

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 4:02 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bennett.

Board Members Present

Absent

Nancy Bennett
Carly Johnson
Toni Madrid
Erin Monroy
Randall Roberson

Joe Ayala

**Subject to approval at the
March 27, 2025
Urban Renewal Meeting**

Also present: Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Aliza Libby, Finance Director
Neils Rikhof, La Junta
Maureen Rikhof, La Junta
Erika Lively, La Junta
Bette McFarren, Rocky Ford Daily Gazette

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

There was no citizen participation.

MINUTES: January 23, 2025

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the January 23, 2025 minutes. There being none, the board moved to a motion.

MOTION TO APPROVE JANUARY 23, 2025 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: BEN MASON

SECOND: ERIN MONROY

AYE: Bennett, Johnson, Madrid, Mason, Monroy, Roberson

OPPOSED: None

The motion carries.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: DECEMBER 2024

Treasurer's Report: Aliza Libby reported that this is the final financial report that will go to the auditors. Toward the end of December, we had \$12,945.94 in our cash/checking account; in the ColoTrust investment account there is \$371,480.76. Notes receivable for \$1,437.50 bringing our total assets to \$388,029.91. We took in revenue from the tax increment district being \$2,629.85. We earned interest from the ColoTrust account on our monies deposited, which is \$1,371.15. We paid out \$4,257.19 in rehab grants. The City of La Junta welcome sign rent expense \$1,583.96. Finally, there was \$69.99 in general operating expenses.

Discussion explaining the breakdown of what is considered budget and savings.

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

MOTION TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2024 FINAL FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED:
RANDALL ROBERSON

SECOND: TONI MADRID

AYE: Bennett, Johnson, Madrid, Mason, Monroy, Roberson

OPPOSED: None

The motion carries.

JANUARY 2025

Toward the end of January, we had \$13,578.90 in our cash/checking account; in the ColoTrust investment account there is \$372,826.39. Notes receivable for \$1,375.00 bringing our total assets to \$388,029.91. You will notice that your "Other Receivable" which is the TIF is not there. We accounted for it in revenue in 2024 and we put it into accounts receivable. Once we got the money, we took it out of receivable and placed it into cash. It was discussed at a board meeting that we would need at least \$50,000 for the money to be placed in investments. We earned interest from the ColoTrust account on our monies deposited, which is \$1,346.88. There was \$1,596.50 in general operating expenses which was Otero County Insurance payments for properties owned by the city.

Discussion surrounding the possible numbers and amendments for the 2025 URA budget occurred.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED: CARLY JOHNSON

SECOND: TONI MADRID

AYE: Bennett, Johnson, Madrid, Mason, Monroy, Roberson

OPPOSED: None

The motion carries.

REPORTS:

A. Plaza Building (Nancy Bennett)

- We had a positive site visit from the architects last week.
- The electric is nearly completed, pending inspection for completion and the drywall will be ready to go up. The ceiling would be next, as well as installation of the tin tiles for the ceiling, as they are on site.
- The oakwood flooring is also on site ready to be installed. Tim Klob will be in charge of flooring installation. Finally, painting of the inside of the building will occur shortly thereafter.
- The new projected completion date of the Plaza Building is August 2025.
- The building will be receiving the Stephen A. Hart award on April 3, 2025 in Denver, CO.

B. Chestnut Apartments (Maureen & Niels Rikhof): Maureen & Niels Rikhof, La Junta, gave updates on the Chestnut Apartments.

- The grant that we received in July stated that we would have 18 months to get the windows installed. We got them sized and some work was needing to be done in some of the window structures (i.e. window casings). We have worked on the brick part of the back of the building where the windows will hang. Upon receiving windows, it will take 2-3 months to get installed. We are working with Ben Mason from Sutherlands to order windows.
 - Nancy Bennett: How many windows does this grant cover?
 - Around 40 windows are covered. That is all of the windows. There are plans for balconies to be installed and doorways for those balconies to be installed, as well.
- The weather has been the reason for the standstill; the windows could not be installed during the colder months due to the caulk for the windows. We will be seeing more activity in that area in the next few weeks now that the weather is favorable.
 - Randall Roberson: What else is going on the inside of the building – you have discussed the windows, but are other projects being worked on as well, such as the roof?
 - The roof has been redone. Sequence-wise, we are looking to stabilize the building with metal to help it be more secure. Then we will think about working on the inside. I do want the outside mostly completed such as the stairwells, the front porch, and the brick as well. We are also hopefully building a shop/garage for off-street parking located behind the building, which is pending City Council approval.
 - Nancy Bennett: Was there damage from the break-ins?
 - There was theft. We had around \$6,000-\$8,000 worth of tools taken at one time. This occurred about a year ago. There has been no more crime since then.
 - Erin Monroy: Do you have an anticipated date of when you expect to order those windows?
 - Ben Mason: We are working on trying to find the correct windows that will help qualify the Chestnut Apartments for future grants, as far as historical properties. It is not just about finding a normal, “everyday” window. There are certain qualities that are required for historical grants.
 - Maureen Rikhof: We keep learning about historical grants every day. Concerning the windows, there have been many questions surrounding the material of the windows (vinyl vs. Vibrex vs. wood). I am getting clarifications from History Colorado. We are excited to get moving on the apartment building as we have perfected many of our skills and processes.
 - Toni Madrid: Anybody out there that has historic property, call us here at Urban Renewal, call those of us at the Historic Preservation Board, formerly Certified Local Government (CLG).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Funding Application/Program Policy (Action)

- Erin Monroy: We held a work session to go over the final edits to our funding application and program policy, and we have been provided a final draft of both by Melanie Scofield. I think they both look great; I did have a question. On the first page of the policy, where it mentions “Grant/Loan funding is available in the following amounts...” It is not 100% clear to me that this is a percentage of the total project that we will fund; I also had a thought about the loan – whether participants are considering a grant or loan.
- Toni Madrid: The funding application talks about the TIF district – could it also be added that an explanation of the TIF district location(s). Having the TIF districts described could also be helpful. To me, the breakdown of the percentages makes sense. There was also a section mentioning interest in the selling of properties that we have provided funding to. Did we discuss if participants that decide to sell the property pay the funding back?

Dialogue surrounding the percentage breakdown of loan/grants awarded to participants occurred.

MOTION TO TABLE THE URA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY UNTIL THE BOARD FURTHER DEVELOPS GRANT PERCENTAGES: TONI MADRID

SECOND: CARLY JOHNSON

AYE: Bennett, Johnson, Madrid, Mason, Monroy, Roberson

OPPOSED: None

The motion carries.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Board Vacancy Interviews

1. Zach Miner:

- Nancy Bennett: I would like to know what you know about Urban Renewal? Are there projects you are especially interested in, whether it be new or old projects?
 - I’ve watched a lot of the meetings through Facebook, so I am fairly familiar of the things the board does. There is also a lot I don’t know, but am willing to learn. My interest in the URA has a lot to do with my experience in this type of work you do – bringing old buildings back to life, encourage new business opportunities to come to the area. We lived here in the community, purchased and sold a farm, and have since then relocated back to La Junta. One future project, which has been questioned by many citizens throughout the years, would be the old Gibson’s building. There are many possible ideas – and one idea is turning that building into an events building for the community which could benefit the TIF district. I have a daughter in softball and we travel out of town often for tournaments. This could be a great opportunity to encourage more tourism and business around the area, as they would be traveling through. At one point we were trying to get a meat processing plant in the area, as we are along Highway 50, as well as having two of the largest cattle sale barns in the state of Colorado. Those are the types of projects I like and look forward to.
- Toni Madrid: What personal skills do you have that would help us on this committee?

- Looking at the committee, I know that there is good experience across the board. I am aware Carly Johnson had applied for funds from the URA, but completely revamped her business without funding from the URA. I would bring experience in pricing of jobs. That is what I have done my entire life. In the big cities, general contractors hire out for all of their jobs. Here in smaller, rural areas, general contractors tend to do most of the work themselves. Regarding the policy, I would like to see a stipulation of using the URA money locally only. Keep the money in La Junta and not send the money out to other areas. If you are going to receive money from La Junta, use local La Junta businesses.
 - Erin Monroy: Would you feel comfortable with some other aspects, like facing the community to explain what we do. 'Holding the baby' type of aspects.
 - I am all for that. I am a husband of a high school coach; I'm essentially a cheerleader. I am pretty public about how I feel; If there is something I truly believe in, I will support it.
 - Carly Johnson: You made some really good points and I agree with a lot of what you said. What do you believe are some of the greatest challenges that we face in La Junta?
 - This might be a little bit unpopular. I think there can be a lot of 'vanity projects' – government money spent on these projects that are not going to last, then that might not be the place to put money. I see a lot of small business dying off because of that. If we could be smarter about where we put our money, and maybe even educate people about the types of businesses that work here. There are always younger people ready to break out. This area would be great for new businesses that will last.
2. Angel Saucedo:
- Nancy Bennett: I would like to know what you know about Urban Renewal? Are there projects you are especially interested in, whether it be new or old projects?
 - I will be honest; I am not completely aware of what the board does. I know that you take old buildings and turn them into something that works a lot better for the citizens. I've watched a few meetings here and there, but have always been interested in doing something within the city. I think Urban Renewal is a great committee, considering what our city is and what it could be. As for projects, I would be interested in seeing the downtown be completely revitalized from the ground up. Last summer, I visited Pella, Iowa and that was one of the most beautiful cities I've seen in my life. I can imagine La Junta being something like that. I've always thought that we could do certain things differently. Something else to focus on is something for youth. When I was young, I was completely bored because there was nothing to do in the area, other than be on the streets.
 - Toni Madrid: What strengths do you bring to this board?
 - Construction experience. I have been in construction for about 4 years now. Not that I'm terribly good at everything, but I feel like I bring experience, especially regarding younger citizen concerns.
 - Toni Madrid: We meet once a month, whether it is face to face or zoom. Would you be able to make it to the meetings monthly?
 - Absolutely. I can make arrangements to participate in the monthly meetings.

- Carly Johnson: Have you ever been involved in any community revitalization projects. I'm assuming you are currently working with the Chestnut Apartments.
 - Yes. I am.
- Erin Monroy: You seem comfortable with public speaking. Would you be comfortable with reaching out to the community/businesses and explaining what we do?
 - Absolutely. I have been working with the committee of the Wet and Dry parade for the last two years. I would be very comfortable in reaching out to the community when needed. I love interacting with the public.
- 3. Erika Lively:
 - Nancy Bennett: I would like to know what you know about Urban Renewal? Are there projects you are especially interested in, whether it be new or old projects?
 - I will preface that by saying I think about your TIF district and the fact that everything falls into a particular district. I feel like the downtown is something that could have newer, smaller business, but there really isn't a whole lot there space-wise for people. The idea that having other locations within downtown itself would be where people could come in (less large). I have been to different towns, such as Newburgh, NY. They had just undergone amazing historic renovation. They have diverse communities. They are wanting to attract both higher and lower income citizens. This idea is very important here in La Junta, as there are very limited people. Even if you have larger companies come in, how does it benefit the local people? Another idea is that La Junta is a major midway point for travel. A lot of travelers tend to have questions when people arrive to a new area from traveling is "What is available to me? Where can I dine, sleep, etc.". A lot of visitors just want to know what is available here for visitors, as well as events and places to eat and convene and find out what is going on in town. La Junta is considered a 'destination point' because you are historic. The idea of renovation rather than tearing it all down also creates atmosphere. Allowing smaller cottage industries, as well as allowing larger industries to come to La Junta to provide equal opportunities for all.
 - Toni Madrid: What skills or knowledge would you bring to this board?
 - In the past in the East Coast, I owned a small business in a dying part of the lower East side of Manhattan in a smaller, primarily Jewish neighborhood. It was a shop that provided some clothing items and fabrics. I came in and opened a shop where I worked with the local community and the business improvement district. I worked with different contractors that I found that I wanted to use locally. I got involved with real estate; I became a licensed real estate salesperson. I am from a construction family; I know how to do certain things – such as pricing and bidding as well as negotiating. I believe I come in with that experience. I'm a real estate broker. I was an entrepreneur; I am aware of some bits and elements of construction.
 - Toni Madrid: What is our ultimate goal at Urban Renewal? Or what do you believe should be the task at hand that the board should address?
 - Currently, I think your task at hand is drawing folks into the community; drawing in companies into the community; groups of people that are willing to work on finding out what they're going to bring in and need and how they are going to execute it to get it done and make it successful.
 - Ben Mason: I know you travel a lot from other meetings, are you more permanent now or still going back and forth?

- I am currently in transition; I have currently been here for 16 weeks, which is the longest time I've been here. I have personal matters to attend to on the East Coast; I will be returning for six weeks; I'm currently a gardener there in the area, and I have been contracted to complete a build-out on a rooftop and with that buildout, I need to go back and finish that project. I will return in June, and I am committed to attend all meetings, whether it be in person, over the phone or a zoom meeting.
- Toni Madrid: Do you own property here in La Junta?
 - I do own property here. My family has been here since 1950; I've been coming and going since I was a little girl. I've seen the area change quite a bit throughout the years. I have never been on a rural farm; however, I have experience with an urban farm. I have experience in construction and have done construction because I am from a construction family. I have been a project manager for a large, 120-unit property in New York City, which I then did the sales after being the project manager engage with the project management.
- Randall Roberson: A question for all three candidates, how many of you would be able to make it in-person to ¾ of all meetings. (Zach Miner and Angel Saucedo raised hands)
 - I can't commit to 100% of the meetings in-person - which is why I was completely transparent about my attendance. I know I will be back in June so I would miss those meetings. I was here in July of 2024, but that meeting was cancelled due to summertime. Then in August, the meeting got shifted. I was here in July and August; I was also here for the September meeting, despite needing to return and zoom to the airport right after the meeting. Because I wanted to be here for the meeting, I ended up missing my flight back. Then I came back and I have been here since November 1, 2024. I have attended every meeting and work session since then. If in-person attendance is the deciding factor, I completely understand and I will try again some other time – if that were the case.

With there being only two (2) open board seats on the Urban Renewal Authority and three candidates, the board voted by ballot on two of the three candidates. Zach Miner and Angel Saucedo received the most votes, therefore adding them to the Urban Renewal Authority.

B. Governing Body Comments:

- Ben Mason: I would like to bring to the board's attention, a few weeks ago I attended the Historical Society meeting in Colorado Springs with Aimee Hill and we learned quite a bit about different grants that we need to apply for. There is a lot of stuff that needs to go into the pre-planning of the grants. As a board, we need to keep in the back of our minds that when folks come before us, they have explored that route. There is a lot that can be done to historical buildings that could exempt them from historical designation – from the paint, to the type of construction materials used. I was working with Aimee to try and figure out somewhere that they could go during the permitting process to try and get ahold of the Historical Preservation Board and walk them through the process.
- Toni Madrid: The Urban Renewal Authority and Historical Preservation Board are completely separate boards, but I think it is important for people to know regardless that, if their building could be considered historical, they would be aware of the options.

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

An Urban Renewal Authority work session is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, 2025 at 4:00 PM in the Power Board Room of the Municipal Building. Melanie Scofield will send out the notice.

The next Urban Renewal Authority meeting will be held March 27, 2025 at 4:00 PM in the Council Chambers.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

Cristian Estrada, Deputy City Clerk

Nancy Bennett, Chairperson