

# CITY OF ROCKY FORD - CITY COUNCIL MEETING

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

**April 14, 2026**

**REGULAR MEETING: 6:00pm**

Rocky Ford City Council met in Council Chambers on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. Mayor Duane Gurulé called the meeting to order.

Those present at roll call were:

Mayor: Duane Gurulé

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

City Staff: City Manager Stacey Milenski, City Clerk Michelle Grasmick, Police Chief Matthew Wallace, Fire Chief Raymond Gonzales, Water/Wastewater Foreman Cody Baylor, Museum Curator Rob Marshall.  
City Attorney Dan Harvey was in attendance online by Zoom.

Public attendance: JR Thompson, Gary Reed, James Budnick, Susan Jung, Joseph Pentlicki, Mike Jurney, Omar Ocana, Emilio Vallejos, Julius Martinez, Marcos Vallejos, Jacob Baca Jr, Adrian Hart, Sarah Dillon.

Mayor Duane Gurulé led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Rob Marshall, Museum Curator, requested that Council consider reinstating Ryan Gates to the Museum Board following the expiration of his term. Marshall stated that Gates is a valuable and willing contributor and noted the historical difficulty of recruiting board volunteers. While expressing support for adherence to museum bylaws limiting board service to four years, Marshall urged Council to consider retaining engaged members when possible and to explore reinstating Gates for the benefit of the museum.

Council acknowledged the request regarding Ryan Gates' potential return to the Museum Board. Council indicated that no immediate decision would be made and that Museum Board bylaws were on the agenda to be discussed later in the evening. Pending clarification of the bylaws and consultation with the

City Attorney, the matter could be brought back for Council direction and possible placement on a future agenda.

JR Thompson, resident, expressed concern that the Colorado Open Meetings Law (OML) was violated in connection with the Emergency Canal Safety Meeting, stating that not enough advance notice was given. Thompson also referenced a prior voter-approved change in the City's form of government from a strong mayor-council structure to a council-city manager form, and suggested Council review the related statutory requirements and operational distinctions.

James Budnick, county resident, reported on recent conversations with individuals from across the political spectrum, including a candidate for governor, regarding concerns about violations of TABOR. He stated that he was directed to an article discussing the use of enterprise fees to avoid TABOR requirements and noted that a coalition of businesses and labor groups is preparing a lawsuit challenging these practices. Budnick asserted that a significant portion of the state is now TABOR-exempt and expressed concern about the impact on taxpayer rights and the use of public funds.

An anonymous Zoom participant identifying as "Batman" requested the reinstatement of Mr. Mullins to the Museum Board, citing his significant service and hours contributed, and criticized the Council's handling of the matter. The commenter also requested an update on the number of applicants for the open City Council seat.

#### **6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mosby.

YES: Barron, Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

Consent Agenda Items approved were:

**6.1 Approval of Council meeting minutes from March 24, 2026** – Regular meeting at 6:00pm

**6.2 Request for a Special Event on a Public Street** – Voices of Praise – May 2, 2026, from 8:00am-5:00pm

#### **7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilmember Roberts motioned to approve the Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mosby.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

#### **8. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, PROCLAMATIONS**

### **8.1 Presentation – Outstanding Citizen Achievement Award – Omar Ocana**

A presentation was given recognizing Omar Ocana with the Outstanding Citizen Achievement Award for winning the Class 2A 285-pound Colorado State Wrestling Championship. Remarks highlighted his dedication, perseverance, and the pride his achievement brings to Rocky Ford. The Mayor also acknowledged the contributions of the Rocky Ford High School wrestling team and coaching staff, emphasizing the role of wrestling in building discipline, resilience, and leadership.

Coach Mike Journey was additionally recognized for his recent induction into the Colorado High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame, with congratulations extended for his long-standing impact and service to student-athletes. Coach Journey thanked the City and recognized team members for their accomplishments and noted his upcoming induction into the National Wrestling Coaches Hall of Fame, Colorado Chapter.

## **9. PUBLIC HEARING**

### **9.1 Ordinance No. 995**

City Clerk Michelle Grasmick reported that, at the request of City Attorney Dan Harvey, she reviewed compliance with publication requirements and determined that although Ordinance No. 995 was published following first reading, the Notice of Application and Public Hearing for the franchise fee was not published by the newspaper as requested. As two applicable state statutory requirements were not met, it was determined that the public hearing must be extended to ensure full compliance. Upon recommendation of the City Attorney, the public hearing was continued and rescheduled for Tuesday, May 26, with direction for the City Clerk to work with the City Attorney to look into alternative publication methods to ensure all required notices and publications are properly completed.

## **10. OLD BUSINESS**

### **10.1 Ordinance No. 995 - An Ordinance of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado approving a franchise fee for City Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise, on Final Reading**

Councilmember Roberts motioned to table Ordinance No. 995 - An Ordinance of the City of Rocky Ford, Colorado approving a franchise fee for City Water, Sewer, and Garbage Enterprise, on Final Reading. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

Councilmember Mullins motioned to release the confidential memo regarding franchise fees to the public as written. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.

Voting results were:

YES: Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Mullins, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

## **10.2 Cemetery Rules and Regulations**

Council reviewed proposed updates to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations following prior work sessions. City Manager Stacey Milenski reported that the prohibition on lanterns, night lights, and other illuminated decorations was removed entirely. The Decoration Placement Rule was updated to clarify that decorations may not impede adjacent graves, roadways, pathways, or maintenance activities, and that the City reserves the right to remove items that interfere with maintenance. A Tree Decoration Prohibition Rule was added, prohibiting decorations, lights, or ornaments on cemetery trees. Foundation measurement requirements were also clarified. Milenski confirmed the revisions were reviewed and approved by the City Attorney with minor edits. Council discussed the possible addition of a visual diagram to illustrate decoration placement, which may be considered in the future if needed.

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Roberts.

Voting results were:

YES: Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Mullins, Mosby, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

## **11. NEW BUSINESS**

### **11.1 Museum Bylaws**

City Manager Stacey Milenski identified several concerns with the Museum Board bylaws, noting that assigned responsibilities such as building security, facility renovations, budget preparation, and handling of revenues conflict with established City responsibilities and municipal practices. Council discussion then focused on the provision prohibiting board members from serving successive terms. Multiple Council members noted the challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteers and expressed support for removing or revising the restriction to allow greater flexibility. Comparisons were made to other City boards and commissions, including the Arts Commission and Swimming Pool Commission, which permit consecutive terms with Council approval.

City Attorney Dan Harvey recommended removing the section addressing appointments and terms to avoid inconsistency, as these matters are already governed by the Municipal Code. Additional discussion addressed governance terminology, with Council noting that the Museum Board functions in an advisory role and questioning use of the term "trustees." Council requested further review of the original bylaws alongside the revised draft before taking action.

Councilmember Roberts motioned to table the Museum Board bylaws until Council is provided with the original bylaws and revisions proposed by City Manager Stacey Milenski. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Martinez.

Voting results were:

YES: Martinez, Barron, Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

### **11.2 Museum Collections Management Policy**

City Manager Stacey Milenski presented the Museum Collections Management Policy and reported no concerns or recommended changes. Milenski noted that such policies are standard practice for museums and expressed support for its implementation at the Rocky Ford Museum. Council confirmed with the Museum Curator that the policy is acceptable and supported.

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve the museum collections management policy. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Barron, Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

### **11.3 Museum Scope of Collections Policy**

City Manager Stacey Milenski presented the Museum Scope of Collections Policy and reported no concerns or recommended changes. Milenski noted the policy aligns with the previously discussed Collections Management Policy.

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve the museum scope of collections policy. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mosby.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

### **11.4 Key Policy**

City Manager Stacey Milenski presented a proposed Key Policy to establish standards for the issuance, use, and control of keys to City facilities for non-employees. Milenski explained the policy was prompted by the return of keys previously issued to a Museum Board member and revealed a lack of documentation and accountability regarding who has access to City-owned facilities. Milenski stated the policy is intended to protect City property, ensure public safety, and maintain accountability for access by non-employees, including board and commission members, volunteers, and Council members. Milenski noted that while employees are covered under the employee handbook, no formal policy exists for non-employees. Council discussed future options such as access control systems but agreed the proposed policy would address current gaps. The policy was presented for Council consideration and approval, with acknowledgment that covered individuals would be required to sign the policy if approved.

Councilmember Martinez motioned to approve. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mullins.

Voting results were:

YES: Mullins, Mosby, Roberts, Martinez, Barron, Gurulé

NO: None

Motion carried: 6-0

## **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.*

## **13. COUNCIL REPORTS**

*Councilmembers provided updates and reports on their respective boards and community events. Mayor Gurulé summarized his written Mayor’s report provided to Council, including updates that occurred after the report was written.*

*Councilmember Mullins chose to use his time to read a portion of the confidential memo regarding franchise fees that Council voted to release to the public earlier in the meeting.*

## **14. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sarah Dillon with Tri-County Family Care Center provided an overview of the upcoming 20th Annual “Cruisin’ Into Summer” Festival and Keep Kids Safe Fair, scheduled for Saturday, June 6, from 7:00am to 5:00pm. Dillon outlined planned activities and the proposed street closures needed to accommodate the event. City Clerk Michelle Grasmick noted that the application has been received and will be considered at the April 28 meeting.

Susan Jung, resident and former Mayor, asked clarifying questions regarding Item 9.1, specifically about the 2025 budget timeline and the franchise fee. Jung inquired whether there was a deadline for finalizing the 2025 budget and whether the franchise fee was tied to the completion of that budget. Council responded that the budget deadline has already passed in mid-December and that while franchise fees are included as a revenue line item in the budget, they are not directly tied to any single action or decision.

JR Thompson, resident, addressed two unrelated topics during public comment. First, he explained that he and his wife, Laura, have long held numbered keys to the Grand Theatre, which they have had since 1980 and use solely to access the building during live performances. Thompson noted the keys are restricted and difficult or impossible to duplicate and emphasized the importance of not losing them. Second, JR raised concerns about the need for handicapped-accessible parking along the 900 block of Highway 50, noting difficulties obtaining guidance or permits from CDOT despite repeated attempts. He stated there are several individuals in the area with handicap permits and suggested installing two accessible spaces between the chiropractor’s office and the Gazette. Council acknowledged the challenges of coordinating with CDOT, noted the City’s lack of authority over Highway 50, and discussed accessibility requirements. Alternatives on 9th Street, which is under City jurisdiction, were suggested, along with further coordination between Public Works and the Police Department.

James Budnick, county resident, expressed concern about the number of establishments serving alcohol in Rocky Ford, stating he was told there are approximately 18 locations offering alcoholic beverages. He said this increase surprised him, compared to when he first moved to town, and raised concerns about the community becoming overly focused on alcohol-related businesses. Budnick referenced moral and religious considerations and questioned the City's willingness to approve liquor licenses and alcohol-serving franchises for revenue. Budnick urged the Council to reflect on the broader impact this trend may have on the community.

**15. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

15.1 None

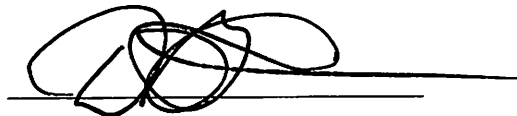
**16. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

16.1 April 21, 2026, from 2:00pm – 4:00pm City Council Work Session

16.2 April 28, 2026, at 6:00pm - City Council Regular Meeting

**ADJOURN**

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



Mayor Duane Gurulé



City Clerk, Michelle Grasmick