

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Monday, July 1, 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
Toni Madrid
Erin Monroy
Randall Roberson
Lily Sweikert – 4:04 via Zoom

Daniel Horton

**Subject to approval at the
July 25, 2024
Urban Renewal Meeting**

Also present: Cynthia Nieb, Economic/Urban Renewal Director
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Aimee Hill, Building Code Official
Caitlin Hansen, La Junta
Kendall Jacob, La Junta
Maureen Rikhof, Council Member
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

There was no citizen participation.

MINUTES: May 23, 2024

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the May 23, 2024 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Joe Ayala, seconded by Trevor Herasingh, that the minutes for May 23, 2024 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: May 2024

The 2024 budget is \$456,000.00 less \$259,592.15 in expenses and \$500.00 in encumbrance leaving a remaining budget of \$195,907.85.

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any questions or corrections regarding the May 2024 financial statements. Hearing none, a motion was made by Trevor Herasingh, seconded by Erin Monroy, that the financial statements for May 2024 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

REPORTS:

A. Plaza Building

Chairperson Bennett: There was a meeting of the architects, contractor and SECCP last week.

- A final decision was made on the tin that is going to be replacing the historic tin ceiling.
- They are not able to get everything from the same manufacturer because the one they had went out of business.

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

- Flooring samples are expected by mid-July.
- Paint for the walls will be needed in addition to the ceiling color.
- Discussion of putting up a wood picture rail for a gallery display area.
- There will still probably be some civil engineering on getting the east and south parking lots to drain away from the building.
- Going to have to take out a bridge loan to help because the historic tax credits will be due but they are not paid until after the project is totally finished.

B. LJ URA Grant/Loan Update

Cynthia Nieb: The following information was provided.

- Contracts are ready if no changes are made (the scopes of work and budget).
- Melanie will be available on Wednesday for applicants to sign their contract.
- Contracts are made to the joint owners of the property.
- Did not do background checks. It would not address our financial interest.
- Grant recipients must prove that they meet the state and municipal code inspection requirements.

NEW BUSINESS

A. LJ URA Funding Application – Clothespin Laundromat (Hansen)

Description of Proposed Project (from application)

I purchased the Clothespin Laundromat in July of 2023. Being a 90% all cash business, it increases our risk of burglaries. In the last 9 months of ownership, we've had multiple attempts at entry by the increasing homeless population. I've been working with our local law enforcement to try to keep it under control, and it seems to be working to some extent. I am wanting to replace 9 windows in the front of the building. The existing windows fit the La Junta Dangerous Building Code, Section 1001.8- Faulty weather protection. They are single pieces of Plexi glass in the window opening and held into place by a small piece of trim board. 5 of the 9 windows are this way. The other 4 windows are over 30 years old and are single pane and not very efficient. The main entry door is also 30+ years old. The previous owner stated that he had done some welding and tweaking on the door to extend the life of it but there are large gaps between the frame and the door. The door to the garage needs to be replaced as the framing and door are tweaked and is unable to be locked securely. We have extended our hours from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm 2 days a week and the outside is very dark and unsafe for our customers when they are leaving. There are 2 commercial vapor lights in place right now, but they have not worked in 5+ years. I would like to replace them with 2 commercial outdoor LED lights, and a few can lights under the awning. The building will remain as it has been for the last 50 years, as a laundromat servicing not only La Junta, but our surrounding communities as well.

What Does This Project Address (from application)

Installing new windows, doors and exterior lighting will not only make the building look more appealing, but it will also increase the security of the business as well as our customers. New doors that will lock properly. Secure windows that will be able to be opened during the daytime to help with air circulation during the day. Exterior lighting that will allow our customers to navigate our parking lot safely. The lights will also deter anyone from loitering at night in front of our building.

Timeline of This Project (from application)

I would like to get started as soon as possible. Adding lights to our parking area is my number one priority. I am planning on going with Colten Electric. He has said that we will install the can lighting under the awning, then move on to the 2 larger lights that will illuminate the parking area. He said that the project wouldn't take very long, a few days at most. The doors and windows will be the longest project to complete as materials are back ordered and their schedule is packed. I'd like to get on their list as soon as possible so we can get the materials ordered. I would like to have everything installed and functioning within 90 days of being awarded the grant. The beginning of September is my goal for completion, if not sooner.

After the Board asked questions of the applicant, the following motion was made.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CLOTHESPIN LAUNDROMAT (HANSEN) PROPOSAL FOR AN URBAN RENEWAL GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000: Roberson

SECOND: Sweikert

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

B. LJURA Funding Application – Miss Fit LLC (Jacob)

Description of Proposed Project (from application)

Miss Fit is a women's only gym, a tenant within Twisted Steel Gym. The business supports local women by providing a comfortable, judgment free area to exercise in. Being inside of Twisted Steel, Miss Fit members are also allowed access to the rest of the facility as well. This gives them access to more equipment and space.

Funding will go towards paving the facility parking lot. The parking lot currently is rock and gravel, making it difficult for our handicap members to maneuver to the entrance easily. We have had multiple complaints from our handicap members regarding the safety and accessibility of the parking lot. The improvements will include adding concrete throughout the parking lot, sidewalk guardrail, ADA placards and striping of the parking lot. By funding this, we will be able to supply our members with a more accessible, ADA compliant, entrance into the facility. The quote we received from Elegant Concrete totaled \$67,520.00. We will contribute \$42,520.00 to the project. Attached is an outlined budget for the project and a loan approval for the funding of the amount Miss Fit would be responsible for.

With easier access to the facility, we will have the opportunity to welcome more members, handicapped or not into our facility. The overall appearance of the lot itself will improve with the added cement parking area. With the funds, we would tentatively be able to start working on this project within the next month and finish within 2 to 3 weeks. This is one of many ways we will strive to maintain and update our facility to not only have a more positive appearance, but also reach out to help better our community. We plan to fill and repair any cracks or holes in the parking lot as they appear. We also plan to set aside funds for the upkeep of the parking lot for the next 10-15 years. We understand that a parking lot can have plenty of wear and tear and we will continue to maintain the lot in the years to come.

What Does This Project Address (from application)

We have had members complain of the instability of the rock parking lot. To help improve safety and accessibility for the 20+ members with wavering stability and/or handicaps, an ADA compliant parking lot will improve their visits to the facility. Our members will be able to

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

navigate the parking lot in wheelchairs, walkers, etc. After speaking with the Otero County Assessor's office, property taxes will potentially increase by \$1,016.00.

Timeline of This Project (from application)

June 2024

- Grant application presented to LJUR Board for acceptance

July 2024

- Contract signed
- Contractor selected
- Check if permit is needed
- Parking lot being installed
- Inspections
- Submission of canceled check and payment received statement from contractor to receive reimbursement request from La Junta Urban Renewal

After the Board asked questions of the applicant, the following motion was made.

MOTION TO ACCEPT MISS FIT LLC (JACOB) PROPOSAL FOR AN URBAN RENEWAL GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000: Ayala

SECOND: Monroy

DISCUSSION: There was discussion whether a doorbell should be installed. It was decided that wasn't a part of this request and the applicant should come back at a later date for that particular item.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ayala, Bennett, Coffield, Herasingh, Madrid, Roberson

Those voting NO: Monroy, Sweikert

The motion carried 6-2 (Horton absent)

C. LJURA Funding Application – Chestnut Apartments (Rikhof)

Description of Proposed Project (from application)

We are writing this proposal to urge the La Junta Urban Renewal Authority to support the rebirth of the Chestnut Apartments with a grant that would partially fund the purchase of and installation of new windows. We are proposing the windows are replaced with single-hung, double-paned windows as we believe this will address energy efficiency as well as greatly improve the appearance of the building from the outside. Currently, nearly all the windows are either missing or broken out, creating an eyesore as well as a safety issue for our community. With the financial assistance of the URA, the Chestnut Apartments could have new windows as soon as late summer/early fall 2024.

What Does This Project Address (from application)

Reduction in the amount of blight per state statute. The renovation of the Chestnut Apartments in their entirety, but certainly also within the piece of replacing the broken and missing windows with new windows, will address a deteriorated structure that has sat empty and deteriorating for more than 2 decades (31-25-103.2a) make the building safe for the community and neighborhood by removing broken and failing windows (31-25-103.2d), reverse the deterioration of the corner of 4th and Santa Fe by creating a livable space (31-25-103-2e), remove the existence of the conditions that had several unwelcome intruders – both human and wildlife – who created unwanted health hazards including several areas inside the building of scorch marks created by squatters while the building sat vacant and unattended

(31-25-103.2h), create a building that is once again safe and healthy for people to live in as dilapidated conditions are addressed and replaced with modern systems of heating, cooling, electricity and sanitation (31-25-103.2i), and will provide much needed housing accommodations to members of the La Junta municipality (31-25-103.2l2)

Increase in safety created by the project. As the property currently exists, it is not habited, and we have removed belongings of several “squatters” and evidence of unwelcome guests. Having functional windows (part of this project) and doors (not part of this request but also has gone out for bids and will be completed in roughly the same timeline) will bolster the security of the property and keep other members of the community safe as a result. The potential for fires started within the building is also a constant concern of ours.

Anticipated positive impact to the local economy and expansion of the property tax base. The annual property tax for 322 Santa Fe Avenue is currently \$84.14. Upon completion, the assessed rate will obviously be much higher and contribute to the tax base of the community.

Jobs retained and created by the proposed project. The habilitation of the Chestnut has already provided 100’s of hours of work to construction labor in La Junta and it is anticipated that skilled trades people as well as thousands of additional construction hours will be needed to complete the project. Labor will continue to be provided by our company, Carpe Construction, and our business practices over the past 4 years demonstrate a commitment to using local labor, contractors and vendors whenever available. We currently pay our crew members \$15-22 per hour. Once completed, the project will continue to require property management and landscape management which will contribute to the local economy.

Strengthening, enhancing or diversifying the business community within the LJURA. The Chestnut Apartments will provide 11 units of housing to the La Junta community as well as a unique short-term rental option to attract visitors to our community. Because of the location, we anticipate professionals from the District Attorney and Public Defender’s offices will be attracted to the Chestnut as a housing option as well as individuals seeking employment at the hospital, college, railroad or many other local organizations and entities.

Timeline of This Project (from application)

May 1, 2024 – Application submitted

June 5, 2024 – Application revised and resubmitted

- Within one week of receiving notice of project approval, windows will be ordered.
- Windows, on average, take 6-10 weeks from being ordered to being delivered.
- Within two weeks of windows being delivered, a crew would be moved to the job to install windows. Installation would be completed 2-3 weeks upon initiating installation.

Potential timeline

Date TBD – LJ URA notified that project is funded

One week later – windows are ordered

6-10 weeks later – windows are delivered

1 week after delivery – crews begin installation

3-4 weeks after delivery – Chestnut Apartments have windows!

After the Board asked questions of the applicant, the following motion was made.

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CHESTNUT APARTMENTS (RIKHOF) PROPOSAL FOR AN URBAN RENEWAL GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,000: Monroy

SECOND: Roberson

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

D. Urban Renewal Director:

- Created an Economic Development report to be discussed at City Council.
- Police Department recently received a donation from the Colorado Health & Finance Authority for almost \$19,000 for e-bikes and extra batteries.

E. Governing Body Comments:

1. Toni Madrid: We need to remember that we all have an opinion when we are making these decisions and we need to respect everybody's individual opinion whether or not its differing from your own.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Nancy Bennett, Chairperson