MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Town Council Members

FROM: Jamie Barker, Communications Manager

CC: Matt LeCerf, Town Manager

DATE: March 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Accessibility & Digital Environments

Accessibility and Digital Environments - The accessibility and transparency of Town of Johnstown government information is a priority, specifically as it relates to our increasing customer engagement on digital platforms: the website, social media, and other SaaS (Software as a Service) solutions. The importance of information accessibility is to provide information in a way that does not rely on sight alone to understand the message. This allows for folks with all types of abilities to understand the same message despite the medium being used: vision, screen reader, full contrast screen, or other accessibility aid. The TOJ Office of Communications, as the webmaster, is working to improve the Town's digital environment accessibility all of the time in accordance with State of Colorado standards. We do this by partnering with digital solutions that already prioritize 508 compliance measures, by scanning all pages of our website weekly for violations and correcting them, and by prompting departments to provide information in accessible formats over non-accessible formats (as might have been the case in the past).

Colorado HB21-1110: An Act, signed in June 2021 means to formalize the process that governments must take in providing their residents with accessible information online. All state agencies and local governments must be compliant with the State's Office of Information Technology's accessibility standards by July 1, 2024. These standards, at minimum, echo federal 508 compliance, and at most follow the World Wide Web Community Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

508 Compliance – Section 508 of the (federal) Rehabilitation Act requires agencies to ensure that their information and communication technology is accessible to people with disabilities.

Web Community Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) – are internationally recognized guidelines for making web content more accessible.

When tackling an organizations digital accessibility, the first step is to assess website platform providers. The Town of Johnstown uses the Drupal 8 platform, hosted by Colorado SIPA. This platform is shared by the Gov. of Colorado, most State Agencies, and over 100 local governments. The platform works closely with OIT already to establish accessibility compliance within its base development code.

Further, digital accessibility is managed through content creation on the website or SaaS solution. Webmasters should consider prompts such as: has alternative text been added for an image? Is the color scheme a high enough contrast? Is this PDF form able to be read by a screen reader or is an online form better? Does the hyperlink address where it is going? Are tables and documents able to be read alternatively to sight? Are 3rd party applications committed to the same customer service and accessibility?

Johnstown Results:
The Town of Johnstown Office of Communications has been paying close attention to compliance across its digital environments. In September of 2022, the Office of Communications was awarded a grant for $6,550 from the Colorado Statewide Internet Portal Authority to pursue digital accessibility. Having already existed on the Colorado SIPA Drupal 8 platform as a result of the Town's website rebuild in 2020, the site was already primed for accessibility by the host. Communications staff were further trained on accessibility tools, forms, and processes throughout continued building and updating of the website. In 2022, the Office of Communications brought on internal software, Monsido with assistance from the SIPA grant. This software scans the entire website at least weekly for 508 compliance violations and notifies the webmasters so that the issues can be corrected.

With limited resources and the rapid demand for online services, the Town prides itself in starting this exercise at a 69.14% Accessibility Rating on December 16. We have improved 6.27% since then, standing now at a 75.41% Accessibility Rating. Accessibility directly measures our website's compliance levels against WCAG 2.1 and the industry average for the State Agency on our Colorado.gov domain is 88.3%.

SEO, Search Engine Optimization, indirectly impacts accessibility as it is the relevance of our website to search terms. Our SEO is above industry average. Quality Assurance measures content issues such as spelling mistakes, broken links, and other errors that may make content less understandable or accessible. We average a 96% in our Quality Assurance, much higher than the industry average of 67%.

The Town of Johnstown is committed to actively working towards more accessible and transparent information in an effort to engage residents at all levels of the governing process.