

*Subject to approval at
the August 19, 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, August 5, 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:

Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
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: Brad Davidson, Interim City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Aliza Libby, Director of Finance
Kristin Carpenter, La Junta
Terry Smalling, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Val Clark, La Junta
Jeff Richardson, La Junta
Josh Harris, La Junta
Colleen Oquist, La Junta
Dottie Burnett, La Junta
Angela Ayala, La Junta
Reece Blincoe, EOSD Superintendent
Nancy Harrington, La Junta
Jason Key, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Daniel Romero, La Junta
Melissa Root, La Junta
Ashli Hernandez, Swink
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 July 15, 2024. The mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE JULY 15, 2024 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Rikhof

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

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INFORMATION

A. East Otero School District Superintendent (James “Reece” Blincoe). Superintendent Blincoe informed the council that we need to grow our schools to the point where they’re bringing more teachers to town, more people working here and more money circulating throughout our community. Having our businesses doing better and succeeding more is all part of the vision of the future of our schools. There are six agenda items that are being focused on over the next three years:

1. Refine the curriculum being taught within State standards and refining instruction,
2. Engage students to give them focus, direction, and something to strive for,
3. Bring in career pathways by working with Otero College to prepare students for the future,
4. Engage the families to get them more involved and engaged in the learning practice,
5. The superintendent will connect with community and stakeholders to be visible within the community, and
6. Align support systems in the school to support teachers and principals to make our schools successful.

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

1. Colleen Oquist, 1716 Carson Avenue: Requested street closures for the Tarantula Fest which will be held September 27th and 28th. Information is on the website: visitlajunta.net.
2. Jason Key, La Junta: Discussed the cost benefit analysis of proposing a camping ban. It shows that paying for homeless to have minimal housing, food, healthcare, and job counseling costs far less than the public cost of policing their street life. Need to take a look at the costs that go into criminalizing homelessness. Need to utilize the correction system as a place for people who pose a genuine danger to the public. That doesn’t include individuals whose only offense is living unsheltered.
3. Kristin Carpenter, 1923 College: Works for Colorado Consortium which is a branch of the School of Pharmacy at Colorado University. They focus on substance use education and technical assistance in Colorado and homelessness is a constant theme. Would like the council to consider pausing further work on the proposed camping ban ordinance until they have time to explore sufficient alternative shelter and referral options available to the community. Camping bans have not been proven effective in addressing homelessness. They disproportionately impact vulnerable populations which includes individuals with disabilities, veterans, and families who have children. Asked the council to participate on a planning task force with local organizations who are experts in treatment, recovery, behavioral health, homelessness, housing and create a strategic plan that aids the community at large with thoughtful care while reducing harm.
4. Lisa Trigilio, Fort Lyon Program Director, 25 Chaparral Cr: Hoping to get some kind of agreement or try a task force that could go around and talk to people, tell them about resources, have them come out to Ft. Lyon to take a look. There’s a lot of solutions that could be tried because camping bans and the punitive portion of this doesn’t work. It’s about people that need help whether its mental health, substance use or both. Perhaps the council would come out and see what is done at Fort Lyon. There are so many lives that have been changed. It’s a very hard population that needs served but there’s so many wonderful rewards coming out of that. Working together, the City of La Junta can improve this problem.
5. Val Clark, 906 Santa Fe Ave: There are success stories. Folks that are homeless now can become productive again. Many of them also bring with them health subsidies such as Medicaid and SSDI. There are also grants that can be considered. A lot of the homeless that are here now were here for a long time. Maybe they can be helped in finding resources or a place for them to go. Maybe consider a triage situation.
6. Jeff Richardson, 617 San Juan Ave: Ended up in Fort Lyon due to alcoholism and drug addiction and became homeless. Accepted being homeless. Alcohol, drug addiction, mental health are a big problem. There is a solution out there. There’s a solution for these people and its not to put them in jail. It’s hard for people who haven’t actually experience some of these things to really process a day in the homeless. Need to try to give these people a chance rather than a citation or criminal record.

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7. Ashli Hernandez, Swink: Here on behalf of the Kitchen of Kindness. We have a lot of compassionate, big-hearted people that are willing to give their time. As it was said before, not every story is the outcome that we would hope for but we do see the ones that are and that's wonderful. They become a part of the community and we just do everything we can all the time to continue to make this a better place, find solutions. The Kitchen of Kindness helps these people and they start coming whether they get into a better place or have found a home. They've started to know us. We've become their friends. We've become where they network. We're not just people that help them with food anymore. It's maybe a light at the end of their tunnel. We want you to be aware that we're ready to become part of the solution and find something for these folks.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. City Manager Search.** There were two finalists, one of them accepted another position elsewhere. Still moving forward with the other finalist. He's going to meet with the search committee at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday the 7th, then there will be a Meet and Greet at 6:00 p.m. at the Senior Center for the public to attend. The following day, the council will interview Mr. Comiskey. People were encouraged to not read anything into the search process other than what the mayor has said.

- B. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE GENERAL FUND, INTERNAL SERVICE FUND, ELECTRIC FUND, WATER FUND, WASTE WATER FUND, AND SANITATION FUND FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2024.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Velasquez

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: Council Member Rikhof is pro transparent budgeting process. Questioning the most is the insurance rates. For her it is about the city council having a budget that they vote on in November that is transparent and is put together as well as it can be in a way that is going to reflect what the city can expect going forward for the next year. It is particularly important since the reserves have been declining at a very significant percentage over the last five years.

It was noted that things do come up during that year that require a supplemental budget and that the budget is a living document.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ramirez, Velasquez, Ayala, Pantoya

Those voting NO: Rikhof

The motion carried 4-1 (Stoker and Ochoa absent)

NEW BUSINESS

- A. A Resolution Declaring the City's Participation in the Jump Start Program.** Resolution No. R-10-2024 was presented for the council's consideration. The Jump Start Program is a grant program that requires participation by the city as well as businesses. The original resolution had a sunset date of 2020 for the program. There is a business in the city right now that wants to take advantage of the Jump Start Program. This new resolution will change the language to permit it not to be outdated.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-10-2024: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: The funding source for this grant is OEDIT (Office of Economic Development and International Trade). Also, the name of the college needs to be changed to "Otero College".

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

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- B. A Resolution Concerning the Petition for Annexation Filed by Pamela Sisson.** Resolution No. R-11-2024 was presented for the council's consideration.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-11-2024: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: This is a vacant lot. Annexing into the city allows them to build using different rules and codes and also gives them access to the city's infrastructure (sewer, electric, water, trash).

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

C. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Center (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Starting September 1st, they're going to be discontinuing all dances.
 - Membership is about 500 strong.
 - Wednesday mornings at 8:00, they have a veterans meeting (fellowship).
 - Looking at renting out the facility.
2. Tourism Board (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Dawn Block gave a fantastic presentation about the multimodal grant.
 - There were two different partnerships that were presented for basically free consulting work.

F. Interim City Manager Comments

- CIRSA will be helping with some coverage of funds for some of the items at the Brick and Tile Park. We've also received updates on the quotes from TLM and Dibble to get some stamped plans for the sturdiness of the bridge.
- The pool closes this Sunday to the public. They held a movie at the pool last Thursday and the turnout was very good. The annual dog days will be held on August 17th from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- We currently have Football and Volleyball registrations open.
- Last Thursday at the airport, we had sixteen Blackhawks come in for some refueling and sold about 4,000 gallons of fuel.
- The Electric Department has been working hard through these hot days trying to make sure that we have good power. They changed out a bunch of transformers to update around town.
- The Street Department has been working on the ballfield at 22nd. They had some drainage issues again. They are also looking at finishing up the project on the 3rd Street bridge.
- Last week, the Police Department worked closely with CBI and were very successful on hitting some drug areas in town.
- The Fire Department deployed a crew over to the southwest region of Colorado.
- Shared handouts with stats and numbers from the Library for the first six months of the year and an update from Mr. Jackson on the Industrial Park (airport, golf course, property management).
- Getting ready to dive into the budget with the supervisors. Will begin one-on-one meetings next week.

Mayor Ayala: Police in the Park will be this Friday, August 9th from 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. at the La Junta City Park.

G. Governing Body Comments

1. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Thanked Brad and the entire staff for the work put into the budget planning session. There were some great resources and would encourage us to go back to the planning session again and figure out how to do it so more people want to come and learn. It was a very valuable evening.
 - Have been doing a lot of reading, homework, about the issue of our unhoused people in our community and from what we heard tonight, would suggest that we reframe next weeks conversation as a conversation about the unhoused in La Junta and not focus on a particular piece of legislation. It's a very dynamic problem and we have a lot of people in

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this community who know a lot about it and a lot of them are not sitting up here. I would like to broaden what we're planning to talk about and that we make it a conversation that is more inclusive of what the real issue is and that's people who don't have a home to go to.

2. Council Member Velasquez:

- Want to commend Mr. Gil Esquibel. He takes it upon himself to go to the recycling containers by Veterans Field and clean it up by himself. That's the type of citizen involvement in our community that makes La Junta such a great place.

3. Mayor Ayala:

- Thanked the Chamber for the BLT. It was a really great event. The speaker was a professional in Economic Development. The way they did it in Kansas is different than how we do it here. They had their county and their city pay in for one Economic Development. I thought that was very interesting.
- We talked about work sessions and the one we have next week. We're also going to plan another ordinance work session and a budget work session as well.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor