

CITY OF ROCKY FORD - CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Council Chambers | 203 S. Main Street, Rocky Ford, CO

February 24, 2026

REGULAR MEETING: 6:00pm

Rocky Ford City Council met in Council Chambers on Tuesday, February 24, 2026. Mayor Duane Gurulé called the meeting to order.

Those present at roll call were:

Mayor: Duane Gurulé

Councilmembers: Nicole Roberts, Thomas Mullins, Robert Barron, and Nicholas Martinez.

Councilmember Johnny McMurray joined the meeting by Zoom at 6:15pm during Item 7.1 Approval of Agenda.

Councilmembers absent: Nanette Mosby

City Staff: City Manager Stacey Milenski, City Clerk Michelle Grasmick, Police Chief Matthew Wallace, Fire Chief Ray Gonzales, Wildland Fire Captain Colin Brown, Cody Kurtz, Autumn Akers, Megan Trujillo (volunteer fire). City Attorney Dan Harvey was in attendance online by Zoom.

Public attendance: JR Thompson, Gary Reed, James Budnick, Nicholas Martinez II.

Mayor Duane Gurulé led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilmember Roberts read aloud the City of Rocky Ford's Mission Statement.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

5.1 James Budnick, a county resident living outside Rocky Ford, reiterated a request first made in 2025 for Council to consider an ordinance or amendment to the municipal code restricting individuals with felony convictions from serving on City Council or as Mayor. He expressed concern that the request has not appeared on a work session agenda despite his continued attendance at meetings.

Councilmember Nic Martinez, speaking as a citizen, expressed opposition to Colorado Senate Bill 97, stating that it would decriminalize prostitution statewide, preempt local authority, pose risks to public safety, and increase vulnerabilities to human trafficking, and he urged the City to stand against the bill.

Councilmember Robert Barron, speaking as a citizen, stated that the community has elected its mayors through due process and expressed concern about discussions regarding limiting eligibility based on felony convictions, noting that all communities face challenges and that all residents matter.

An anonymous Zoom participant identifying as “Batman” expressed opposition to Senate Bill 97, congratulated Omar Ocana on winning a state wrestling championship and suggested Council recognize him at a future meeting.

6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Two amendments to the Consent Agenda were presented: the removal of Item 6.2 Approval of Ordinance No. 995, which was moved to Item 10.2 under Old Business, and the correction of the meeting minutes date from February 3 to February 10.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Consent Agenda with amendments. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Barron.

YES: Barron, Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Gurulé

NO: None

ABSENT: McMurray, Mosby

Motion carried: 5-0

Consent Agenda Items approved were:

6.1 Approval of Council meeting minutes from February 10, 2026 – Regular meeting at 6:00pm

6.3 Approval of Ordinance No. 996 – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 7 of the Rocky Ford Municipal Code Concerning Animals at Large, **on first reading**

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

7.1 Councilmember Nic Martinez requested the addition of a resolution opposing Senate Bill 97 to the agenda. Mayor Gurulé stated the item is scheduled for discussion at the March 17 work session. Councilmember Martinez requested it be added to the current agenda, prompting extensive discussion regarding agenda procedures, public notice requirements, and the 90-day timeframe for placing proposed items on an agenda. City Attorney Dan Harvey advised that items requiring Council action must appear on the posted agenda at least 24 hours in advance.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Agenda with the addition of 10.2 Approval of Ordinance No. 995 under Old Business. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Barron.

Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Barron, Gurulé

NO: McMurray, Mullins, Martinez

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion failed: 3-3

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve the Agenda with the addition of the Resolution opposing Senate Bill 97 for discussion. The motion was seconded by Councilmember McMurray.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Martinez, McMurray

NO: Roberts, Barron, Gurulé

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion failed: 3-3

Councilmember Mullins motioned to approve the Agenda as presented with the understanding that the Resolution will be on the Agenda for the next regular meeting. Councilmember Barron seconded the motion. Mayor Gurulé stated that this topic would be scheduled for the Work Session on March 17th. Councilmember Mullins withdrew the motion.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Agenda with the understanding that the Resolution opposing Senate Bill 97 will be on the March 10th agenda. Councilmember Martinez seconded the motion.

YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron

NO: McMurray, Mullins, Gurulé

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion failed: 3-3

Councilmember Mullins motioned to reconsider the motion to approve the Agenda with the addition of 10.2 under Old Business and addition of the Resolution opposing Senate Bill 97 for discussion under New Business. Motion dies for lack of a second.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to reconsider the motion to approve the Agenda with the addition of 10.2 under Old Business and the understanding that the Resolution opposing Senate Bill 97 will be on the March 10th agenda for discussion and possible action. Councilmember Barron seconded the motion.

YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, McMurray

NO: Mullins, Gurulé

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion carried: 4-2

8. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, PROCLAMATIONS

8.1 None

9. PUBLIC HEARING

9.1 None

10. OLD BUSINESS

10.1 Discussion – Memorandum of Understanding/Lease with Arkansas Valley Exposition and Fair Association

City Attorney Dan Harvey recommended combining the Memorandum of Understanding and the Lease with the Arkansas Valley Exposition and Fair Association into a single document. The consolidated document would include the lease and an attachment outlining the responsibilities of both the City and the Fair Board. If changes were needed in the future, it would be much simpler to amend the exhibits rather than revise the entire agreement. Harvey will make the necessary edits, and the revised document will be presented to the Fair Board. Once approved by the Fair Board, it will be brought back to Council for consideration.

10.2 Approval of Ordinance No. 995 – An Ordinance of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado approving a franchise fee for City Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise, on first reading

This item was moved from the Consent Agenda to address a needed correction to the dates. City Attorney Dan Harvey noted that the second reading date must be updated to March 24, 2026, instead of March 10, 2026, to allow sufficient time for the required public notice in the local newspaper.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve Ordinance No. 995 – An Ordinance of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado approving a franchise fee for City Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise, on first reading with the amendment of the second reading date to March 24, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Barron.

Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Barron, Gurulé

NO: Martinez, McMurray, Mullins

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion failed: 3-3

Councilmember Mullins motioned to table discussion on Ordinance 995. Motion dies for lack of a second.

Council discussed whether amendments could make the ordinance acceptable or whether it would be preferable for the ordinance not to move forward.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to reconsider motion to table discussion on Ordinance 995. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Roberts, Barron,

NO: McMurray, Martinez, Gurulé

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion failed: 3-3

Council continued discussion regarding what amendments or changes might be needed to reach a consensus on the ordinance. It was noted that it was likely no progress would be made without the full Council present for a final vote.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to reconsider motion to table discussion on Ordinance 995. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Roberts, Barron, Gurulé

NO: Martinez, McMurray

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion carried: 4-2

11. NEW BUSINESS

11.1 Discuss/Review/Award – Catlin Canal and Rocky Ford Ditch Shares

A total of 179.3 Catlin Canal shares and 5.661 Rocky Ford Ditch shares were available for lease. Four sealed bids were submitted by the deadline. All the bids received were for Catlin Canal shares; no bids were received for the Rocky Ford Ditch shares. The bids were as follows: Bid 1 – 5 shares at \$250/share; Bid 2 – 22 shares at \$86.66/share; Bid 3 – 20 shares at \$80/share; and Bid 4 – 30 shares at \$65/share.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the four sealed bids as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Mullins, Gurulé

NO: McMurray

ABSENT: Mosby

Motion carried: 5-1

12. STAFF REPORTS

12.1 City Manager – Stacey Milenski summarized written City Manager’s report to Council. Milenski included updates that occurred after the report was written.

12.2 Fire Chief – Ray Gonzales – End of Year Report

Fire Chief Ray Gonzales summarized the Fire, EMS, and Wildland Fire Departments’ 2025 annual report, noting increases in call volume with 2,227 total calls, including 98 city fire calls, 116 rural fire calls, 1,192 EMS calls, and 821 non-emergent calls. EMS calls are split roughly evenly between city and rural areas. Chief Gonzales explained that the City provides EMS coverage across a large region—including areas outside the Rural Fire Protection District that do not pay a supporting mill levy—and insurance reimbursement averages only 30–40%. He also reported that the department maintains an ISO rating of 3 in the city and 3Y in the rural area, operates as an all-hazards department with 22 volunteers and 11 full-time staff plus the fire chief, and is the only municipal agency in the Arkansas Valley providing paramedic-level service on all three shifts.

13. COUNCIL REPORTS

Martinez – Reported that he has been assisting at the library over the past week. Noted that the swimming pool will see minor fee increases, including a small adjustment to group passes, which remain

reasonably priced. Attended the Arts Commission meeting as a citizen and will continue to be available at the library throughout the week.

Barron – *Attended Arts Commission meeting last Tuesday. The next meeting is scheduled for March 17th at 6:00pm. I Can Only Imagine 2 will be showing for a second weekend, and Hoppers will be featured next weekend. Several suggestions were discussed regarding ways to support the theater. Donations are still needed to meet the matching-funds requirement for the awarded grant.*

McMurray – *Absent – technical difficulties on Zoom*

Mullins – *Several previously missing Native American artifacts have been located. Documentation was also found confirming that the Museum is in compliance with NAGPRA. All tribes that may have had a connection to the artifacts have been contacted. The only remaining step is to properly secure the items, as they are not appropriate for display.*

Mosby – *Absent*

Roberts – *Upcoming events include Arkansas Valley Community Cancer Support Group Chili Dinner Fundraiser (Feb 28), Lions Club Pancake Supper (March 2), and Chamber Easter Brunch and Egg Hunt (April 4). Rocky Free Kitchen next meal on March 4th – baked hamburger macaroni and cheese, strawberry shortcake. The Gobin Building is pretty booked for events around graduation and has been for some time.*

Gurulé – *Summarized written Mayor’s report provided to Council.*

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

14.1 Nicholas Martinez II asked why the proposed resolution was denied placement on the agenda, noting that the request had been emailed to Council two to three days prior and referencing the 24-hour public-notice requirement mentioned by the City Attorney.

Mayor Gurulé explained that Council operates under established rules and procedures that available to review on the City’s website. Items requiring Council action must be publicly noticed on the agenda at least 24 hours in advance; because the proposed resolution was not posted, the public did not receive the required notice. He added that Councilmembers may submit items to the Mayor and City Manager for placement on a future agenda within 90 days

James Budnick asked whether a cost analysis exists showing how much the City spends to maintain the fairgrounds, including the taxpayer investment and any return on that investment, and whether such information is available in a financial breakdown or spreadsheet.

Mayor Gurulé responded that the City tracks both expenses and revenue associated with the fairgrounds. He noted that, although no formal market or return-on-investment analysis has been completed, the fairgrounds provide public benefit and economic impact through increased visitation and local spending. He added that the City’s budget is available on the City’s website and that additional budget and audit documents can be accessed through DOLA.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

15.1 For discussion of a personnel matter under C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(f) and not involving: any specific employees who have requested discussion of the matter in open session; any member of this body or any

elected official; the appointment of any person to fill an office of this body or of an elected official; or personnel policies that do not require the discussion of matters personal to particular employees; City Manager Performance Evaluation

Councilmember Roberts motioned to go into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins. Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Mullins, Gurulé

NO: None

ABSENT: McMurray, Mosby

Motion carried: 5-0

Mayor Gurulé recessed the regular meeting at 8:23pm to go into Executive Session.

Those going into Executive Session were City Manager Stacey Milenski, Mayor Duane Gurulé, Councilmembers Nicole Roberts, Thomas Mullins, Robert Barron, and Nicholas Martinez.

Executive Session 15.1 started at 8:27pm and ended at 8:58pm.

The regular meeting reconvened at 9:01pm.

Mayor Gurulé reported, for the record, that if any person who participated in the executive sessions believed that any substantial discussion of any matters not included in the motion to go into the executive session occurred during the executive session, or that any improper action occurred during the executive session in violation of the Open Meeting Law, that they should please state their concerns for the record. There were none.

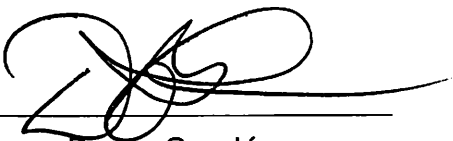
16. UPCOMING MEETINGS

16.1 March 3, 2026, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm City Council Work Session

16.2 March 10, 2026, at 6:00pm - City Council Regular Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Mayor Gurulé adjourned the meeting at 9:01pm.



Mayor Duane Gurulé



City Clerk, Michelle Grasmick