CITY OF ROCKY FORD - CITY COUNCIL MEETING

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

January 13, 2026

REGULAR MEETING: 6:00pm

Rocky Ford City Council met in Council Chambers on Tuesday, January 13, 2026. Mayor Duane Gurulé called the meeting to order.

Those present at roll call were:

Mayor: Duane Gurulé

Councilmembers: Robert Barron, Nicholas Martinez, and Nicole Roberts. Thomas Mullins was in attendance by Zoom.

Councilmembers absent: Nanette Mosby

City Staff: City Manager Stacey Milenski, City Clerk Michelle Grasmick, Police Chief Matt Wallace, Officer Robert Powell, Officer Michael Gonzales, Sergeant Timothy Moore, Fire Chief Ray Gonzales, Wildland Fire Captain Colin Brown. City Attorney Dan Harvey was in attendance online by Zoom.

Public attendance: JR Thompson, Gary Reed, Johnny McMurray, James Budnick, Ariel Camacho, and Micaela Camacho. Multiple unnamed viewers on Zoom.

Mayor Duane Gurulé led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Duane Gurulé read aloud the City of Rocky Ford's Mission Statement.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

An anonymous Zoom participant using the name "Batman" encouraged the council to choose a strong appointee for the vacant seat and urged them not to engage in any improper actions during open or executive sessions.

6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Roberts moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Barron.

Voting results were:

YES: Barron, Martinez, Roberts, Mullins, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 5-0
Consent Agenda Items approved were:
6.1 Approval of Council meeting minutes from December 9, 2025 – Regular meeting at 6:00pm
6.2 Approval of Council meeting minutes from December 15, 2025 – Special meeting at 6:00pm
6.3 Resolution No. 1 – Series 2026 - A Resolution Setting Regular Meeting Dates for the City of Rocky Ford City Council and Setting the Official Location of Posting Meeting Notices for the Year 2026
6.4 Approval of the 2026 City of Rocky Ford Employee Holiday Schedule

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
7.1 Councilmember Roberts moved to approve the Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.
Voting results were:
YES: Martinez, Roberts, Mullins, Barron, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 5-0

8. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, PROCLAMATIONS
8.1 **Introduction of New Police Officer - Michael Gonzales**
Police Chief Matthew Wallace introduced new officer Michael Gonzales. Officer Gonzales, originally from the Rocky Ford area, successfully completed the full application process and was sponsored by a grant to attend the Otero Law Enforcement Academy in La Junta. He completed the academy and passed his state licensing exam. Officer Gonzales is now in field training with Sergeant Moore as he begins his duties with the Rocky Ford Police Department.

9. PUBLIC HEARING
9.1 None

10. OLD BUSINESS
10.1 Discuss and Review Letters of Interest for Ward II
Two letters of interest were received by the specified deadline: one from former Councilmember Johnny McMurray and one from Dr. Joe Pentlicki. Dr. Pentlicki notified the City that he was traveling abroad for business and would attempt to join via Zoom if internet access allowed. Mr. McMurray attended the meeting in person. Both letters were provided to Council for review prior to the meeting, and Council proceeded with discussion regarding the applicants.

Councilmember Mullins moved to appoint candidate Johnny McMurray to the vacant seat in Ward II. Councilmember Martinez seconded the motion.
Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Mullins, Barron, Martinez
NO: Gurulé
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 4-1

City Clerk Michelle Grasmick administered Oath of Office to Councilmember Johnny McMurray.

<u>11. NEW BUSINESS</u>

11.1 Approve/Disapprove Billing Specialist for Wildland Deployments

Fire Chief Ray Gonzales presented the proposed contractual agreement for billing services associated with the billing specialist position in the 2026 Wildland Program budget. The agreement outlines the scope of work for a contracted (1099) billing specialist who would provide billing support on an as-needed basis. It also includes an incentive structure allowing the contractor to receive a bonus if reimbursement is received within three months of submission to the State of Colorado. Chief Gonzales explained that recent changes by the Colorado Department of Public Safety increased the subrecipient indirect rate, enabling these incentive costs to be covered without financial impact to the City. The contractor would be compensated at $30 per hour, funded through the $30,000 allocated in the Wildland Program budget. The Rural Fire Protection District was also approached regarding potential cost-sharing, pending City Council's decision on the contract. Council reviewed and discussed the proposed agreement.

Councilmember Martinez moved to approve the contract position of Billing Specialist for Wildland Deployments contingent on agreement to cost share with Rocky Ford Rural Fire Protection District. Councilmember Roberts seconded the motion.
Voting results were:
YES: Roberts, Mullins, Barron, Martinez, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSTAIN: McMurray
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 5-1 with one abstention

11.2 Ordinance No. 995 – An Ordinance of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado approving a franchise fee for City Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise

Council extensively discussed Ordinance No. 995, proposing a franchise fee for the Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise Funds. A percentage-based fee was considered more equitable than a flat fee, with 7.7% identified as the amount needed to support the adopted 2026 budget. It was noted that the fee would be incorporated into existing rates and would not independently increase customer bills. Council questioned whether the budget depended on adopting the ordinance. City Attorney Dan Harvey explained that the budget included a $300,000 transfer from the enterprise funds, and the franchise fee is one mechanism to formalize that transfer. Council also discussed sustainability, potential use of a term or sunset provision, and ensuring consistency with other franchise agreements. A revised version of the ordinance will be prepared for a future meeting.

11.3 Letter of Support – OCHD Substance Use Disorder Program
Council considered a request from the Otero County Health Department for a letter of support for a Substance Use Disorder Program grant application funded through opioid settlement resources. Mayor Gurulé explained that the grant application was being submitted on behalf of the Otero County region and sought support from local governments throughout the Arkansas Valley. Council reviewed the proposed letter of support, noted that this was the first such request received, and expressed support for the grant application.

Councilmember Roberts moved to approve signing the Letter of Support. Councilmember Martinez seconded the motion.
Voting results were:
YES: Barron, Martinez, Roberts, Mullins, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSTAIN: McMurray
ABSENT: Mosby
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.*

<u>13. COUNCIL REPORTS</u>
***Martinez** – Reported a strong turnout for the library party and continued participation in the Lego Club. He expressed interest in expanding special youth programming, utilizing full-day Friday opportunities for activities at the library, and gathering community input through a vision board project. Martinez also encouraged greater attendance at the Fireside Chats, noting a willingness to provide meals to increase participation, and emphasized the importance of volunteerism and community engagement.*
***Barron** – Reported that the Arts Commission is expected to meet the following week. He highlighted upcoming movies at the Grand Theatre, including David, SpongeBob, and Song Sung Blue. Barron also encouraged community support for the Grand Theatre through donations, memberships, attendance, rentals, and concessions purchases, noting information previously distributed with utility bills by the Friends of the Grand. He suggested that a similar community support model could be beneficial for the library and emphasized the value of supporting local cultural amenities.*
***McMurray** – Disclosed that he has joined the board for the Rural Fire Protection Board and will have to abstain from any related votes.*
***Mullins** – Reported that the Museum is regaining momentum and moving forward with several new projects aimed at increasing revenue and long-term sustainability. He noted that the Museum recently acquired a sublimation printer and die-cutting equipment and plans to begin producing merchandise for sale, particularly targeting visitors from outside the community. Mullins also discussed partnering with*

the Library to provide custom items at cost for resale and emphasized the goal of making the Museum more self-sustaining and less reliant on future budget allocations.
***Mosby** – Absent*
***Roberts** – Reported that the Chamber Board has not met since November and that its next meeting has been rescheduled for the following Thursday at 6:30pm. She noted that two board seats remain open and encouraged community members to volunteer and become involved. Roberts highlighted several upcoming events, including the Valentine's Day Dance on February 14, the Arkansas Valley Resource Center annual fundraiser on February 21, the Arkansas Valley Community Cancer Support Group chili dinner fundraiser, and the Chamber's Easter Brunch on April 4. She also noted that Chamber membership forms will be distributed in March and expressed enthusiasm for the Chamber's plans and new board members in the coming year.*
***Gurulé** – summarized written Mayor's report to Council*

14. PUBLIC COMMENT

JR Thompson noted that Rocky Ford's franchise fee concept was modeled after practices used by the City of La Junta, explaining that City departments are charged reduced rates for services such as water, sewer, and trash collection as a way of allocating costs between funds, though he noted he was not specifically recommending the practice and was unsure of its overall effectiveness.

15. EXECUTIVE SESSION

15.1 Executive Session pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) to receive legal advice on specific legal questions concerning procedure for complaints

Councilmember Roberts moved to go into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez. Voting results were:
YES: Barron, Martinez, Roberts, Mullins, McMurray, Gurulé
NO: None
ABSENT: Mosby
Motion carried: 6-0

Mayor Gurulé recessed the regular meeting at 8:19pm to go into Executive Session.

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

Executive Session 15.1 started at 8:26pm and ended at 8:47pm.

The regular meeting reconvened at 8:52pm.

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 January 20, 2026, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm City Council Work Session
16.2 January 27, 2026, at 6:00pm - City Council Regular Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Mayor Gurulé adjourned the meeting at 8:53pm.

Mayor Duane Gurulé

City Clerk, Michelle Grasmick