

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 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, July 7, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

INVOCATION: MJ Romano 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
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 2

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Cristian Estrada, Deputy City Clerk
Nancy Harrington, La Junta
Bette McFarren, RF Daily Gazette
Elaine Wittman, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Allie Batterton, La Junta
Laura Diprince, La Junta
Brittany Baylor, La Junta
Kimberly Gallegos, La Junta
Mariah Gallegos, La Junta
Josh Harris, La Junta
Kayleigh Hart, La Junta
Jenny Mathews, La Junta
MJ Romano, La Junta



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



MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: Mayor Ayala asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of June 16, 2025. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JUNE 16, 2025 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Ramirez

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (5-minute time limit per person): None

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 7, 2025**COMMUNITY EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Lisa Pantoya – Our Lady of Guadalupe/St. Patrick Parish is having their 103rd Annual Bazaar this weekend July 11th and 12th, 2025 from 5:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. each night.
2. Maureen Rikhof – SECCP Brew Fest has been rescheduled to Saturday, July 26, 2025 at the Santa Fe Plaza Park from 6:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. Come out to support the Plaza Block building.
 - a. Next Monday, July 14th at 6:00 P.M. at the Brick and Tile Park will be the Ward 3 listening tour. All are welcome.

INFORMATION**A. Arkansas Valley Regional Medical Center**

1. Joe Ayala – Has been in contact with AVRMC. They are currently in a period of transition from the previous Director, Andy Flemmer, and are searching for a replacement. AVRMC wanted to send a representative, but did not have an idea of whom to send. One of our council members, Paul Velasquez, is on the AVRMC board who is going to read a few prepared statements from the hospital. This is not a question-answer session, but rather just sharing information. There has been much misinformation circulating the area regarding the new BBB bill.

2. Paul Velasquez – shared a prepared statement (attached) from Arkansas Valley Regional Medical Center.

3. Joe Ayala – Many people were concerned with the BBB and what that meant to the hospital. Those proposed work requirements would not go into effect until January 2027, which is based off of the actual bill. We do have a short window to come up with ideas. AVRMC does have a new president, Joe Pentlicki, D.M., whom took over for Dale L. Leighty; will be in communication with Joe and have Michael Hart involved, as well. The council does not take any ownership of the hospital unless certain trigger points are hit, then we as council can brainstorm and share ideas. We do not have any direct say in the hospital's business. In the event that certain trigger points were hit, then council is to take over the hospital board. Does not think that this idea was thought out well, as the mayor nor the council is comfortable to do that. There is a lot of work needing to be done with our hospital; however, this situation is also occurring with rural hospitals across the nation. Even in the best of cases, they are still facing hard times. If the council has any questions that are directed towards the hospital, please share them with the mayor and will get any questions passed on.

B. Economic Development Summit

1. Michael Hart, City Manager – Attended the Economic Development Summit at Otero College last week; was an overview to figure out what to do with economic development here in La Junta. The purpose of the summit was to convene economic development partners in the City of La Junta to create a shared understanding of current economic development efforts, a roadmap to future economic development efforts, and roles and responsibilities that drive success. There was a total of 27 folks from a wide variety of different entities, including the Chamber of Commerce, City of La Junta, Creative Main Street, Tourism, Otero College, Otero County Economic Development, Urban Renewal Authority, a representative from AVRMC, as well as one of the county commissioners. There were a few focus questions that were focused on during the summit, which were: What would define economic development in La Junta? What are we missing? What responsibilities and roles currently exist? What we would like to see for the future of economic development? What needs to change to make our future happen? What now? By the end, there were three action items that were produced: Beautifying store fronts/facades in downtown La Junta; Identifying primary industries to recruit at the Industrial Park in La Junta; Reassess and create a plan to upgrade the aging city infrastructures including the water/wastewater, streets, electricity, etc.

- Was part of the infrastructure group; had good discussions; each group was tasked to figure out a 30-day, 6-month, and 1-year plan. Next steps going forward, in my opinion, is the establishment of a 7-to-9-person Economic Development Board. It is important to identify folks at that table to be from many different industries we have here in La Junta; such as tourism, medical, education, industrial park – we would like a good array of representation from here in La Junta. Now the next steps would be compiling bylaws for this new board.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 7, 2025

- Major supporter of infrastructure; if there is no infrastructure to support growth, it will not work out. There also needs to be a plan in place; everything will not be solved at the snap of fingers. It is important to have a board put together, as well as a plan.

C. Camper Trailer Parking

1. Jenny Mathews, 113 W. 7th St. emailed the council; has been a several month process to be heard; would like clarification (or a possible revision) to the current ordinance regarding camper trailer parking. The current ordinance states that people have 48 hours to leave a camper trailer parked before they have to move it. Owns a small, teardrop trailer. There are SUVs and many other campers are much larger than my own camper.

2. Chandra Ochoa – owns a camper; a chore to bring out, work all day to clean it out. There were several times where we would need to leave it parked. We would contact the Police Department, Code Enforcement, or Todd Quick prior to leaving it parked to inform them; 48 hours is quite a short time frame, especially for those who work. The PD has been good in working with us. Also sees the other side of having a camper parked in front of a property for a long time could become a hinderance to neighbors.

3. Joe Ayala shared a message from Jeremiah Stoker, whom was absent from this council meeting:

“I won’t be at council tonight, but the comment I have is regarding the campers – It should be ok for them to be parked on the street; I believe that they should be treated similarly to junk vehicles – should have current registration, be operable and have no flat tires, and they can only be parked in front of the owner’s residence.”

4. Maureen Rikhof – It seems like the issue is process; it is more about how information is delivered. That 48 hours is too short of a window and that there should be more a warning. Not sure if it is a policy issue, or more of a process issue. Is there room for change in how the process is perceived?

5. Jenny Mathews – Has a trailer that is no larger than the size of her Subaru; it works, has current tags and has no flat tires. It is taxing to hook and unhook, as well as to make sure that it is constantly pitched when the car is needed. Has called the PD previously and asked for an extension past the 48 hours, but was told “no”, due to the ordinance.

Further discussion occurred regarding the ordinance and how a lot of campers are larger in size by comparison. Another discussion point that came up was having people park their campers/trailers at another person’s house, rather than their own. More dialogue surrounded the subject of larger sized campers and how it could impede sight and traffic. Overall, the current ordinance seems to be ambiguous and not working as is. The reason for most camper/trailer parking ordinances like this one is due to people living in camper trailers on the street parked in front of non-owned homes (family/friends’ homes). Another idea of the possibility to issue paid permits for campers/trailers to allow the long-term parking, but more issues could arise from that as it is a public street.

NEW BUSINESS**A. Liquor Licenses**

1. **Application for a Special Events Permit by SECCP, Nancy Aschermann, Event Manager. The event is their rescheduled Brew Fest to be held July 26, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at Santa Fe Plaza Park.** 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 SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT BY SECCP, FOR THEIR BREW FEST TO BE HELD JULY 26, 2025 FROM 6:00 P.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 7, 2025

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

2. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Inspiration Field, Brittany Baylor, Event Manager. The event is the SECOM Golf Tournament to be held July 10 and July 11, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 612 Adams Avenue.** 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 SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT BY INSPIRATION FIELD, FOR THE SECOM GOLF TOURNAMENT TO BE HELD JULY 10 AND 11, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

3. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Our Inspiration Field, Brittany Baylor, Event Manager. The event is their Hall of Fame Event to be held October 18, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 612 Adams Avenue.** 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 SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT BY INSPIRATION FIELD, FOR THEIR HALL OF FAME EVENT TO BE HELD OCTOBER 18, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

4. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Inspiration Field, Brittany Baylor, Event Manager. The event is their Annual Monster Bash to be held October 25, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 612 Adams Avenue.** 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 SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT BY INSPIRATION FIELD, FOR THEIR ANNUAL MONSTER BASH TO BE HELD OCTOBER 25, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

5. **Application for a Special Events Permit by Inspiration Field, Brittany Baylor, Event Manager. The event is the Sip 'N Shop Event to be held November 1, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 612 Adams Avenue.** 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 SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT BY INSPIRATION FIELD, FOR THE SIP 'N SHOP EVENT TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 1, 2025 FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 7, 2025

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Stoker absent)

B. Committee/Board Reports: None**City Manager's Comments**

- Was amazed with the attendance and activities at the Wet/Dry Parade on July 4th; this was such a great turnout; an amazing event for the community to come together. Looking forward to next year's event.
- Attended the Colorado Municipal League (CML) event in Breckenridge, CO with Lisa Pantoya and Paul Velazquez. Lots of good sessions with a lot of information.
- From the Police Department, there were 322 calls; from July 1st through the 3rd, there were nine (9) calls regarding illegal fireworks. On July 4th, that number increased to 25 calls with an additional five (5) more calls on July 5th. The time for fireworks has ended. Additional officers were used for the July 4th festivities just to be able to have some more manpower to help out.
 - Todd Quick, including 25 different officers from the region, as well as from New Mexico, South Dakota, and all the way up to Washington were all in attendance at the FBI Supervisor Leadership Institute meeting going on this week.
- From the Fire Department, calls are up from around this time last year – we are at about 958 calls, and last year they were around 901 calls. The majority of the calls (771) of course come for the EMS services.
- The Light Department is still doing tree trimming around power lines. There was also a new street light pole installed at the Brick & Tile Park parking lot.
- The Purchasing Department bid #25-006 for the Arkansas Valley Pallet Company ADA compliant bathroom has been extended to August 7, 2025.
- Quite a bit events happening at the library; In June, they had five (5) special different classes as well as offered nine (9) different opportunities total. About 1,200 people visited the library and participated in these activities in the month of June. Deeply enjoys all of the programs offered by the library. Encourages the community to visit the library and talk to the library staff, as they love talking about everything the library offers.
 - The library's summer reading program is at 380 participants; they are also hosting the free movie at the Fox Theater tomorrow (July 8, 2025).
 - The library has had a few A/C issues; it is currently not working and very hot at the library. There are still people using the library, computers, and looking through the stacks. Had to close the library today due to the heat. The A/C should be fixed by tomorrow morning.
- Brock Hinkhouse reported that they have been in the middle of removing invasive reed grass at the City Park Pond. They are very invasive. This has been a multi-day process, as well as some work being done during the wintertime.
- Men's & co-ed league softball signups are underway. Sign up at City Hall.
- The repair of the DeBourgh building has started where the roof had collapsed.
- The airport runway replacement design should be completed later this month, and the project should begin sometime in 2026.
- Aliza Libby had brought to attention regarding special events – in order for the vendors to get exempt from the peddler's permit, the council just has to declare a certain event be a "special event". The city will still be able to collect sales tax.
- Safety Jam happened over the past weekend; another great turnout for a great community event. There was a helicopter brought in, as well as a Denver Broncos Hall of Famer.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – July 7, 2025

C. Governing Body's Comments

1. Mayor Ayala

- Will need to reschedule the Work Session planned for July 21, 2025. The mayor will be absent on the 21st, as well as Erin Harris will not be in attendance.
- Thanked the Chamber of Commerce for putting on the Wet/Dry parade. There is a lot to say about these types of events, and it definitely brought the community together.
- The fireworks were a bit of an issue, woke up at 2:00 a.m. to the sound of fireworks on July 5th.
- The Wipeout "Dive-In" movie night at the pool was successful; there are some kinks to work out for next time, however still an overall success. Shout out to the whole crew at The Wipeout for their efforts, as well as their amazing parade float for the Wet/Dry parade.

2. Council Member Pantoya

- Thanked the City of La Junta and the La Junta Chamber of Commerce. Even though there was no fireworks display this year, everyone was still out celebrating the festivities and having fun.
- Wanted to mention CML; discussed economic development and the stakeholders that are involved in that. City Council plays a crucial role as the city, but there are many more people that need to be involved such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Colorado Workforce Center, businesses, and community leaders. It takes a lot of collaboration in order to get economic development where we would like it to be. Had a great time and made a lot of connections at CML.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

ATTEST:**CITY OF LA JUNTA**

Cristian Estrada, Deputy City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor