

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – April 7, 2025

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, April 7, 2025, 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
Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 2
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Bill Jackson, Asst. City Manager
Chris Arguello, Electric Superintendent
Paula Mahoney, Admin. Asst.
Angela Ayala, La Junta
Brook Leonard, La Junta
Christine Dailey, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Jeannie Thomas, La Junta
Carter Pickering, La Junta
Naomi Rivas, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette



Subject to approval at the
April 21, 2025
City Council Meeting



PUBLIC HEARING: Application for a New Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by LJ Liquor LLC, d/b/a LJ Liquor, 302 E. 1st Street.

1. That the application is in proper order, the necessary fees having been paid, and the requisite checks and drawings are in order.
2. That the premises sought to be licensed is located at 302 e. 1ST Street, in La Junta, Colorado.
3. That the premises is presently zoned in a manner that will accommodate the proposed business.
4. That the premises sought to be licensed was under a similar type of liquor license.
5. That the premises is properly occupied by the applicant.
6. That the proposed premises outlet is not within 500 feet of any public school or parochial school.

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7. Notice of hearing has been given by posting of the premises as required by law and by publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the City of La Junta, being the La Junta Tribune-Democrat, more than ten days prior to the hearing date.
8. That the neighborhood to be served is designated as the City of La Junta.
9. That the closest outlet with a Retail liquor license within the City of La Junta is at J & S Liquor, 420 E. 1st Street, which is over 500 feet from the premises sought to be licensed.
10. That there are other outlets of similar nature within the neighborhood.
11. The City Clerk recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A FERMENTED MALT BEVERAGE AND WINE LIQUOR LICENSE TO LJ LIQUOR LLC, D/B/A LJ LIQUOR, 302 E. 1ST STREET: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

PROCLAMATIONS: Mayor Ayala proclaimed the week of April 5-11, 2025 as “Week of the Young Child” and also the week of April 6-12, 2025 as “National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.”

Brooke Leonard, Director: Arkansas Valley Resources Center is a non-profit agency that serves Bent, Crowley and Otero Counties since 1987.

Christine Dailey: National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is a time to recognize the struggle victims and survivors of crime endure and overcome. It’s also an opportunity for communities to come together.

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 17, 2025. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MARCH 17, 2025 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

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

1. Jeannie Thomas, Department of Human Services and Child Welfare: This month is also Prevent Child Abuse Awareness Month. We have pins and pinwheels to show your support and you can also wear blue.
2. Nancy Bennett, SECCP: (The Plaza Building might be done this August.) Last week, Southeast Colorado Creative Partnership was awarded the Stephen H. Hart Award by History Colorado for the Plaza Block. The Hart award is to recognize Colorado’s great history through outstanding archaeology and historic preservation projects. It celebrates and recognizes exemplary projects in archaeology and historic preservation across the state.

REPORTS

- A. **Emergent Enforcement Solutions (Russell W. Sarpy).** Is a custom speed enforcement program that can be suited to your municipalities needs. This difference between this company and other vendors is that the municipality owns the software as long as the contractual agreement is in force as opposed to others where they own everything. The contract includes the online payment portal, mail

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center, use of equipment, training services, and storage of videos. No payments are required up front. The company invests between \$10,000-\$12,000 for start-up. The company provides a handheld lidar camera to the police department. The best way to measure and determine whether or not this system is a fit for our municipality is to put the officers out there and educate the public. You can transition anytime from an officer utilizing the gun to a fixed pole or mobile speed trailer. The gun is more proficient than an actual speed camera because an officer has the ability to work two directions and can manipulate it better than a fixed position. (Discussion continued amongst the board.)

- B. Motor Pool/Vehicle Use (City Manager Hart).** The City's vehicle policy was needing re-vamped. A draft was emailed to the council today. Some feedback was received and will be incorporated into the policy. It's a document to protect our city as well as our employees giving the do's and don'ts. The next step in the process is identifying how many vehicles we have, which ones are good, which ones are bad, and what can be considered surplus.

CIRSA (City's insurance carrier) has told us that anybody within the vehicle, whether a city employee, family member, or someone off the street, are covered if an accident occurs. However, if we have people that are in there that are not for city business and the city has to pay out, premiums are going to go up. We're trying to figure out what's an authorized and unauthorized person. The way it came to me was that there were city employees picking up or taking their kids to school in city vehicles and why are the tax payers paying for this. We are currently putting city emblems on all city vehicles, except for three unmarked police vehicles.

- C. Economic Development (City Manager Hart).** This is still ongoing. I'm looking back at the original Articles of Incorporation from 1988 and seeing if they are still applicable today. If not, do we amend them, scrap them and start over? We need to figure out what the council wants in regards to Economic Development so that we're all moving together in the same direction.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS**A. Property Management Fund Audit Update.**

City Attorney Harris: What we discussed on the resolution, we talked about a budget of nothing more than \$8,000 used to fund some kind of audit. One of the reasons for that was because we knew that would be enough money to cover the deductible that CIRSA would charge us if they were going to do such an audit. In my conversations with them, they explained that they don't do things like audits. They only investigate an accusation of something. The resolution was saying, do we have enough information so that the council is informed about this enterprise fund. It's not an accusation that something was going wrong. The way that conversation closed was this is not something that CIRSA can do, find an independent auditor. It would require a lot of extra money that we would be spending to do something that could be done locally, in-house. Recognizing that there are people here within the city that know a great deal about what's happening with property management. The information that I provided to Michael and to Joe was that if we can't do a CIRSA "audit", then how do we want to proceed, recognizing that the resolution had a limited budget and a request that used that word. I would like some discussion concerning the next direction to take and whether that's something that, we might have Mr. Hart feeling us in on what the other options might be if we can't use CIRSA. I believe part of the rest of the resolution indicated that Mr. Hart would be responsible for that.

City Manager Hart: What it boils down to, since CIRSA is out, do we still seek a third party to come in and do this and if so, what's the cost going to be on that given the scope that we're trying to look at here. The other option is internally. We give them the scope of work, what we're looking for and then turn them loose and go from there.

(Discussion amongst the board continued.)

MOTION TO MAKE AN AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION NO. R-7-2025 IN ITEM 4 TO STRIKE THE WORDS "TO SELECT A REPUTABLE AND INDEPENDENT AUDITING FIRM" AND ADD AT THE END OF THAT SENTENCE "INCLUDING PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES IF THE MANAGER DEEMS NECESSARY": Rikhof

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SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no further discussion

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

NEW BUSINESS**A. Liquor Licenses**

1. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Otero Museum Association, Dave Hill, Event Manager. The event is their Annual Benefit Event to be held April 25, 2025 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. The appropriate fee has been tendered and the premises have been posted. The City Clerk recommends approval.

2. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Southeast Colorado Creative Partnership, Nancy Aschermann, Event Manager. The event is their Annual Brewfest to be held June 6, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at Santa Fe Plaza.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. The appropriate fee has been tendered and the premises have been posted. The City Clerk recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT TO OTERO MUSEUM ASSOCIATION FOR THEIR ANNUAL BENEFIT EVENT TO BE HELD APRIL 25, 2025 FROM 5:30 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M. AND TO SOUTHEAST COLORADO CREATIVE PARTNERHISP FOR THEIR ANNUAL BREWFEST TO BE HELD JUNE 6, 2025 FROM 6:00 P.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Pantoya

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

3. **Application for Renewal of a Tavern Liquor License by Red Dog Revisited LLC, d/b/a Red Dog Revisited, 709 E. 3rd Street.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. The appropriate fees have been tendered and the City Clerk recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A TAVERN LIQUOR LICENSE BY RED DOG REVISITED LLC, D/B/A RED DOG REVISITED, 709 E. 3RD STREET: Pantoya

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

- B. **First Reading/AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE ELECTRIC FUND FOR THE CALNEDAR YEAR 2025.** This is a change in the budget specifically for electric because of the two breakers that need to be purchased. This amount was not in the previous budget. The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There has been plenty of discussion prior to this meeting. It has been thoroughly vetted and lots of questions were asked and answered.

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

C. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - About 475 members

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- Tai Chi classes will continue
 - Still no scheduled dances
 - Sr. Center is available to rent
 - Get with Celeste if you're interested in Rockies tickets.
2. Utilities Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Meeting is tomorrow at 4:00 p.m.
 - The Utility Board and City Council worked together in passing the supplemental budget.
 3. AVRMC Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Dual meeting with City Council and the hospital board is on May 27th.
 4. Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Still looking for applicants for an open seat.
 5. Tourism Board (Mayor Ayala):
 - Last month I had brought up the CML packet that said there are some cities using tourism money to fix roads, put up lights and safety signs. That was something I had already taken to tourism and let them know. The Tourism Board kind of got a little defensive. This idea is still very early on. We don't even have anything in the works of what that looks like, if that's even possible to do. We would have to prove that it was due to increased tourism if we wanted to fix a road. Something that I did notice is the way that it was passed vs what we have now, doesn't match up.

City Attorney Harris: Have had multiple conversations with Aliza about the lodging tax. It seems that it was passed just for tourism funds but what we started doing is we may have particular projects in mind that are the only ones. Primarily, that money goes through the tourism board but it may be that the tourism board is under the belief they are legally obligated to make certain decisions about it and that may not in fact be true. There isn't anything specific besides saying that it needs to be tourism projects. It does sound like, over the years, we have developed a belief that there were particular large scale goals that were part of that. Some of the projects we have in mind, especially when they're large building project, require a lot of planning ahead of time. Years and years in order to be on particular lists, to do considered for certain grants, to have enough money in the coffers to provide the match, was always the dialogue that was going on at the time. It may be that all of us benefit by looking back at what the rules really are to decide whether we are in a rut that was based on prior dialogue or whether we are really following the rules as they are.

6. Urban Renewal (Mayor Ayala):
 - Now have a full board
 - Talked about the Chestnut Apartments. They are waiting on windows.
 - Also talked about the application and getting it approved.

D. City Manager's Comments

- Thanked everyone who came out to the reception.
- Joined the Action Colorado Leadership and Governance Academy.
- Met with Brook Leonard with Arkansas Valley Resource Center. They have a wide range of service they offer.
- Attended the Senior Center Advisory Board meeting.
- Veteran "Coffee and Donuts" every Wednesday at 8:00 a.m. at the Senior Center.
- Rural Fire received a \$17,500 grant from Colorado State Division of Fire Prevention for new rope rescue equipment.
- Fire Department hosted a hazmat operator class.
- Shout out to Chris and the gang. Lamar had 27 poles go down in the last wind storm. Chris sent a crew to help with 1.5 miles of transmission line.

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- Asphalt projects starting in June. Walmart and Conley Road, 6th Street between Santa Fe and Colorado, 2nd Street between Cimarron and Smithland.
- Brownfield grant is about to move into phase 2.
- Sidewalk repair done at Brick & Tile Park, 10th and Barnes.
- Applied for a mini grant from the Southeast Colorado Economic Development.
- Patched a water line cut at 9th and Nevada.
- Received a little over 50 applications for the swimming pool.
- Received a transportation grant for free bus fares for the months of June, July, and August.
- Senate confirmation hearing to reappoint Dawn for another term to the Colorado Transit Enterprise Board will be next week.
- Still have the book sale going on at the Library.
- The April calendar is out for the Library.
- Teen volunteer applications will be available April 14th and due by May 10th for any student entering 7th-12th grade.
- The Summer Reading Program starts June 2nd.
- The auditors are here for the next two weeks.
- Financials will be out later this week.
- Am officially a Coloradoan.

E. Governing Body's Comments

1. Council Member Velasquez:
 - (Citizen observation) The mosaic looks great on the Brick & Tile Park sign but the words Brick & Tile are hard to read.
 - Questioned the glitches with the utility bills. Dates and accounts being wrong.
2. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Next Monday is the Ward 3 Listening night at Casa del Sol on April 14th at 6:00 p.m. in the Aspen Center. Next month we'll probably move outdoors at the Brick & Tile Park.
3. Council Member Ramirez:
 - April 15th at 2:00 p.m. is the ribbon cutting for the new Otero County Detention Center.
 - "Strike and Play" bowling will be arriving soon.
4. Mayor Ayala:
 - Thank you to Sangre de Cristo and our American Legion Post for putting on the Quilts of Valor event to welcome home Vietnam veterans.
 - Shout out to the library for doing their annual book sale.
 - Shout out to Martin Montoya on making a pothole form. With the help of Cristian, they got it put online along with street signs and code violation forms.
 - Otero CDS Community Shower was today. It was a great turn out.
 - Trash routes are on the website under the GIS system along with the TIF District.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor