

*Subject to approval at  
the May 6, 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, April 15, 2024, 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:

Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 2  
Joe Ayala, Mayor  
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2  
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3  
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent:           Damon Ramirez, Ward 1  
                  Paul Velasquez, Ward 1

Also present:   Brad Davidson, Interim City Manager  
                  Erin Harris, City Attorney  
                  Melanie Scofield, City Clerk  
                  Kasey Miehlike, La Junta  
                  Terry Smalling, La Junta  
                  Tim “Radar” Snyder, La Junta  
                  Brooke Leonard, La Junta  
                  Christine Dailey, La Junta  
                  Kelly Jo Smith, La Junta  
                  Julie Worley, La Junta  
                  David Polley, La Junta  
                  Donna Hestand, La Junta  
                  Josh Harris, La Junta  
                  Angela Ayala, La Junta  
                  Kim Thomasson, La Junta  
                  Everett Ediger, La Junta  
                  Betty Lopez, La Junta  
                  Cynthia Nieb, ED/UR Director  
                  Susan Dietrich, La Junta  
                  Adrian Hart, SECO News  
                  Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

**PROCLAMATION:** Mayor Ayala signed a proclamation declaring the week of April 21<sup>st</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> as National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.

## REPORTS

**A. Kitchen of Kindness (Terry Smalling):** Served their first meal on April 1, 2022. Began serving once a month and are now serving every Thursday at the First Christian Church at 5<sup>th</sup> and Santa Fe Avenue. There is a monthly menu posted on Facebook. They are currently serving 50-60 meals each week costing about \$70.00 on average per week. Assistance is received from Associated Charities and donations from individuals and a few churches. They recently received their nonprofit and are applying for sales tax exemption. They’ve applied for some grants and hope to eventually

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be able to provide a place of their own with a commercial kitchen. In the future they would like to be able to provide shelter, at least temporarily, for those in need.

- B. Sutherlands (Ben Mason):** Glad to be open, it has been very successful. Seeing people from all over the valley at around 400-600 per day. The first weekend in May, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>, will be their Grand Opening. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m. There will be activities for the whole family including food truck, a bounce house, and other vendors. They will also be hosting a Mother's Day Event where kids can create heartfelt gifts for their moms. They currently have thirty-four employees and look to hire an additional five-10 more.
- C. Police Department (Chief Todd Quick):** Regarding the Wal-Mart incident on April 6<sup>th</sup>, the situation started off with a phone call to the Rocky Ford Dispatch saying that a La Junta police officer has been shot in Rocky Ford. (Officers were accounted for.) Shortly after that, La Junta dispatchers received a call that there was someone armed but not shooting in the store. Police officers arrived and made contact with Wal-Mart staff and confirmed that there was no shooting inside the store. A few minutes later, contact was made with the person who made the call. During this time, Wal-Mart was evacuating the store. Once it was verified that there was no active shooter, nobody hurt, Chief Quick contacted the news media to inform the public. After the officers completed the initial clear, they got bigger groups and went in and gave a secondary sweep. Officers were able to determine that the caller was the same person but had two separate phones. They were able to make an arrest off of that information. This was a successful operation and was made possible by cooperation between all the agencies: La Junta Police Department, Otero County Sheriff's Office, Colorado State Patrol, 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial DA Office, La Junta Fire and EMS.

Another incident occurred last Thursday on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Officers responded to the Ark Valley Regional Medical Center ER where they had been told that an inmate had escaped from the ER wearing hand cuffs, black and white striped pants and an orange shirt. Otero County Sheriff's Office and Bent County Sheriff's Office arrived on scene and started searching the area. A short time later, two drones were deployed. The next morning, there was a report of a stolen vehicle in the 1200 block of Bradish in La Junta. At approximately noon today, La Junta Police Department was informed that the suspect had been arrested in Albuquerque New Mexico. Agencies involved were La Junta Police Department, Bent County Sheriffs Office, Otero County Sheriffs Offices, State of Colorado parole and the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial investigators.

Coffee with a Cop: Went over well. Spent almost three hours with quite a few people. Received a lot of good comments. Next one will be at the Barista, April 24<sup>th</sup>, starting at 8:00 a.m.

Neighborhood Watch: Will be putting a meeting together again to help get people started. They are taught what to look for and when to call the police.

Since January 1, 2024, there have been 6,000 calls for service and 720 cases.

CodeRed (Reverse 911): You need to be signed up to be added to the database of names. There is a QR code on Facebook or you can access it through codered.com. Jessica Madrid added that it's "Dispatch Week" and thanked her team and all the dispatchers in the area.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:** Mayor Ayala asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of April 1, 2024. The mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT THE APRIL 1, 2024 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED:** Stoker

**SECOND:** Rikhof

**DISCUSSION:** There was no discussion

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

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – April 15, 2024****CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (5-minute time limit per person):**

1. David Polley, 622 Colorado Avenue: There will be a Neighborhood Watch kick-off meeting at the Senior Center this Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup>, at noon. Chief Quick will be there to speak. Kimberly at the library has agreed to be their spokes-person.
2. Tim “Radar” Snyder, American Legion: National Wreaths Across America Day is December 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 at the Fairview and Calvary cemetery. There are over 1,100 veterans there. Last year, there were 226 wreaths placed on gravesides. This year their goal is to leave no veteran behind. Wreaths can be purchased for \$17.00 each. The City Council and Rural Fire both agreed to purchase 10 wreaths each.
3. Angela Ayala, 1514 San Juan Avenue: Earth Day is Monday April 22<sup>nd</sup>. She invited everyone to come out to the first Community Cleanup of the season to take place at the Brick & Tile arroyo on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. **City Manager Search.** There is a brochure being put together. Once it is finalized, the job posting will be live. There are also some questions that have been compiled for the community that will be sent out as an online survey.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. **Sale of Old Electric Department Bucket Truck to Las Animas Power for \$53,000.00.** Interim Davidson said that this would be a great move to help our neighbors out and it's a good price for the age of this truck.

MOTION TO SELL THE ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT BUCKET TRUCK, THAT WAS RECENTLY REPLACED, TO LAS ANIMAS POWER IN THE AMOUNT OF \$53,000: Stoker

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: This truck is still in service; however, it is time for it to be replaced. Research was done for fair market value of this bucket truck.

VOTE: The motion carried (Ramirez and Velasquez absent)

- B. **Recommendation from the Certified Local Government to approve the Local Landmark Application from the United Methodist Church.** The United Methodist Church submitted an application for the local registry along with their state application. If your listed on the state or national register, you can automatically be locally landmarked. The Certified Local Government commission voted unanimously to approve the application.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE LOCAL LANDMARK APPLICATION FROM THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

**C. Committee/Board Reports**

1. Utility Board Work Session (Mayor Ayala):
  - Received a lot of new information about the Arkansas Valley Conduit, selenium, Pfas and a bunch of water issues coming our way. Getting prepared to deal with this as a united front.
2. AVRMC Board Dinner (Interim Davidson):

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- Received an overall update on where the hospital is sitting, what's going on, their challenges right now between Medicare and Medicaid, and submitting claims. Also looked at the positive side of what they're trying to bring back. More specialty clinics, doctors and some new programs. It was a very positive environment and good communication.

Council Member Rikhof: Andy Flemer is a huge asset to the community. The leadership he shows in rural hospitals is impressive.

**E. Interim City Manager Comments**

- Senior Center had two dances. Around twenty people attended the day dance and around thirty-five people attended the evening dance.
- SETran started up. It's the valleys first regional transportation system.
- Parks Department is planting some trees at Brick & Tile and some boulders were placed around the parking lot. Still working on some waterline advancement.
- Slide replacement at College Overlook playground.
- Baseball registration is ongoing at the lower rate.
- Soccer has started.
- Started working on the pool.
- Cemetery getting ready for Memorial Day cleanup.
- Electric Department had a broken pole on 10<sup>th</sup> Street by the new bathrooms for the park.
- Also working in North La Junta at wells fields, replacing and setting new poles and maintaining lines.
- Water Department received a new vac truck.
- The Streets Department is getting ready to work in front of VanHooks to replace a storm sewer line. Then will be working on 14<sup>th</sup> Street just south of Bradish and Grace.
- Around May 20<sup>th</sup> they're going to plan on doing a deck replacement and maintenance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> & Adams bridge.
- There was a huge fire at the Evraz property fire along with a big wildland fire going on at the same time. La Junta and other departments in Southeast Colorado were able to go up and assist.
- April 26-28, hosting Fire on the Plains training. There have been 110-115 signed up around the state.
- Discovered a tent and other things in the arroyo at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Anderson. The Street Department cleaned up that area. Thank you.
- The shopping carts have been picked up by the museum.
- Was notified that the vultures are back. The FDA and Mr. Gacnik are going to be hanging a deterrent sculpture in the trees. It is a decoy only.

**ADDITIONAL TOPICS DISCUSSED:**

- The renting of the Senior Center hasn't been decided yet.
- The tunnel systems in the arroyo area at Brick and Tile park need to be secured.

**F. Governing Body Comments****1. Council Member Rikhof:**

- Wondered if a town hall had been scheduled yet. There's a lot of people wondering how to have conversations and questions about some of the things going on in town. This was promised as an outlet.

Mayor Ayala: The town hall meeting had not been scheduled yet. Was hoping for April but currently shooting for May. Something that used to be done a long time ago were individual council member ward meetings either in their ward or a neutral place.

**2. Council Member Stoker:**

- Will be walking the ward starting in May on Thursday evenings around 6:00 p.m. if anyone would want to join for discussion.

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- The neighborhood watch is a great idea. Proactive citizens help make proactive police officers. Sometimes officer presence is enough to deter any bad things.
  - Plug out to Adrian, Todd and Brad and all our local public safety for their quickness in getting information out to your Southeast Colorado News at [seconews.org](http://seconews.org).
3. Council Member Rikhof:
- Otero will graduate 350 people with degrees, certificates and credentials on May 4<sup>th</sup>.
  - Community concert series continues on Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup>.
4. Mayor Ayala:
- Senator Hickenlooper met with our hospital and then all of the Southeast hospitals. Mayor Ayala and Commissioner Rob Oquist represented La Junta.
  - The Mayor and Interim Davidson got to take a tour of the brewery. It was a great tour and a beautiful facility.
  - Hospital dinner was great.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

**CITY OF LA JUNTA**

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Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

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Joe Ayala, Mayor