

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY

CALL TO ORDER: The La Junta Urban Renewal Authority Board of Commissioners held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 4:16 p.m. at the CORE Center. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Bennett.

Board Members Present

Absent

Joe Ayala
Nancy Bennett
Christine Coffield
Trevor Herasingh
T.J. Martinez
Justin Miller

Rebecca Goodwin

Also present: Cynthia Nieb, Economic/Urban Renewal Director
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk/UR Secretary
Bette McFarren, Rocky Ford Gazette

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

There was no citizen participation.

LA JUNTA URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY APPLICATIONS: Each of the four candidates submitted the following applications. Each Board member also had the opportunity to ask additional questions of each candidate.

VANCE JOHNSON

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal Authorities?
I've studied the website, chooselj.com, and I am familiar with the concept and associated duties of an urban renewal authority commissioner. Specifically, the authority focuses on safety and blight within the Tax Increment Finance District, and that focus can take many forms within the public/private realm.
2. What do you know about Certified Local Governments?
Per the chooselj.com website, I am aware that the CLG is responsible for preserving our local culture and material culture. I am looking forward to the results of the downtown historic preservation survey, which will assist the community in determining our historic context and buildings worth preserving in the downtown.
3. What do you think the Authority/Commission should focus on in the near future?
As a recipient of a MSOB grant, I have to say that I like the direction that the Authority/Commission is moving; private/public partnerships that make a big impact are important. I also like the Authority partnership with the six-county housing

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development: resources were leveraged to better the entire community. Instead of a piecemeal approach to improving the TIF district, LJURA is partnering with programs that make a huge difference to many stakeholders.

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

I think I've demonstrated that I love La Junta by moving here from Los Angeles and investing (and improving) two vital businesses and purchasing one additional downtown building. I know what it takes to make a business enterprise thrive and to rehabilitate a building. Moving a building from blight to success is something with which I have first-hand experience.

ADAM RUMPF

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal Authorities?

I know that URAs are funded through property taxes and are responsible for mitigating blight and safety concerns in the TIF district through public/private partnerships. I am familiar with the LJ URA/CLG website at chooselj.com. I am also aware that the LJ URA has been responsible for assisting with the MSOB Program to promote rehabilitation (and the elimination of blight) in the downtown and that its donation of properties to a development company will be instrumental in providing much needed workforce housing in the municipality.

2. What do you know about Certified Local Governments?

The LJCLG program is currently working on a downtown historic survey which will be a baseline of local historic building history and possibly lead to district designation.

3. What do you think the Authority/Commission should focus on in the near future?

I think the Authority/Commission should continue working with programs that build upon rehabilitation and the elimination of blight.

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

As a contractor/developer and downtown building owner, I am very aware of the challenges facing all of us in eliminating blight downtown. I think I have useful knowledge and experience as an MSOB recipient as to what can assist local building owners in rehabilitating their buildings and improving our downtown.

DANIEL HORTON

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal Authorities?

Created by statute or ordinance, Urban Renewal Authorities (URA) play an important role in improving and revitalizing areas within a city. For example, URAs may relocate businesses, re-purpose neighborhoods, renovate or demolish blighted structures, or repurchase property for government or public use.

Generally, URAs help with community sprawl and residential communities by allowing local governments to focus their investments and encourage public/private development. Usually, this is accomplished collaboratively (public/private partnerships) to reduce project costs and increase growth in affected areas.

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The Authorities behind urban renewal execute within statutory rules and local ordinance. And through tax increment financing from successful URA projects, Authorities can set aside monetary gains from these projects.

Here, the La Junta URA directed monies to remove storage buildings and designated empty lots for future parks and other public/private use possibilities. Specifically, La Junta worked with environmental protection agencies (EPA) to rid the City of blighted and environmentally compromised buildings by purchasing the property and working with EPAs for clean-up. Thus, the City utilized Urban Renewal Law, local ordinances, and national resources to rehabilitate and address unsafe and hazardous buildings and lands.

Therefore, although limited in experience, academically, I know the general legal framework by which URAs operate to accomplish their urban renewal goals.

2. What do you know about Certified Local Governments?

I know that Certified Local Governments (CLG) is a program established under the National Historic Preservation Act and administered by the National Park Service. The result is a partnership between local governments, state preservation offices, and the National Park Service.

I know that La Junta achieved this status in 2018 through its Urban Renewal Authority (Authority) in conjunction with La Junta's Historic Preservation Advisory Board (board) and their commitment to protecting La Junta's historic properties. Further, CLGs receive 10% of funding from the Historic Preservation Fund and a host of guidelines for its use.

Here, La Junta established a local preservation program, a preservation ordinance, a qualified review board, maintained historic properties, and encouraged public participation. And with all members serving without compensation, the Board can focus its resources and inspire commitment.

Locally, the role requires the administration of local preservation laws, maintaining an inventory of historic property, participating in the National Register Process, and adhering to minimum standards as required by federal, state, and local rules.

3. What do you think the Authority/Commission should focus on in the near future?

Conserving natural and cultural resources, bringing new life to downtown by integrating historic preservation into land-use planning such as housing, and increasing tourism.

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

My educational background includes a Political Science Bachelors, a Public Administration Masters, and a Juris Doctorate. My experience includes junior legal associate in criminal and civil law, Chief Financial Officer of Young Black and 'N

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Business, former Vice President and Operations Chair of the San Diego Urban League Young Professionals, and F.B.I. Community Relations Council Member.

Thus, my education and experience have prepared me to appropriately research community goals and legal issues, analyze the same under existing facts and present the information clearly and concisely for public consumption whereby decisions can be made. My professionalism, tact, and diplomacy allow for tranquil communication and collaboration with others.

LILY SWEIKERT

1. What do you know about Urban Renewal Authorities?

Urban Renewal Authorities are public/private partnerships authorized by Colorado law (§31-25-104) to restore and redevelop areas of “blight.” Blighted properties are those that look like slums that meet 4 of 11 criteria specified in the laws. A key part of Urban Renewal Authorities is the ability to use tax increment financing (TIF). TIF is a tool that allows the local authority to collect taxes on the future improved property.

2. What do you know about Certified Local Governments?

Certified Local Governments facilitate state and local governments to partner with the federal government in a mutual commitment to preserve the historic built environment according to national historic preservation standards. Basically, CLGs help local authorities protect historic properties. As La Junta is a history city, there are many properties embodying the history of the local people that should be preserved.

3. What do you think the Authority/Commission should focus on in the near future?

Being relatively new to La Junta (I moved here last year), I would like to first hear what you’re currently working on. My initial observations of the city are that there is an overflow of refuse on private properties. I would love to help brainstorm and execute creative efforts to help the residents of La Junta clean up their properties.

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

I am a service-oriented person. I currently serve our Nation leading the natural and cultural resource and recreation programs at John Martin Reservoir for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. My professional vocation is conserving the environment, which has led me to earning a master and a doctorate applying social science to better understand environmental behaviors. I have excellent critical thinking and problem solving skills and am able to navigate contentious issues with diplomacy. I have years of experience working with divided groups to advance controversial issues in the common interest. As a new home-owning resident of La Junta, I’m eager to help improve the quality of life for the residents in this place that is now my home.

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MOTION TO MOVE INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING POSITIONS RELATIVE TO MATTERS THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS, DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR NEGOTIATIONS, AND/OR INSTRUCTING NEGOTIATORS, UNDER C.R.S. §24-6-402 (4)(e): Ayala

SECOND: Miller

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously

The Urban Renewal Authority Board went into Executive Session beginning at 4:59 p.m. and ending at 5:10 p.m.

MINUTES: September 9, 2021

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the September 9, 2021 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Justin Miller, seconded by Trevor Herasingh, that the minutes for September 9, 2021 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES: October 14, 2021 (no quorum)

Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any corrections or additions to be made to the October 14, 2021 minutes. Hearing none, a motion was made by Trevor Herasingh, seconded by T.J. Martinez, that the minutes for October 14, 2021 be approved as published. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS: October 2021

The October 2021 financial statements were provided for the Board's review.

BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

- Total cash at the end of July was \$240,787.39.
- Notes receivable was \$7,056.61
- There is one investment for \$109,980.43.
- Total assets are \$357,824.43 for the month ending October 2021.

LIABILITIES

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

STATEMENT OF REVENUE/EXPENDITURES

BUDGET TO ACTUAL

Bank interest in the amount of \$1.88 was received. \$1,224.42 was received for September from Otero County for the Tax Increment. Southeast Colorado Power was paid \$32.63 for the Welcome Sign. Second and third quarter payments were made to the City of La Junta for the director salary. \$46,615.10 was given to MSOB for cash match. First round checks were distributed by the City. The 2021 budget is \$182,400 less \$125,695.60 in expenses and \$46,615.10 (MSOB PYMT #2) in encumbrances leaves a budget remaining of \$10,089.69.

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Chairperson Bennett asked if there were any questions or corrections regarding the October financial statements. Hearing none, a motion was made by Justin Miller, seconded by Joe Ayala, that the financial statements for October 2021 be approved as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

PROJECT UPDATES:

A. PLAZA BUILDING

Chairperson Bennett: We have received another State Historical grant in the amount of \$250,000.00. We have applied for a \$2 Million grant and should know after December 16th.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Urban Renewal Director:

- Urban Renewal gave \$100,000.00 for the MSOB cash match. Klein Maker Space will probably be done by the end of January.
- The Plaza Building and the parking lot are the only properties Urban Renewal still own. The Board turned over the other properties for the housing development project (Michael Yerman). The site at 4th & Hayes has been integral for them moving forward. It should begin in the next few months.
- City Engineer Mike Weber will be attending our next meeting to talk about how the City and Urban Renewal can work together on blight.
- We have officially become a Certified Creative District.
- The Arkansas Valley Film Festival will be held December 17th and 18th from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. We should have around twenty applicants.
- Joe wants Cynthia to start a blog.

B. Governing Body Comments:

1. Joe Ayala: Invited the Board on the walking tour of the downtown area when it gets scheduled. There will be two different tours. One will be of the active businesses and the other will be vacant buildings.

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

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Melanie R. Scofield, Secretary

Nancy Bennett, Chairperson