

# The Sunday Chieftain & Star-Journal

FRANK S. HOAG, General Manager, Publisher, President—1904-1963

FRANK S. HOAG, JR., Chairman, Publisher, President—1931-1989

ROBERT H. RAWLINGS, Publisher and Editor

## Not enough

**T**HE CITY of Aurora has offered to help Rocky Ford try to offset the economic effects of its pending purchase of Rocky Ford Ditch water, specifically offering to pay for an \$11,000 vision and goal-setting study.

Excuse us? The huge suburb of Denver is willing to pay \$17 million-plus for the water rights and who knows how much more for the legal and technical fees, and then is willing to pay for an \$11,000 study?

That's walkin' around money, not real mitigation for what the purchase will do to the Rocky Ford economy and tax base if the sale is approved in Water Court. While some of the farmers involved have stated they intend to keep farming with well water, others apparently would let their land be revegetated with native grasses.

The shame here is that, along with Weld County, the Rocky Ford area is considered by many as the best farmland in the state. Turning such valuable assets into grazing land will have a serious impact on the tax base.

To add insult to injury, while community leaders have been scrambling to find ways to prevent more out-of-basin sales, Rocky Mountain Clothing, a maker of blue jeans, announced last week that it was closing its Rocky Ford plant. The loss of 64 jobs will be felt dearly in the community.

In any event, there are indications that both the Rocky Ford City Council and the Otero County Commission may pay for some or all of the vision and goal exercise. That would help galvanize community buy-in to whatever direction Rocky Ford is to take in the future.

Meanwhile, Aurora should do more for Rocky Ford than wave a few bucks in folks' faces. The purchase of almost all of the Rocky Ford Ditch shares will have a profound effect on the community.