

***Subject to approval at
the April 1, 2024
City Council Meeting***

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

CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, was called to order by Mayor Ayala on Monday, March 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

INVOCATION: Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Council Member Velasquez led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: The following Council Members were present:

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

Absent: none

Also present: Brad Davidson, Interim City Manager
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Julie Worley, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Connie Shane, La Junta
Cathy Hurd, La Junta
Beth Bender, La Junta
Gary Cranson, UB Chairman
Susan Dietrich, La Junta
Brad Patterson, KOA
Angela Davis, Rocky Ford
Betty Blanco, La Junta
Robert Fowler, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: Mayor Ayala asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of March 4, 2024. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MARCH 4, 2024 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Stoker

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

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CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (5-minute time limit per person):

1. Julie Worley, 2417 San Juan Avenue: I want to thank the City Council for your generous support and willingness to let the Young AmeriTowne On the Road use the La Junta Armory. Since March 1st, there have been almost 300, 4th, 5th and 6th graders that have come to On the Road Project out at the Armory. For those of you who may not know what it is, Young AmeriTowne is the flagship project of the Young America Center for Financial Education in Denver. It's a simulated rural town. There's a grocery store, medical center, TV station, radio station, bank, and a print shop. There was a newspaper printed every day. The 3rd, 4th and 5th graders from the following schools participated: Las Animas, Campo, Pritchett, Vilas, Manzanola, Wiley, Springfield, La Junta, Rocky Ford and Crowley County. They had curriculum in their classroom before they came to town. They elected a mayor, a judge, and a police officer. They interviewed for jobs and went to work. From March 1st to the 15th, kids were in the Armory every day, about fifty kids. There was also a manufacturing facility in On the Road Towne. You had to order a custom-made briefcase online and pay for it with your debit card. So, I took my debit card and paid for two custom-made briefcases for the mayor and the city manager and they're also engraved. Thank you so much to the City of La Junta for allowing us to use the Armory. I also want to thank the fiscal sponsors: Colorado Bank & Trust in La Junta, La Junta Chamber of Commerce, InBank in Wiley and Lamar, Peoples Credit Union in Springfield, Randall Roberson Agency here in La Junta, Southeast Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction (SEBREA), Southeast Colorado Power, SECOM and Three Corners Connectors. They helped to get this to La Junta because it was a \$15.00 fee for each student who came. The schools paid \$5.00 a student and the investors paid the other \$10.00.

2. Brad Patterson, General Manager, KOA and Country Car Rentals: My wife Wendy and I bought our campground and started a car rental business eight years ago. I had the opportunity to visit with council in July of that first year. Thanks to the encouragement of Councilwoman Pantoya, after eight years, I've decided to come back and visit with you once more. I also want to thank the Office of Economic Development and the Chamber of Commerce for encouraging us to get into the rental car business. The community has been very welcoming. We've enjoyed a good eight years in business and getting to know many of the local merchants and doing business with them. As well as the city staff and being able to participate in the tourism and travel sports. I also want to thank Pam Denahy in her role in tourism. She's done a fantastic job. We have certainly seen a lot of growth in our business due to the tarantula visitation. I want to present to you for your consideration an ordinance that would restrict camping on non-residential private property. As you'll see in the outline I distributed, we believe that such an ordinance is both necessary and beneficial to the people of La Junta. I want to make it clear that this ordinance is a proposal for the people not against Wal-Mart, which is where this issue takes place on an almost daily basis. We do shop there ourselves, almost daily. We also direct our guest to Wal-Mart every day. It's a five-minute walk from our campground. We even have a pass thru in our west fence for the guests to walk to them and the other businesses in our neighborhood. Wal-Mart graciously lets campers camp in about 75% of their parking lots around the country, including the one here in La Junta. While this might be a nice thing to do it is not necessarily a good thing to do. Whether at Wal-Mart or any other location in the city not equipped to provide for the electrical, water, sewer services typically necessary for RV customers. Camping on non-residential private property in the city of La Junta has allowed for public health and safety violations to occur. It also does nothing to contribute to the local economy in terms of taxes for lodging. It does not improve the lives of the people in the city. Wal-Mart does not want to be the bad guy when it comes to this issue. I understand that. Their employees do not want to be tasked with asking campers to camp elsewhere. That is why at least thirty-one municipalities in Colorado have passed ordinances restricting camping in their communities and we encourage the City of La Junta to be the next do so. A sample ordinance from the City of Ft. Collins has been provided to you that helps you to take the next step. Please note that the sample ordinance does not prohibit over the road truckers from sleeping in non-residential private properties. Thank you for your time and consideration.

3. Robert Fowler, 15 W. 22nd Street: This is not a new issue. Brad and I have talked about this before even when Kenny Allen had the old trailer park. The big issue that I've noticed over the years is brown water and grey water. The big thing I don't like to see out there is the fact that they take both those hoses, the brown and the grey water, and put them in the ditch. That is just disgusting

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because you know their running their toilets, running their showers, and they don't care where they put it on the ground. If you go back and look at Ft. Collins right now, they have such a homeless issue where they have their homeless camp. The city is actually hauling those campers away because they're dumping their brown and grey water right on the ground by where they have their shelter and their food source on the north side of town. This is really an issue. This is actually a health issue for us as a whole community because that means it's finally going to hit the river and your water department has to be very picky what their doing with the river. I see it as a major health issue that's gone on for quite some time. Homelessness or not, I'm all in favor of an ordinance like this and I know you might look into what Ft. Collins has done. The federal government is looking at some of these places that you can go in right now with your camper if it's self-contained. This can really be a major health issue. If those people don't want to stay someplace to pay for it, you should not allow them to dump those two kinds of waters on the parking lot or in that ditch. If your kids are out there playing in that ditch and they come up and now they're covered with brown water, how would you feel about that? I'd be a little unhappy to say the least. I don't like it. You shouldn't do it. It's wrong to start with and people do that because they don't want to spend the money and I can't say they're cheap but they should not do that. Common sense would tell you; you don't dump those two kinds of water on anything that's public. Some of the people are there two to three days. You just have to look and those hoses go over into that ditch and then you can see under where they were. It's disgusting.

4. Gary Cranson, 705 Edison Avenue: We probably have an ordinance that says you're not allowed to dump sanitary waste anywhere. That can be instantly taken care of when somebody dumps out there. You can post a sign that says sanitary waste disposal is against the law. You'll be ticketed, whatever. That would be a quicker solution than trying to keep people from parking and dumping.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **City Attorney Contract.** The Mayor received a letter from Harris Law Office, Erin Harris and it was forwarded to the council.

Mayor Ayala: There are a couple of different ways we can go about doing this. I want it to be on record that I reached out to nine different attorneys. Most of them were local. One was given to me by Mrs. Julie Worley. They were from Lamar to Pueblo to Denver. We did not have a lot of interest. If we were to put this out to bid, we would probably get a lot of interest but it probably wouldn't be from anyone local. That's council's choice. I did talk to Dean to see if this was a job that had to be put out for bid. Dean said as long as I could show that I did my due diligence looking for more than three lawyers, participants, that would be fine to do it this route. If we do go this route, it would be how we did with the Interim City Manager where we make a motion to go into contract negotiations. We could talk about the contract and then Erin would be willing to be here at the next meeting. If we do this, I would like to go into executive for it tonight just to go over the contract. When we come back out, that would be the only business that we do after executive.

MOTION TO ADD THE CITY ATTORNEY CONTRACT, RECEIVED FROM HARRIS LAW OFFICE, TO ITEM "G" ON OUR AGENDA: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Dog Park.** Betty Blanco and Angie Davis spoke regarding having a dog park in La Junta.

Betty Blanco, 14th & Rice Avenue: We've been sharing ideas where we could have different things in the dog park and the dogs can have a place to go. We started asking for feedback and support from others and we got plenty of positive feedback. We did get some negative. We wanted to share some of these things with you and then make a request for three things from you. Angie and I came in and talked to Rick Klein and we found out that you already have a dog park in the future plans. He sent us

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over to where you were all thinking about putting the dog park over at the Wickham Addition. It's a huge area that should give the dogs plenty of room to run. We're here to give you our enthusiastic approval for this dog park. We were really surprised at how expensive the land was but it is a good location for the park. The positive things that we saw was that the land was more than five acres in size. It has plenty of room to put in a large dog area and a small dog area. We would suggest that the older dogs and puppies go in the small dog area. When we talked with Rick, he was talking about putting a walkway all the way around the perimeter of the park and that measured out to be around a half a mile long. That would be great for decompressing the dogs before they went into those areas. It's secluded and away from traffic so you're not going to be having dogs get run over. It's got some trees there already. The concept we saw is that the access to the park across the railroad tracks. It's in pretty bad shape and difficult to cross. That road needs to be fixed. There's another road that goes under the highway that has a big ditch. Maybe a culvert can be put in there with a road over the culvert. The negative feedback that we got was they don't want their taxes to go to this. I know there's lottery money, also different grants and things that maybe we can look into. Another thing they were worrying about was the poo being all over the place and they were also very concerned about aggressive dogs. We know there's lots of trainers in the area that could help people teach their dogs not to be so aggressive and help them to acclimate to the dog park. It is our hearts desire that this dog park be named Sirius Memorial Dog park. Sirius was a K9 police officer. (See Attached Article). I would like for us to honor this dog by naming this park Sirius Memorial Dog Park. I would like to see a statue of Sirius put out in front of the dog park with some signage to tell his story. It would also be nice if you could put up a monument for people to put their canine companions' names on.

Angie Davis: I am a radio talk show host of Veterans of the Valley on our local radio station, Lightning 1400. I am also with the American Legion Auxiliary. I'm the District 1 president and Unit 9 president and also a K9 specialist. I agree with what Miss Betty Blanco has said and I would like to add some things. We are guesstimating the total of the dog park could be astronomical but there would be no need to break the bank if we used recycled materials. We also had fancied a green dog park using solar power and artwork from recycled materials. You can use tires and PVC to make shapes and stuff like that. Recycled materials from the recycle center. We've already found quite a few items. There are also various generous sources willing to be part of this worthy cause through grants and scholarships. I'm also a board member of an organization called Training Tree Corps which is a veteran ran Colorado nonprofit and I can have them donate trees for the dog park in honor of our local veterans as well. We recognize the development of a successful dog park requires a great deal of planning and effort. We are confident that the La Junta Dog Park Project would be a success and a valuable asset to our community through the dedication and combining of our ideas. Surely, we can gain the ultimate reward of enjoying a special place where dogs and their families can have fun and socialize. A happy, tired dog is a happy home.

Interim City Manager Davidson: This afternoon, Miss Blanco came and visited with me for a little bit. I did talk with Brock Hinkhouse from the recreation side. The master plan does talk about a dog park but it rated as a lower priority. With it being a lower priority, we do have other things that would be ahead of it but it would be something that the council is happy to listen to and take into consideration. This would be nothing that could happen overnight. We have to beef up some things in the budget before we can get some bigger projects done.

B. Liquor Licenses.

- 1. Application for Renewal of a Lodging & Entertainment Liquor License by VanceOwen LLC, d/b/a Fox Theatre, 11 E. 3rd Street.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. Appropriate fees have been tendered and the Mayor recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A LODGING & ENTERTAINMENT LIQUOR LICENSE BY VANCEOWEN LLC, D/B/A FOX THEATRE, 11 E. 3RD STREET: Rikhof

SECOND: Stoker

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

2. **Application for Renewal of a Hotel & Restaurant Liquor License by Mexico City Café Inc., d/b/a Mexico City Café, 1617 Raton Avenue.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. Appropriate fees have been tendered and the Mayor recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A HOTEL & RESTAURANT LIQUOR LICENSE BY MEXICO CITY CAFÉ INC., D/B/A MEXICO CITY CAFÉ, 1617 RATON AVENUE: Stoker

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

3. **Application for Renewal of a Hotel & Restaurant Liquor License by Fargerson LLC, d/b/a Boss Hogg's Saloon & Restaurant, 808 E. 3rd Street.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. Appropriate fees have been tendered and the Mayor recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A HOTEL & RESTAURANT LIQUOR LICENSE BY FARGERSON LLC, D/B/A BOSS HOGG'S SALOON & RESTAURANT, 808 E. 3RD STREET: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- C. **A Resolution Authorizing the Sale of Real Property – 1521 Grace Avenue.** Resolution No. R-6-2024 was presented for council's consideration as follows:

WHEREAS, the City is a Home Rule City organized under the laws of the State of Colorado; and

WHEREAS, the City previously owned certain real property described as follows:

The South 137.55 feet of the South 80.42 feet of Lot 4, Block 16, La Junta Home Place Subdivision to the City of La Junta, as shown by the recorded plat thereof, in Otero County, Colorado.

More commonly known as 1521 Grace Avenue, La Junta, Colorado.

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that the real property has no utility to the City and as such is surplus property; and

WHEREAS, the City decided to sell the same to JAMES BUSH.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO as follows:

1. The City determines that the property is surplus property.
2. The City authorizes the Mayor to execute a Deed of Conveyance to JAMES BUSH in exchange for the gross sum of \$1,500.00.
3. The resolution is enacted by the City Council of the City of La Junta.

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MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-6-2024: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: The following discussion took place:

Council Member Rikhof: Just want to make it clear to folks that this is still part of the cleanup from the EPA asbestos. It's a continuation of the same properties that we sold.

Council Member Ramirez: Can we determine what the process is? Is it permanent or can we make changes to it? The property at 218 Harriet, besides the legwork that we did, there was some backfill and some tree cutting that occurred and I want to make sure that we're getting our money back for that.

Interim City Manager Davidson: On that one, that lot had been divided into a half lot. That's why that price was a little lower.

Council Member Ramirez: I contacted a local realtor and gave him a list of these properties. We sold this property for \$500. I know we're not probably going to get what's on the open market but that property was estimated at \$2,500. The other properties sold from \$1,500 to \$2,500. One property was listed at about \$5,000 and another one between \$8,000 - \$10,000. The Edison and Lewis properties were both \$8,000 - \$10,000. We secured maybe \$1,500 out of those properties. My concern with this process is we're not getting our money back out of these properties. For future reference, if that opportunity occurs again, we can set a minimum. We're not trying to make money but we're trying to recoup what we put into those properties.

Interim City Manager Davidson: Mr. Mayor, what I can do is have Martin Montoya, the city engineer, look into that a little more through the EPA side moving forward. Then, when we get a new city attorney, see if we can set a minimum price.

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

D. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Center Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):

- Tabled once again the decision whether to make the center available to rent.
- There's an abundance of activities going on. The Tai Chi classes just exploded. It's great for your balance and overall healthy well-being.
- We have people coming for the quilting class as far away as Pueblo because they don't have that in their area.

E. Interim City Manager Comments

- Changed the supervisor meetings to once a month. The supervisors just send me information throughout the month of what's going on.
- The RO Plant is going to be doing an update on their SCADA system updating all the computer system. They're upgrading a 20 year plus old system. Starting March 25th, next Monday, going through the 27th. It's going to take them a couple of days so they're asking people to limit the use of outside water, car washes, and irrigation because it's going to slow down the process without being able to use their computers but they will be able to keep up with certain amounts.
- The Streets Department found a collapsed storm sewer line by the parking lot at VanHooks Nursery on 3rd Street. They're going to have to tear that up and get it replaced. They are also working on alley approaches on 5th Street between Cimarron and Smithland. There's three or four alley access that were already in the budget for this year to be worked on and they started that this week.
- The Parks Department is still doing some work over at the Brick & Tile Park. They just put a big order in for a bunch of trees that will be going in along the trail and a large order of sod for the big grass area that they're putting in next to the park area. They also installed some ballards on the path itself to kind of detour golf carts, electric vehicles and motorized vehicles, so they can't get down the park in a few places. They also installed a few more benches and a few more dog areas with trash cans.

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- Baseball fields, Potter, Tippy and 22nd, are all starting to be used heavily, starting this last week. The college is playing softball and baseball and the high school is taking use of Big Potter. The nice thing is those teams are taking care of the fields.
- Getting ready for soccer.
- Everybody knows that there's a lot of sickness going on right now. Influenza and respiratory problems. We have seen a huge increase in calls over the last week and a half. Just over the weekend we ran 29 calls just for medical in three days.

Mayor Ayala: Brad has done an amazing job. He hit the ground running. He's put out a whole bunch of small fires.

Me, Brad and Chief Quick did meet with La Junta Housing Authority to follow up on what Mr. Cordova came to speak about. One of my major take aways was, we want to look forward and not backwards. Maybe we weren't doing everything on both ends right in the past. But we want to move forward on how to work together.

Interim City Manager Davidson: Chief Quick and I and the mayor also talked and came to an agreeance that once a month they will pull incident calls and have it available for those places. It'll be back on those places to come in and get them. I feel that we don't need to waste that time of trying to track them down. But if they want that information, it will be available at the end of each month.

F. Governing Body Comments

1. Council Member Rikhof:
 - On Tuesday, the 5th, and that whole week, the Arkansas River Basin Water Forum was in town. That was an excellent event. I was able to speak with Tom Seaba during the event and he offered again for the city council members to tour both the water treatment and water department in La Junta. I would encourage all of us to do that.
 - Greg Felt, Chaffee County Commissioner, gave the keynote and talked a little bit about the process of Envision Chaffee County. It's a very thorough and inspiring process. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. I think there's some good things that have gone on.
 - The public portion of the EPA Brownsfield grant got kicked off on Wednesday the 6th. It was for property and business owners in the downtown area. Martin is doing a great job leading that process. Trying to address again the blight and through the lens of how do we clean up some of the messes and moving forward towards a healthier, better developed downtown.
 - Otero College has some students who have taken on teaching Spanish classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. in the Learning Commons. It's free and has been well attended. Some of them are international students. One from Spain and one from Columbia.
 - The 6th Annual Arts Festival is a cool thing that happens on campus every spring and is the first week of April.
 - The Rattler Run in on April 6th.
2. Council Member Pantoya: Chandra and I went to the Young AmeriTowne On the Road and I got to see the kids in action. They were pretty serious about what they were learning and I thought it was a great experience for them and they'll remember it.
3. Council Member Ramirez: Speaking of Parks & Rec, this is something that we talked about looking at a decrease in fees for sports. I think baseball may have been the first sport for that to kick in. So, they dropped it from \$50 to \$40. Some of that is due to the 1% helping get things back on track.

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MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION 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) REGARDING SGR AND HARRIS LAW OFFICE: Stoker

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

The Council went into executive session at 7:15 p.m. and reconvened at 8.31 p.m.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE CITY ATTORNEY CONTRACT FROM ERIN HARRIS, HARRIS LAW OFFICE, EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2024: Stoker

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joe Ayala, Mayor