CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bennett.

Board Members Present	Absent
Joe Ayala	
Nancy Bennett	
Christine Coffield	
Trevor Herasingh	
Daniel Horton – via zoom	
Toni Madrid	
Erin Monroy	
Lily Sweikert	

Subject to approval at the February 22, 2024 Urban Renewal Meeting

Also present:
Cynthia Nieb, Economic/Urban Renewal Director
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Aimee Hill, Building Officer
Bethany Bender, La Junta
Ben Mason, La Junta
Randall Roberson, La Junta
Erika Lively, La Junta

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:
There was no citizen participation.

BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEWS & ELECTION: Candidates submitted the following applications and were interviewed one at a time. The Chairperson and other Board members asked questions of each candidate. The following candidates were interviewed: Bethany Bender, Ben Mason and Randall Roberson.

BETHANY BENDER

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal?

   I know the focus of Urban Renewal is to find, and transform blighted areas of our community through creative redevelopment.

2. What do you think Urban Renewal should focus on now and in the future? Note: LJ URA MUST focus on State Statute requirements dealing with blight and safety.

   I think Urban Renewal should focus on both arroyos and the Arkansas River (head gates). These areas are seemingly abandoned and a catchall for human waste and trash. They also have the possibility of, when respect is provided, to be opportunities for our community members to take care of their health.

3. Why do you think you are a good choice for this position?

   I am a great candidate for this position because I am willing to bring a fresh new perspective towards the community development while conducting in a respectful collaborative manner.

BEN MASON

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal?

   They work on city projects to keep the history of the town up to date and building codes, to keep the city's economic progress moving forward within the laws that the board governs by.

2. What do you think Urban Renewal should focus on now and in the future? Note: LJ URA MUST focus on State Statute requirements dealing with blight and safety.

   I think something needs to be done with the vacant buildings in the downtown area. Most shops are not clean and or in use and I'm sure are not up to current fire/safety codes. State inspections should happen and adverse financial stipulations should be placed on the owners to either rent, renovate or sell the buildings to bring life back in them and the downtown area. I also feel the same about several properties on the north and east side of town that lay on busy streets that children walk up and down on their way to/from schools.

3. Why do you think you are a good choice for this position?

   I like to serve people and my community. I think outside the box yet stay true on my course of honesty and integrity. My passion has always been in serving and leading others and have always wanted to reach out into city government. I have served on several non-profit boards in my past that focused on food insecurities and homelessness and I feel I could be an asset to this board and its causes.

RANDALL ROBERSON

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal Authorities?

   a. *Their mission:*
      i. *Remove blight.*
      ii. *Promote revitalization of poorly developed or dilapidated areas within a city.*
      iii. *Eliminate substandard housing.*
      iv. *Restore economic viability to a given area within a city.*

   b. *Their funding:*
      i. *Primarily from revenues generated within the tax increment district (TIF). This district, a defined area, is the beneficiary of incremental property and/or sales tax increases within the district from a predetermined base year.*

2. What do you think the Urban Renewal should focus on now and in the future (must reflect the directives of the state statute that deal with blight and safety)?

   Evaluating funding requests and scoring the requests per the new UR rubric and funding guidelines.

3. Why are you a good choice for this position?

   I have served on the UR Board for nearly 2 years with virtually no absences, including several work sessions.

   My 30 years' experience as a loan officer in the La Junta area, in addition to running my own insurance agency since 2019, gives me a unique and inciteful vision of the need for UR in La Junta. I have seen the difficulty of establishing a viable business both through analyzing the financials of numerous and varied types of businesses in the Arkansas Valley and experienced that struggle firsthand. As such, I know how difficult it can be to simply meet the monthly variable costs associated with running a business and how difficult it is to have sufficient funds thereafter for capital investment, particularly in the startup phase of a venture.

   I purchased my building, located at 401 E. 3rd Street in La Junta (the old A to Z Electric Bldg.), on October 10, 2019, and for the next six month, totally remodeled the front portion of the building (exterior & interior, wiring, and plumbing) into the office space for my agency. I lease the back portion to Eric Pulido for his electrical business, thereby utilizing the entire structure.

   This experience will aid in my understanding of the complexity and complications that many of the UR applicants will have in front of them.

After the interviews were conducted, the ballots were prepared and provided to the members. The members voted and ballots were counted by the City Clerk. The tally of the votes was Randall Roberson receiving the majority of votes (five). This will go to the recommendation for the Mayor to present before City Council.

STRATEGIC PLAN (adoption) (action): The Strategic Plan will be tabled until the next meeting. There was not enough time to include all of the edits. However, the financial assistance police, scoring rubric, brand guide, applicant guidelines and application need to be voted on today.

MOTION TO ADOPT THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY, THE SCORING RUBRIC, AND THE BRAND GUIDE: Monroy
SECOND: Herasingh
DISCUSSION: These documents can be adopted knowing that additional edits can be made in the future.
VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

MOTION TO APPROVE THE APPLICANT GUIDELINES AND NEW APPLICATION: Monroy
SECOND: Sweikert
DISCUSSION: These documents are still a work in progress and that by approving them, we are allowing for changes to take place. These documents are not yet officially adopted.

MINUTES: October 26, 2023
Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the October 26, 2023 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Trevor Herasingh, seconded by Toni Madrid, that the minutes for October 26, 2023 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: December 2023

The December 2023 financial statements were provided for the Board's review.

BALANCE SHEET
ASSETS

- Total cash at the end of December was $17,140.84.
- Notes receivable was $2,187.50. (One note)
- Investments were $480,915.20 (COLOTRUST).
- Accounts receivable was $2,559.04.
- Total assets are $502,802.58 for the month ending December 2023.

LIABILITIES

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

STATEMENT OF REVENUE/EXPENDITURES
BUDGET TO ACTUAL
Interest in the amount of $2129.51 was received. Tax increment of $1,017.60 (NOV) was received from property tax collections. Another TIF was received for $2,559.04 (DEC) and is recorded as a receivable and accounted for in 2023. Expenses for the month of December follows:

- $41.77 – Southeast Colorado Power (Welcome LJ Sign)
- $52.75 – La Junta Tribune Democrat Subscription
- $3,100 – UR/ED Director Salary

The 2023 budget is $182,500.00 less $151,511.57 in expenses less $11,000.00 encumbered leaving a budget remaining of $19,988.43. Income exceeded the budget by $53,868.24. Income exceeded expenses by $84,856.67

UR/ED Director Nieb: Had a conversation with Ken Hood, County Assessor. He's going to prepare a written explanation of how he comes up with how much we get per year for our TIF. He will be invited to come and explain what's on the spreadsheet that he will be presenting. Also, after speaking with Aliza, the budget needs to be amended. There is $30,000 more in revenue that was budgeted for last year. Decisions need to be made using the information that is in the strategic plan, after it is adopted.

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any questions or corrections regarding the December 2023 financial statements. Hearing none, a motion was made by Trevor Herasingh, seconded by Lily Monroy, that the financial statements for December 2023 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS:

A. Plaza Building

Chairperson Bennett: Nancy read excepts from the Project Summary Report written by Jane Daniels which was directed to the State Historic Fund.

The projects highlights have been centered on the fact that the State Historic Fund funded a portion, the steel framing, installation of the storefront rehabilitation, which was part of a larger project funded by the Office of Economic Development and International Trade Community Revitalization Program , which allowed SECCP to also complete work on the exterior masonry, rear first floor windows, installation of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing and some interior finishes which will allow for a portion of the building to be occupied on the second floor. Summit Sealants Inc. was the general contractor and Form+ Works was the architectural engineering team because of the team's overall familiarity with the building and each other, problem solving and communication was open and clean. The project generally went smoothly despite setbacks, delays with the purchase of and arrangement of the mechanical system. Some of the things that were learned in this project so far was that in addition to having a good, skillful, and experienced team on the complex project like this, they learned that they needed to involve the city's engineer early and often in project decision making and approvals. We also learned that despite requests by Summit Sealants to put in bids and assist the project, local contractors were hard to come by. Since the project has significantly made progress on the exterior and mainly the interior, La Junta interest in saving other historic buildings, especially downtown, has grown. Owners of neighboring buildings and throughout the downtown have inquired about the process and have made improvements to their buildings. In addition, at the end of this current phase, the building will be ready to occupy and rent out, at least one space on the upper floor. Putting a derelict building back into use. Once its fully completed and rehabilitated, the Plaza Building and SECCP's use will serve the larger community through the offering of arts and cultural programming for multi-generational groups in Southeast Colorado, short-term housing, and the commercial kitchen that can be used by the community groups and businesses.

UR/ED Director Nieb: Had a conversation with Jane Daniels who writes all the grants and does the planning for the Plaza Building, she told me that she was going to apply for a T-Mobile grant with the maximum that you can get of $50,000. She then said that she was going to apply for a Redi-grant for $150,000, but she needs some kind of governmental entity to apply in conjunction with her as a fiscal agent. Since we own the building, I suggested that it would be a good idea for Urban Renewal to be that fiscal agent, but no more monies would be given. She said that they might be able to finish the building by the end of the year.

MOTION TO STAND IN AS FISCAL AGENT UNDER THE TERM CYNTHIA DESCRIBED: Horton
SECOND: Herasingh
DISCUSSION: Being a fiscal agent would mean we would push the money through our accounting system and then disperse it. We would not have any responsibility whatsoever when it came to the money. Cynthia will administer the funds.
VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers for 2024. The chair opened the floor for nominations for Chairman, Vice-Chairman and treasurer. Nancy Bennett was nominated for Chairman. Toni was nominated for Vice-Chairman. Randall Roberson was nominated for Treasurer.

MOTION TO CONFIRM NANCY BENNETT AS CHAIRMAN, TONI MADRID AS VICE-CHAIRMAN, AND RANDALL ROBERSON AS TREASURER: Sweikert
SECOND: Monroy
DISCUSSION: There was no discussion
VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

B. Urban Renewal Director:

- Aimee Hill gave us a dangerous buildings document that clearly delineates what a dangerous building is. We will know how to assess applications on whether or not there's blight or safety problems.
- Barn Owl Precision Agriculture won the 2024 Ag Innovation Challenge and a purse of $50,000. They are located in the same building as Klein Makerspace. They address challenges to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.
- Klein Makerspace is being honored next month by the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. They are one of eight arts and business partnership award winners.
- The 2024 Colorado Lottery Starburst Award nomination is for the La Junta Brick and Tile Park.
- Going to put the board book on a thumb drivel.

C. **Governing Body Comments:**

1. Lily Sweikert: We've talked about signage in the past. I know that we are still in an agreement with the Hampton Inn and I know that their sign has been partially out of order for close to a year or so. Is there anything in our agreement that says they need to fix that? (Cynthia will look into that.)

2. Erin Monroy: Noticed that the statute says that if there's other districts who have a mill levy in our TIF district, then we should have them represented on our board.

   Cynthia Nieb: That portion of the state statute has been looked at. It was changed back in 2016 and it was decided by the legislature and the people who figure these things out that if your plan is valid, they're 25-year plans, that we did not need to invite all these special districts to be part of the board. It's my understanding that they did invite all the special districts to be part of the board and no one took them up on that. You don't have to do that until 2032 when you readopt a new plan, if you choose to.

   Erin Monroy: Can we only fund projects in the tax increment district?

   Cynthia Nieb: Yes. I don't know why they did some outside of the TIF district long ago.

   Erin Monroy: Want to know more about the TIF calculation since the statute refers to having a base year.

   Cynthia Nieb: That was part of my discussion with Ken Hood. The base year resets every year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk	Nancy Bennett, Chairperson