

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – February 2, 2026

STATE OF COLORADO)
COUNTY OF OTERO) SS
CITY OF LA JUNTA)



CALL TO ORDER: The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, was called to order by Mayor Ayala on Monday, February 2, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

INVOCATION: Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Ayala led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: The following Council Members were present:

Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Carly Johnson, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3


Subject to approval at the
February 17, 2026
City Council Meeting


Absent: none

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Todd Quick, LJPD
Mitch Zgorzynski, LJPD
Jerry White, CBI
Pam Denahy, Econ. Dev.
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Steve Zgorzynski, La Junta
Julie Zgorzynski, La Junta
Cheryl Lindner, La Junta
Ally Batterton, La Junta
Erica Zgorzynski, La Junta
Dottie Burnett, La Junta
Bethany Bender, La Junta
Christopher Menges, La Junta
Jeff Richardson, La Junta
Mario Trujillo, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

AWARD PRESENTATION – Mitch Zgorzynski: Todd Quick, LJPD and Jerry White, CBI, recognized Mitch for his exceptional efforts in criminal investigations, patrol, and community policing. His actions help enhance public safety, build trust in the community, and reduce crime.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person):

1. Bethany Bender, Otero College: Invited everyone to this Wednesdays Lunch and Learn about Columbia. If you can't make that, they also go to the library the week after during Friday Fillers and Teen Activities.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – February 2, 2026

2. Cheryl Lindner, 16 E. 22nd Street: YEEHAW announced the opening of the warming shelter from Friday, January 23rd to Monday, January 26th. The center was a refuge to about thirty visitors who could just be safe, warm, have nutritious meals and snacks, clean clothing, a place to shower, a new to them pair of shoes, boots, jackets or socks. There were over forty volunteers who gave of themselves to provide care for the many community members. This effort was made possible because of the resilience of community members and caring for its own. A great deal of thanks goes out to the Otero County Health Department, the Rocky Ford Methodist Church, Otero County Sheriff's Department, City of La Junta Police Department, the Primary School children, AVRMC and all the local ministries, community organizations and volunteers who assisted in the months of planning, training, development and support leading up to the opening of the warming center. Also, Bent County opened a warming center on those days as well. They recruited fourteen volunteers and served five individuals. Lamar has reached out to ask for guidance and advice in opening a warming center. This is the type of contagiousness worth spreading. We are grateful for all who give and there are many ways that giving can happen.

Years ago, there was a grant for e-bikes. I've noticed that there's several of the bike racks that are around town that are empty but the ones that are up at the college have bikes in them and the bikes are in need of maintenance, repair.

MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR A CONFERENCE WITH THE CITY ATTORNEY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING LEGAL ADVICE ON SPECIFIC LEGAL QUESTIONS UNDER C.R.S §24-6-402(4)(b) AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING POSITIONS RELATIVE TO MATTERS THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS, DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR NEGOTIATIONS, AND/OR INSTRUCTING NEGOTIATORS, UNDER C.R.S §24-6-402(4)(e): Ochoa

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion passed 7-0

The Council went into Executive Session at 6:15 p.m. and reconvened at 6:39 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA**A. Regular Meeting Minutes January 20, 2026****B. Application for Renewal of a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by Wal-Mart Inc. d/b/a Wal-Mart #1384, 6 Conley Road****C. Application for Renewal of a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by LJ Liquor LLC d/b/a LJ Liquor, 302 E. 1st Street**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 2, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

NEW BUSINESS**A. Set for Hearing/New Application for a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by Colorado Harvest Markets Inc., d/b/a Auggie's Market, 315 W. 2nd Street (March 16, 2026).**

MOTION TO SET A LIQUOR LICENSE PUBLIC HEARING FOR COLORADO HARVEST MARKETS INC., D/B/A AUGGIE'S MARKET, 315 W. 2ND STREE FOR MARCH 16, 2026: Ochoa

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – February 2, 2026

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- B. A Resolution Accepting a Petition for Annexation and Referring the Proposed Annexation to the La Junta Planning Commission for Review and Recommendation.** Resolution No. R-8-2026 was presented for council's consideration.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-8-2026: Rikhof

SECOND: Johnson

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- C. A Resolution Authorizing Release and Satisfaction of Judgment Lien Related to 1010 Raton Avenue.** Resolution No. R-9-2026 was presented for council's consideration.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-9-2026: Pantoya

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- D. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE CREATING A NEW CHAPTER 9.10 OF TITLE 9 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE, ENTITLED "GAMBLING DEVICES".**

- E. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO ADOPTING CHAPTER 9.14 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE OF PREMISES ENGAGED IN UNLAWFUL ACTIVITY.**

- F. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING CHAPTER 8.14 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE ENTITLED "PUBLIC NUISANCE ABATEMENT, INJUNCTIONS, AND RELATED REMEDIES".**

- G. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE CREATING A NEW ARTICLE WITHIN CHAPTER 9.08 OF TITLE 9 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE PROHIBITING GAMBLING AND SIMULATED GAMBLING DEVICES, PROVIDING DEFINITIONS, ESTABLISHING PENALTIES, DECLARING GAMBLING PREMISES A PUBLIC NUISANCE, AND AUTHORIZING SEIZURE AND FORFEITURE OF GAMBLING DEVICES AND PROCEEDS.**

City Attorney Harris: Gambling is already illegal but making it illegal in the municipality, we shift the authority to the municipal court instead of to the county court which allows for all the enforcement to be faster and more nimble. The issue is though penalties available in municipal court are not as thorough as they would be at the state level. So, these other statutes give us additional avenues for enforcement if speed is more important than punishment.

MOTION TO PASS AGENDA ITEMS #D-G ON FIRST READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

H. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Meeting will be this Wednesday at 1:00 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – February 2, 2026**I. City Manager Report**

- Retired City employee, Peggy Powell, would like to see more American flags on homes this year.
- Water Treatment pumped 835 million gallons and treated 305 million gallons of water.
- Water Distribution replaced four hydrants, had nine main breaks and replaced about 1,300 feet of line on 6th & 14th Streets.
- Waste Water sludge press did a little over four million gallons and fourteen sewer mains were repaired.
- Utilities had almost 48,000 bills created.
- Accounts Receivable had a little over 2,600 payments equaling \$3.6 million.
- Accounts Payable had 7,198 invoices paid in the amount of around \$23 million.
- Sales tax collected (not including Dec. 2025) was a little over \$6.6 million.
- There are 119 employees on health insurance with 107 dependents.
- Outdoor Conservation (lottery money) collected a little over \$84,000 and around \$345,000 was spent on resurfacing the tennis courts at City Park.
- The library had 192 different programs that were attended by 6,385 people, purchased 862 new items and had another 874 items donated, 387 new library cards, over 54,000 visits to the library, over 44,000 different things were circulated, 544 facility uses with almost 4,100 people attending.
- The Electric Department kilowatt demand for twelve months was a little over 193,000. The energy produced was a little over 86 million kilowatts.
- Purchasing had 1,503 purchases totaling a little over \$3.7 million, did 127 quote transactions, and ten formal bids and request for proposals were issued. The warehouse stocks a little over 4,000 inventory items with an evaluation of a little over \$3.5 million.
- The Police Department had a total of 21,451 calls for service, handled 2,540 criminal cases resulting in 1,265 arrests, involved with Police in the Park, collaborated with Elks Lodge for the Halloween party and assisted Wal-Mart with their Trunk-or-Treat event and secured approximately \$65,000 in grant funds.
- The Fire Department had a total of 2,302 calls, twenty-seven structure fires, forty brush or wildland fires. EMS was the bulk of that (1,938 calls). Fire damage loss estimated a little over \$2.3 million. Went on three different wildland deployments across the state totaling about forty-two days. Conducted twenty-four community outreach and educational programs.
- There were twenty new hires, forty-three seasonal hires, fifteen babies, and four weddings. Started off in January 2025 with 145 employees. Ended last day in December with 139. Peak employees was 189 in June (includes seasonal). We had six employees complete five years of service. Five employees completed ten years of service. One employee completed fifteen years of service. Three employees completed twenty years of service. One employee completed twenty-five years of service. One employee completed thirty years of service.
- The Cemetery had sixty-four internments.
- The Golf Course has 175 memberships.
- The Swimming Pool had 12,932 in attendance and 183 swimming lessons.
- The Senior Center had 10,249 in attendance and 471 members.
- The transit gave out a little over 16,000 rides.
- Recreation had 1,135 sports registrations, 191 volunteers, sixty-five officials/workers.
- The Tree Dump took in 1,334 loads.

J. Community Events/Council Reports

- The 124th Chamber Banquet had 240 attendees.

K. Governing Body Reports

1. Council Member Rikhof: Rural Start Up Days, organized by Start Up Colorado is February 25-27.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

ATTEST:**CITY OF LA JUNTA**

 Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

 Joseph Ayala, Mayor