

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 4, 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, August 4, 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 1
Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2

Also present: Brock Hinkhouse, Acting City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Brad Roe, La Junta
Bethany Bender, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Erika Lively, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette



Subject to approval at the
August 18, 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 July 21, 2025. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JULY 21, 2025 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Rikhof

SECOND: Stoker

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

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

1. Bethany Bender, 802 Carson Avenue, Otero College: Invited families who would be interested in being a “friendly family” for our international students so that they have another connection to our community besides the college.
2. Brad Roe, Veteran Outreach Coordinator Staff Sgt. Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program: The program started in September 2022. In September 2025, the three-year pilot program ends if it doesn’t get funded. It is currently sitting on the desk of the Veteran’s Affairs Committee in the Senate. Additional funding was obtained to get through the end of December. Please reach out to your Senators.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 4, 2025**COMMUNITY EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS (Council Members):**

1. Otero students are returning, now is the time to register. Faculty starts tomorrow and classes start on the 18th.
2. The mayor received an email invite from Rocky Ford Mayor Duane Gurule to the 148th Arkansas Valley Fair. The parade is Friday, August 15th at 10:00 a.m.
3. Police in the Park was a great event. The Explorers were in attendance. They are youth ages 14-18 and are in the process of maybe becoming law enforcement. Great job by Todd, Dispatch and all the officers.
4. The Public Budget Outreach event at the Senior Center had a better turnout than last year. This is it's second year. It's a great event to kick off our budget process.
5. Shout out to Jerry's Painting and his young people that were there. They sponsored a First Responders luncheon last week. It was nicely attended.

REPORTS

- A. Property Management Fund Audit.** The next thing to do is get some dates together to schedule a tour with City Council to go around our different properties.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE OUTDOOR CONSERVATION FUND FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2025.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Stoker

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

NEW BUSINESS**A. Committee/Board Reports**

1. Parks/Recreation (Council Member Ramirez):
 - Baseball had 208 participants. There were fifteen community members who sponsored teams. Thank you to those sponsors.
 - There's an issue at the golf course with the software that runs the sprinkler system.
 - Wanting to make improvements at Potter Park: artificial turf, redoing the press box and bathrooms.
 - Will be working on the tennis courts at City Park the end of this year or beginning of next year.
 - The scoreboard at Little Potter is completely down. Currently looking at updating and looking for sponsors.
2. Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Had two citizen requests for variance approvals. One for a home dog grooming business and the other for a car port. Both were approved.
3. Library Board (Council Member Rikhof):
 - The board had a retreat last Friday morning with Chelsea Coleman. Shout out to the board members: Holly Huerta-Hudak, Terry Smalling, Sarah Holt, Julie Worley and Nicholas Burdick.
 - Reviewed the charter.
 - Summer Reading Program has wrapped up. There were 277 kids that signed up and 108 adults. With twenty-three different activities and opportunities for engagement. Nearly 2,000 people showed up.

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- Talked about the parking lot next to the Plaza Building. There was some discussion on who should be in charge of repairing and maintaining that parking lot which is owned by the city. There are two parking lots. One is leased to Urban Renewal and the other to Perkins. At first it seemed like SECCP wanted Urban Renewal to maintain it but Urban Renewal wondered why they should since it's city property. After doing some research, we found a lease that Urban Renewal signed saying they would be in charge of maintaining that property and fixing it if it needs to be fixed. The parking lot is set in a way that when we get rain, it is going into the north door and we were worried about it damaging the floor that was just put in. There were arguments as to whether it should have been done before or after. What they've done is made a trench cut for now to drain the rain. Urban Renewal is going to have another meeting to go over what their ultimate fix is going to be. The city will try to work with them but it will not be on the city to repair or replace that parking lot at this time. The original quote came in was around \$380,000 which is more than Martin's whole budget for the year.

D. Acting City Manager's Comments

- Some of the membranes on the vessels at the RO Plant have been going bad. They did get some replacement membranes.
- Received a quote for the building that's supposed to go around the sludge press.
- Tom had some funds leftover from a partnership with Resources Central and asked me if I wanted any trees. We were able to put forty-five trees at the park, cemetery and golf course.
- Pool closes this Sunday, August 10th. Dog Days will be August 16th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Currently taking youth Football and Volleyball registrations.
- This week the crosswalks around the schools will be painted. Then work will begin on the curb and gutter project at 10th and Barnes.
- Michael Yerman will be here for a work session on Wednesday, August 6th at 4:00 p.m. regarding the sign code.
- Michael Hart is attending a Brownsfield Conference in Chicago. The conference was completely paid for with a scholarship. The city didn't pay anything. Pam Denahy is also attending.

E. Governing Body's Comments**1. Council Member Velasquez:**

- Thanked the lifeguards. They've done such a tremendous job and they do every year. They're giving up their summer so we can have a summer. Working at the pool might seem like a cool job but it's probably stressful and comes with a lot of responsibility.
- Thanked the street crew and Martin Montoya for taking care of the cleanup of south Bradish.
- Mr. Ron Hogan is the new interim CEO for AVRMC and started this past week.

2. Council Member Rikhof:

- The Police Department is doing their Citizen's Academy again. It starts August 19th. It'll be held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and one Saturday. Highly recommend it and it's a really good experience.
- Shout out to the Fire Department. There was a fire in an office at Otero College last week and Brad and crew showed up. Was very impressed with how professional and quick they were.

3. Mayor Ayala:

- The women's group called Cafecito of Denver invited me to be a part of their monthly meeting. This last meeting was about Bent's Fort and how they can help save it because of the issues coming up with the interior and exterior. During the call, we talked about a number of issues. There were a couple of people that are going to attempt to have the governor come to Bent's Fort to take a tour. There have been invites as well to Congressman Jeff Hurd and Congresswoman Lauren Boebert. Both of them have reached back out. We're just seeing what those schedules look like.

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- At Police in the Park, I was having a conversation with our new code enforcement officer and he says that the online way of turning in what you may believe to be a code enforcement violation is working really well for him. He says he checks it every morning and he always has a couple. It helps him because they can't be everywhere at once. He checks them and if they seem credible, he will talk with the owners and go from there.
- That made me think of the other things that we started doing on the website. I reached out to Martin and he said the pothole one gets used a lot on the website. Not so much the signs. They have been able to service more potholes this year by using this. It's not about turning in someone that you deem to be not following the rules. Just because you see something doesn't mean someone else knows about it. Everyone thinks our officers are just cruising around but that's not what's going on. They're getting calls. There's a loose dog issue that we have in La Junta right now. That takes at least 30-45 minutes per dog call and that's if they're easy. If he's out doing weed or junk vehicle violations and a dog call comes in, that takes precedence. Just know that code enforcement is working really hard.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor