

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL
LA JUNTA, CO
AUGUST 3, 2026
6:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
601 COLORADO AVENUE

INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL TO ORDER (Mayor Ayala)

The Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, was called to order by Mayor Ayala on Monday, August 3, 2026, at 6:01 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL (City Clerk)

Present: Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Scott Copley, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2

Also Present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Clay Buchner, City Attorney (via Zoom)
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Aliza Libby, Director of Finance
Kasey Miehke, La Junta
Ed Wiker, La Junta
CaSandra Thomas, La Junta
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Cynthia Nieb, La Junta
Diane Rikhof, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Murissa Jackson
Tammy McCann
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Erin Harris, La Junta
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette
Adrian Hart, SECO News

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

1. Aliza Libby, Director of Finance: Researched ways to help lower customer utility bills during the summer months.
2. Murissa Jackson: Has been in contact with the city attorney and wants to know why she still has not received her records request.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Regular Meeting Minutes July 20, 2026

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 3, 2026, CONSENT AGENDA: Velasquez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 5-0 (Ramirez and Ochoa absent)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1688 REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, CO (City Attorney) (Action)

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There has been plenty of discussion on this topic. It's been looked at from every angle. The date has been updated as well.

VOTE: The motion carried 5-0 (Ramirez and Ochoa absent)

NEW BUSINESS

A. Conflict of Interest Document (City Attorney) (Action)

City Attorney Buchner: A resolution was passed that adopted a conflict of interest disclosure form that was discussed at the last regular meeting that encapsulates the two different regimes that govern the statutory code of ethics and conflicts of interest for government officials, which is Title 24, Article 18, and Article 129, and then 41 of the Colorado Constitution. There's a host of conflicts, from gifts to family to contract interest, etc., but it would be more productive of a conversation if we discussed the specific points of issues that Council Member Rikhof wanted to discuss and other council members wanted to discuss. The broader issue is, if and when the board adopts the more robust code of ethics proposed, if there was a conflict and one of the council members disagreed, they would then de facto be put in front of the board of ethics for an investigation and review. My initial thought would be to allow me to do objective analysis and talk individually with the council members. My suggestion is that we are allowed to address it informally, whether it's done through a verbal or written disclosure form, and then, if a council member insists that there is no conflict, even if they've been advised to the contrary, then we could use the soon-to-be adopted or some version of

procedure for complaints, because at that point it would typically be a complaint that there is unethical behavior on the part of a council member. (There was lengthy discussion regarding informal process, ethics board, elected officials, employees and procedures.)

B. Committee/Board Report

Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):

- Senior Spotlight is Mr. Mitch Cruz, who is also the Advisory Board Chair.
- The last day to purchase Rockies tickets is August 14th.
- The next meeting will be this Wednesday, August 5th, at 1:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

C. City Manager Report

- Police Department: 1,800 calls for service for the month of July, 82 arrests, 146 traffic stops, and 20 traffic collisions.
- Code Enforcement: 147 calls for service, 12 were junk vehicles, 49 weed complaints, nine trash complaints, 57 animal complaints, and 20 miscellaneous weed code violations.
- The PD is hosting a P.O.S.T. approved handgun red dot site instructor school this week here in La Junta. There will be about 15 to 20 different students from different agencies across the state.
- Fire Department: 199 calls total. 146 were for EMS. There were 10 accidents and 39 calls for service. This included four mutual aid responses, two public assists, and two severe weather-related calls. They also had three staff members complete their wild land fire course.
- Water Department: Will be redistributing the lead and copper surveys, either through door hangers, utility bills, or online.
- Airport: Project has been pushed back a little due to circumstances outside our control. We're now looking at it being done perhaps by September.
- Early Settlers Day: The city had a little over 100 hours worth of man-hours going into getting everything set up. I want to give all the departments a big shout-out. They put in a lot of work to help make Early Settler's Day a huge success.
- Library: Summer Reading Program is over. They have two new programs going on. Bibliotele and Kanopy. All covered by your library card.
- Evaluation: Have about 98% of all employee evaluations completed. There's just a couple left.
- Budget Workshop: Will be this Wednesday night from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Senior Center. All department heads will be in attendance. Will be meeting with supervisors for the budget process starting the week of the 17th.

D. Community Events/Council Report

- Budget Work session this Wednesday at 4:30 p.m.
- Ward 3 listening event on August 10th at 6:00 p.m. at the Brick & Tile Park.
- Movie night at the pool this Wednesday, Jaws. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and it starts at 8:00 p.m.

E. Governing Body Report

Council Member Velasquez:

- Shout out to the lifeguards and staff. They've made it a tremendous year.

Council Member Rikhof:

- Wanted to know what the status was of Ms. Jackson's written statement that they were given in May. City Attorney Buchner stated that he recalls it being in regard to the police department and criminal assertions, which is way outside any jurisdiction that we have as council members or city attorneys. He can address it if the council directs him to.

Mayor Ayala:

- Would like to schedule a semi-annual review for the city manager.
- Working on setting up a Planning Commission work session.
- The CML District 6 Meeting will be September 26th in Lamar.
- Budget Meet & Greet. All the department heads will be in attendance.
- Thanked the Chamber of Commerce for a successful Early Settler's Day. Lewis Bolt & Nut and the Lions Club for the well-attended breakfast. I also want to thank the Council for serving the senior lunch and all the sponsors and volunteers.
- We are supposed to have a pickleball tournament this weekend at the new pickleball courts at City Park. We had a group out there last night and noticed that the gate was broken. So they are locked again and Brock is working on some solutions.
- We are headed back to school across the valley. Please slow down in school zones and stay alert.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor