CITY OF ROCKY FORD – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

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

August 25, 2026

REGULAR MEETING: 6:00pm

Rocky Ford City Council met in Council Chambers on Tuesday, August 25, 2026. Mayor Duane Gurulé called the meeting to order.

Those present at roll call were:

Mayor: Duane Gurulé

Councilmembers: Nicholas Martinez, Robert Barron, Joe Pentlicki, Thomas Mullins, and Nicole Roberts. Councilmembers Nanette Mosby was in attendance by Zoom for roll call, but lost connectivity before Consent Agenda.

City Staff: City Manager Stacey Milenski, City Clerk Michelle Grasmick, Police Chief Matthew Wallace, Public Works Director Rick Long, Library Director Sonia Puga, Public Works Foreman Cuco Ruiz. City Attorney Dan Harvey was in attendance by Zoom.

Public attendance: JR Thompson, Gary Reed, Susan Jung, James Budnick, Johnny McMurray, Brian Lovato, Tom Martin.

Mayor Duane Gurulé led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Martin, resident, expressed surprise at the mayoral resignation and emphasized that Rocky Ford is built on its citizens and community, not any one individual. He encouraged all interested residents to apply for the mayoral vacancy, stating that ordinary citizens are qualified to serve and expressing hope for a strong applicant pool.

James Budnick, an Otero County resident, asked about the City's process for approving new businesses and developments. Citing data centers that have purchased large parcels of land in other communities, he asked whether Rocky Ford has protocols or public notification requirements to ensure residents are informed of significant business developments before they are established.

Johnny McMurray, Ward II resident, commented on the Mayor's resignation and noted that he was elected through a fair process and received strong voter support. McMurray acknowledged the Mayor's service, dedication, and contributions during his time in office, and stated that those efforts should be recognized regardless of differing opinions about his tenure.

Anonymous Zoom Participant ("Batman") commented on the mayoral transition, expressed support for respectful and nonpartisan leadership, endorsed a potential candidate for the mayoral vacancy, and encouraged community members and officials to engage in respectful dialogue regardless of differing viewpoints.

6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.
Voting results were:
YES: Barron, Pentlicki, Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

Consent Agenda Items approved were:
6.1 **Approval of Council meeting minutes from August 11, 2026** – Regular meeting at 6:00pm
6.2 **IGA with Otero County Clerk & Recorder – General Election 2026**

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve the Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Pentlicki.
Voting results were:
YES: Pentlicki, Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

8. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, PROCLAMATIONS

8.1 None

9. PUBLIC HEARING

9.1 None

10. OLD BUSINESS

10.1 Discussion/Action – **Ordinance No. 999** – An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado, Amending Various Provisions of the City of Rocky Ford Municipal Code Concerning Surrender of Animals, Possession of Marijuana, Concealed Weapons and Operation of Municipal Parks, **on first reading**

The proposed code revisions were previously brought forward by Police Chief Matthew Wallace which were further discussed at a Council work session and subsequently reviewed by the City Attorney. Attorney Dan Harvey explained the revisions, noting that most changes align municipal code provisions with state law, including updates related to underage marijuana offenses, sentencing flexibility, substance abuse education requirements, and added definitions for clarification. Harvey also noted that proposed park-hours regulations remained largely unchanged from the version submitted for review. No discussion followed.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve Ordinance No. 999 – An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado, Amending Various Provisions of the City of Rocky Ford Municipal Code Concerning Surrender of Animals, Possession of Marijuana, Concealed Weapons and Operation of Municipal Parks, on first reading. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.
Voting results were:
YES: Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Pentlicki, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

<u>11. NEW BUSINESS</u>
11.1 Discussion/Action – **Asphalt Streets Projects**

Public Works Director Rick Long presented updated measurements, obtained using a new measuring wheel, for proposed asphalt street projects on 18th Street/Lori Lane, portions of 15th Street, and portions of 4th Street. Long estimated paving costs at $3.75 to $4.00 per square foot, for a total project cost of approximately $327,000 to $349,000. He reported that more than $400,000 is currently available for street improvements, with projected funding expected to exceed $600,000 by year-end. Long also confirmed that the proposed projects involve existing dirt streets and are not anticipated to require significant utility or infrastructure work after paving.

Council discussed project prioritization and reviewed several sidewalk-related needs, including a potential sidewalk connection to the fairgrounds, ADA considerations, and the distinction between repair and replacement projects versus new sidewalk installations. It was noted that sidewalk improvements along portions of Highway 50 (Elm Avenue and Swink Avenue) may be addressed through the Thriving Communities plan.

Councilmember Mullins motioned to approve the project list submitted by Public Works Director Rick Long. Councilmember Martinez seconded the motion.

Discussion continued and Council sought clarification regarding multiple project lists that had been provided, which included both asphalt and sidewalk projects. Following clarification, Council agreed that the agenda item pertained only to asphalt street projects. The projects identified for prioritization were 18th Street/Lori Lane, 15th Street between Pine Avenue and Washington Avenue, and 4th Street from Locust Street north to the railroad tracks. Council expressed confidence in the recommendations of the Public Works Director and agreed the projects were financially feasible. Consensus was reached to proceed with the asphalt street improvements and defer further discussion of sidewalk projects to a future work session.

Councilmember Mullins amended the motion to exclude sidewalk projects. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.
Voting results were:
YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Pentlicki, Mullins, Gurulé

NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

11.2 Discussion/Action – **Recommendation from Museum Board to charge admission to Museum**

Council discussed a recommendation from the Museum Board to begin charging admission as part of ongoing efforts to improve the museum's fiscal sustainability. Councilmember Mullins reported that the Board unanimously supported a proposed $5 admission fee for visitors aged 12 and older. The curator would be responsible for collecting admission fees and tracking visitor counts. Discussion clarified that any revenue generated would be deposited with the City and applied against museum operating costs rather than retained directly by the museum.

Council discussed whether an admission fee would deter visitors, noting that many donations currently come from out-of-town visitors who may already be accustomed to paying museum admission fees. It was also suggested that a fee could discourage non-purposeful visitors. Additional discussion Council considered options for fee waivers for individuals unable to pay and reviewed how other Boards, such as the Arts Commission and Swimming Pool Commission, are authorized to establish their own fees. Consensus emerged that an ordinance amendment to the Museum Board section of the municipal code may be necessary to grant the Board authority to establish and manage admission fees in the future.

Councilmember Mullins motioned to approve the $5 admission fee for the museum. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Pentlicki.

Council continued discussions focused on whether Council's role should be to authorize the museum's ability to charge admission rather than establish a specific fee amount. City Attorney Dan Harvey advised that any admission fee should be structured to offset museum operating costs rather than generate a profit. Harvey also noted that if Council approves an admission fee, the City's fee schedule would need to be amended before the fee could be implemented.

Councilmember Mullins amended the motion to remove the specific fee amount and instead authorize the museum to charge admission. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Pentlicki.
Voting results were:
YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Pentlicki, Mullins, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

11.3 Discussion/Action – **Recommendation to appoint New Library Board member – Briana Maes**

Library Director Sonia Puga presented a recommendation to appoint Briana Maes to the Library Board. Puga spoke in support of Maes' letter of interest, stating that she possesses the leadership qualities and commitment necessary to serve the library and community effectively.

Councilmember Martinez motioned to appoint Briana Maes to the Library Board. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Roberts.

Voting results were:
YES: Martinez, Barron, Pentlicki, Mullins, Roberts, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

11.4 Discussion/Action – **OeHI Library Grant Purchase Authorization**

Library Director Sonia Puga reported that the library's OeHI (Office of eHealth Innovation) grant project plan was submitted on August 12th and has been approved. The library is anticipating receipt of a $25,000 grant award. Council considered authorizing Puga to make grant-related purchases without requiring individual Council approval for expenditures over $5,000. Planned purchases include computer workstations, laptops, and telehealth equipment to support project implementation.

Councilmember Mullins motioned to approve library grant purchase authorization. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Pentlicki.
Voting results were:
YES: Barron, Pentlicki, Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

11.5 **Next Steps to Appoint New Mayor**

Council discussed next steps following the resignation of Mayor Gurulé, effective August 31st. City Attorney Dan Harvey advised that letters of interest for the mayoral vacancy may be accepted beginning September 1st and explained that State statute requires Council to appoint a qualified replacement within 30 days of the effective resignation date. Harvey further clarified that mayoral vacancies must be filled within 30 days, compared to the 60-day period allowed to fill Council vacancies.

Discussion focused on the timeline for declaring the vacancy, soliciting letters of interest, and appointing a successor. Eligible candidates must be at least 18 years of age, a registered voter, and have resided within the city limits for the preceding 12 months. The appointed mayor will serve until the next regular municipal election in November 2027. Council reached consensus to hold a special meeting at the beginning of the September 1st Work Session to formally declare the vacancy and initiate the appointment process, with the goal of selecting a replacement within the statutory deadline.

11.6 **Appointment of New Mayor Pro Tem**

Council discussed the resignation of Councilmember Mosby as Mayor Pro Tem and the need to appoint a new Mayor Pro Tem to serve as the presiding officer during the upcoming mayoral vacancy and appointment process. City Clerk Michelle Grasmick clarified that Mosby’s resignation applied only to the Mayor Pro Tem position and not to Council membership. Council solicited nominations, and both Councilmembers Martinez and Pentlicki expressed interest in serving as Mayor Pro Tem.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to appoint Joe Pentlicki as Mayor Pro Tem. The motion was seconded by Mayor Gurulé.
Voting results were:
YES: Mullins, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
ABSTAIN: Pentlicki
Motion carried: 5-0

<u>12. STAFF REPORTS</u>
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 **Library Director** – Sonia Puga
Library Director Sonia Puga reported that the library's new digital platform, Hoopla, is now live, providing patrons with free access to thousands of eBooks and audiobooks using a library card. The library received a donation of approximately 70 Easy Reader books from Crowley County School Library and added 72 adult and family DVDs to its collection through community donations. Puga also provided an update on donated furnishings and equipment expected from Wilkinson Public Library in mid-September, including shelving, tables, chairs, children's furnishings, and toys.

Additional updates included the availability of radon detectors for public checkout, continued monthly assistance through Connect for Health Colorado, the start of the Small Town Project after-school program, the return of Story Time, and ongoing LEGO Club activities. Puga encouraged residents to obtain library cards during National Library Card Sign-Up Month and highlighted available mental health resources in recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness and Recovery Month.

<u>13. COUNCIL REPORTS</u>
Councilmembers provided updates and reports on their respective boards and community events. Mayor Gurulé also provided his Mayor's report, a written report was not provided in advance of the meeting.

<u>14. PUBLIC COMMENT</u>
James Budnick, an Otero County resident, commented on Mayor Gurulé's resignation and expressed disagreement with the Mayor's political views and policy positions. Budnick shared his perspectives on government, community values, religion, and constitutional rights, and stated his support for a future mayoral appointment that he believes reflects the priorities of the community.

Councilmember Barron thanked Mayor Gurulé for his service to the community, recognizing his leadership, involvement in local programs and initiatives, and commitment to public service. Barron acknowledged the challenges of serving in an unpaid elected position and wished Gurulé and his family well.

<u>15. EXECUTIVE SESSION</u>
15.1 None

16. UPCOMING MEETINGS
16.1 September 1, 2026, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm City Council Work Session
16.2 September 8, 2026, at 6:00pm - City Council Regular Meeting

ADJOURN
There being no further business, Mayor Gurulé adjourned the meeting at 7:41pm.

Joe Pentlicki
Mayor Pro Tem, Joe Pentlicki

Michelle Grasmick
City Clerk, Michelle Grasmick