

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. via ZOOM. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bennett.

Board Members Present

Absent

Nancy Bennett

Christine Coffield – arrived at 4:13 p.m.

Trevor Herasingh

Daniel Horton

T.J. Martinez

Justin Miller – arrived at 4:16 p.m.

Lily Sweikert

Joe Ayala

Vance Johnson

**Subject to approval at the
March 10, 2022
Urban Renewal Meeting**

Also present:

Cynthia Nieb, Economic/Urban Renewal Director

Melanie Scofield, City Clerk/UR Secretary

Michael Yerman, SCEDD

Randall Roberson, La Junta

Bette McFarren, Rocky Ford Gazette

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

1. Maureen Rickof – Closed on the purchase of the Chestnut Building.
2. Randall Roberson – Questioned why the meeting went to full Zoom.

MINUTES: January 13, 2022

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the January 13, 2022 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Trevor Herasingh, seconded by T.J. Martinez, that the minutes for January 13, 2022 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: January 2022

The January 2022 financial statements were provided for the Board's review.

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

- Total cash at the end of January was \$301,257.65.
- Notes receivable was \$6,025.00
- There are no investments.
- Total assets are \$307,282.65 for the month ending January 2022.

LIABILITIES

- There were no outstanding bills at the end of January.

STATEMENT OF REVENUE/EXPENDITURES

BUDGET TO ACTUAL

Bank interest in the amount of \$2.23 was received. \$1,575.90 was paid to Otero County Insurance for our annual property insurance. \$14,646.50 was paid to the City for the match portion of MSOB grants. The 2022 budget is \$229,015 less \$16,222.40 in expenses and \$44,368.60 (MSOB PYMT #2) in encumbrances leaving a budget remaining of \$44,538.18.

City Finance Director Libby explained that the December financial does not reflect the final numbers. There is still the TIF money to be received in January for December. And there is also the Southeast Colorado Power bill, for the Welcome Sign, received in January for December charges. These amounts will be pulled back into the December financial. Financials will not be final until the audit. There was also discussion regarding investments. The Board decided to wait a month and see what information Aliza comes back with to make a decision. As far as the receivables, there are only three loans out. All the others have been paid.

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any questions or corrections regarding the January financial statements. Hearing none, a motion was made by Justin Miller, seconded by Trevor Herasingh, that the financial statements for January 2022 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS:

UR Director Nieb: Talked about the importance of getting our code, land use and everything that has to do with the development of housing all in line. We received a REDI grant from the Department of Local Affairs just shy of \$50,000. We are waiting until April to see if we received funds from the Gates Family Foundation. This will allow us to have Michael Yerman for 40 hours per month for 18 months to help us move ahead with all of these housing possibilities. In addition, he's looking into downtown revitalization and blight throughout the entire city not just downtown.

- A. Housing and Blight Remediation** – Michael Yerman with SCEDD shared the following power point presentation:

La Junta Urban Renewal – City of Salida – Case Study on Tackling Blight, Use of Public Property, and Recreation

La Junta is Ready for Action

Program Established

- Main Street
- Urban Renewal
- Emerging Creative District
- Certified Local Government

Plans in Place

- La Junta Economic Development Action Plan
- City of La Junta Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2020-2025
- La Junta Main Street Community Visioning Document

Knowledgeable and Experienced Staff

SCEDD's Approach – Reverse Engineering

- Where do you want to be in 5 years
- Policy and Code Alignment with these goals
- Budget Alignment with Goals
- Funding Gaps
- Set Realistic Expectations
- Help with Communication with Citizens
- Create Processes and Capacity not set policies

Salida Case Study – Downtown Revitalization

- Steam Plant Event Center
- Creative District
- City Cleaning up its Own Act First
- Property Maintenance Enforcement
- Importance of Parks, Recreation, and Public Space
- Priorities and Goals = Budget and Funding

Salida Creative District

- First of 2 Certified Districts in the State (Santa Fe Art District)
- Strategic Planning for the Arts
- Platform for Creatives
 - Marketing
 - Small Business Education
 - Special Events
- City Codes Updates
 - Use of Public Space
 - Public Art
 - Buy Local First
 - Murals

Property Maintenance Code

- Cited City Property First!!!
- International Property Maintenance Code and Existing Building Code
- Carrot and Stick Approach
 - Voluntary Compliance
 - Formal Citations
- Clear and Transparent Process
- Deadlines were firm but flexible
- City Council Buy-in
- Follow Through

Salida Case Study – “The Good, The Bad, The Ugly”

Parks, Recreation, and Public Spaces

B. Plaza Building

Chairperson Bennett: We had a kick-off meeting last week with the State Historical Fund. They are ready to start working in March. Summit Sealants is willing to be the general contractor for the inside of the building. Everybody's enthused and ready to go. They will get started first on the State Historic grant and then move into the CCI grant. The 2.1M CCI grant should be enough to finish the building itself. We also received a \$25,000 grant from Black Hills Energy at an art show in Rocky Ford.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers for 2022.

1. **Chairman.** The chair opened the floor for nominations. Miller nominated Nancy Bennett for Chairman. Hearing no further nominations, the chair closed the nominations and called for the vote. Nancy Bennett was unanimously elected as Chairman.
2. **Vice-Chairman.** The chair opened the floor for nominations. Martinez nominated Justin Miller for Vice-Chairman. Hearing no further nominations, the chair closed the nominations and called for the vote. Justin Miller was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman.
3. **Treasurer.** The chair opened the floor for nominations. Herasingh nominated T.J. Martinez for Treasurer. Hearing no further nominations, the chair closed the nominations and called for the vote. T.J. Martinez was unanimously elected as Treasurer.

B. Meeting Time Selection. After some discussion, it was decided to keep the meeting on the same day but change the time to 4:30 p.m.

MOTION FOR THE URBAN RENEWAL/CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEETINGS TO BE HELD ON THE SECOND THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH IN A HYBRID FORMAT AT 4:30 P.M.: Horton

SECOND: Herasingh

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

C. By-Laws. Cynthia Nieb has a draft but still needs to go over it to make sure they don't contradict the State Statute. It's beneficial to have something down that talks about how many board members we should have, when we have elections, conflict of interest, as well as duty of loyalty. Daniel Horton volunteered to also review the draft by-laws making sure they don't contradict State Statute.

D. Google Drive. All the information needed by Urban Renewal members will be on this drive. I will continue to build on it. There will also be things on there related to CLG.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Urban Renewal Director Comments:

1. **Tax Increment Finance 101 – Pueblo – February 23rd from Noon to 4:00 p.m.** Have been invited by Paul Benedetti to attend the Tax Increment Finance 101 in Pueblo Conference by DCI. This conference is in person. We have plenty of money for training. Let me know if you would like to attend.
2. **Saving Places Conferences.** Closed today however; you should be able to get into it over the next six months. Please view your conference sessions before that and write up which ones you went to and what you learned from them. I need to turn in the summary in order to receive the scholarship money.
3. **MSOB – 2nd Quarterly Report.** Have turned in our 2nd Quarterly Report. The only thing lagging behind are the roofs which is due to the weather and the supply chain.
4. **Accomplishments.** Shared “LJURA/CLG Priorities & Accomplishments” dated February 9, 2022:

WORK SESSION PRIORITIZATION – March 2021

- Blight Study – we have one in our 2007 Plan, but wanted an update for information (NO CHANGE IN 2007 PLAN – just information – Michael Yerman will advise)
- Blight Strategy – concentrated pockets such as Santa Fe Avenue and connection between public benefit and blight-safety
- Investigate possible Main Street Grant for blight mitigation
- See how to leverage other grants to move ahead with blight remediation
- Inquire if there are any City projects that we might partner with
- Find a progressive use for the Urban Renewal Lots
- Educate people about Urban Renewal
- Have an update on URA loan repayments at every Authority meeting

LJURA Some Recent Accomplishments (2021-2022)

- Blight – the #1 concern of URAs and most La Juntas per a 2021 survey
 - Main Street Open for Business – six (6) buildings with blight issues provided grant monies and LJURA cash match. Five of those buildings are addressing failing roofs, which is the downfall of any building
 - Coaching and support for T.O.’s, the Chestnut, The Elks Building, 27496 Frontage Road, The Sign Shop, the Presbyterian Church, and the Copper Kitchen.
 - Rehabilitation of empty lot next to The Chestnut into a parking lot to lessen congestion on Santa Fe between 3rd and 4th. The City of La Junta provided in-kind services.
 - Sale of Adams lots to Marci Shoulderblade to house horses.

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- Transfer of all properties except 8-10 1st Street (The Plaza Building) and the Santa Fe Parking lot to housing project being headed by the SE COG to provide 70 workforce housing units in six (6) SE Colorado counties.
- Receipt of a \$2 million award by Colorado Creative Industries to SECCP to complete the Plaza Building project over the next 18 months, which includes two apartments. Other awards have come in for this project recently. The Plaza Building is owned by LJURA.
- Ancillary Projects Under Other Programs That Affect Blight
 - 2022 DoLA Rural Economic Development Initiative – Hiring of consultant for 18 months to address updates in code, land use, zoning, etc. that pave the way for ameliorating blight and an increase in workforce housing. Awaiting results of sponsorships/grant applications with Colorado Housing and Finance and the Gates Family Foundation for the cash match, which should be decided on April 9.
 - Livewell Park – under two CDOT Revitalizing Main Street Grants, Main Street La Junta is rehabilitating a pocket park on Santa Fe. Thus far, we have a concrete base and stage, stage awning supports, pergola, water station, lighting, electrical, water, beginnings of a mural, public art, stucco repair, and water remediation. Progress has been briefly stalled by illness, COVID-19, weather, and the supply chain.
 - Certification as a Colorado Creative District and an \$11,000 award from the National Endowment for the Arts.
 - An inventory of all the businesses and buildings in La Junta, funded by Colorado Main Street.
 - Arkansas Valley Film Festival funded by the Colorado Film Commission: provided foot traffic downtown and much-needed recognition of youth accomplishments.

In a recent discussion (February 3, 2022) with Paul Benedetti, our LJURA attorney, he stated that LJURA has an excellent board that is addressing blight in a very intelligent manner. He respects how we are leveraging ancillary programs and grants to achieve our goals, and this is the approach that he is recommending to other small, rural communities with URAs. He would like us to document and share our approach with others.

Commissioner Rob recently shared that he likes the direction LJURA is taking with its approach.

B. Governing Body Comments:

1. Justin Miller: I've been watching the presentations from the Saving Places Conference. There are two, so far, that I feel are fantastic. "What does preservation mean?" and "Keeping old buildings out of landfills." I highly recommend these two.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Melanie R. Scofield, Secretary

Nancy Bennett, Chairperson