

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 18, 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 18, 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 – arrived at 6:02 p.m.
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Subject to approval at the
September 2, 2025
City Council Meeting

Absent: None

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Erika Lively, La Junta
Nancy Harrington, La Junta
Jenny Mathews, La Junta
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 August 4, 2025. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 4, 2025 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Ramirez

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

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

1. There was no citizen participation.

COMMUNITY EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS (Council Members):

1. The Police Citizen's Academy has been moved to the spring, around March, in order to rally more people to be involved.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 18, 2025**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR DISCUSSION OF A PERSONNEL MATTER UNDER C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(f) AND NOT INVOLVING: ANY SPECIFIC EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE REQUESTED DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER IN OPEN SESSION; ANY MEMBER OF THIS BODY OR ANY ELECTED OFFICIAL; THE APPOINTMENT OF ANY PERSON TO FILL AN OFFICE OF THIS BODY OR OF AN ELECTED OFFICIAL; OR PERSONNEL POLICIES THAT DO NOT REQUIRE THE DISCUSSION OF MATTERS PERSONAL TO PARTICULAR EMPLOYEES (City Manager Six-Month Review):** Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

The Council went into Executive Session at 6:04 p.m. and reconvened at 6:48 p.m.

- B. Application for a Special Events Permit by La Junta Chamber of Commerce, Christina Tozzie, Event Manager. The event is Early Settler's Day to be held September 6, 2025 from 4:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. at the City Park Tennis Courts.** 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.

MOTION TO GRANT A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT TO LA JUNTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR EARLY SETTLER'S DAY TO BE HELD SEPTEMBER 6, 2025 FROM 4:00 P.M. TO 11:59 P.M. AT THE CITY PARK TENNIS COURTS: Rikhof

SECOND: Stoker

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Pantoya abstained)

C. Committee/Board Reports

1. Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Will begin meeting in the Council Chambers at the next meeting on September 15th.
 - Would like to be added to the September 15th Council agenda to give their annual report.
2. Senior Center Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Brining back breakfast and potluck's starting next month.
3. Utilities Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Performed routine maintenance at the RO Plant. Flushed air relief valves and tested wells.
 - Distribution completed the fire hydrant testing and flushing.
 - The Electric and Sanitation Departments requested rate increases. Sanitation requested a 3% rate increase and Electric requested a dollar increase to the customer charge beginning in 2026.
 - It was announced that Keith will not be seeking another term for the utility board.

D. City Manager's Comments

- Attended the Brownsfield Conference in Chicago. Was able to get a lot of good contacts and networking. We've had the Brownsfield program since 2022. The initial grant was for \$500,000. To date, we've spent a little over \$300,000. The next two buildings we'll be looking at is the Travel Inn and Gibson's.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 18, 2025

- Pam is getting with the city attorney regarding short term rental lodging tax and will have a potential ordinance to present soon.
- School is back in session. Please be cautious when you're out driving in the morning.
- Did some research on parking trailers in the street. Currently, the city council has an ordinance that does not allow for trailers, campers, RV's, etc. to be parked on the city right-of-way for more than 48 hours. Parked meaning unhitched from a vehicle sitting independently. The ordinance does not speak to the time frame for a vehicle parked on public right-of-way. However, the state statute does dictate vehicles cannot be parked on a public right-of-way for more than 48 hours unless there's a local ordinance that allows for them to be longer. Since we don't have that local ordinance it reverts back to the state statute. Also, the current city ordinance does not identify what junk vehicles or vehicles in general are. It basically states that they cannot be in disrepair or without current licensing. From that, I worked up four different options. Option #1 is to do nothing and continue to enforce it as it currently is. Option #2 is to change the trailer parking ordinance to allow parking in the streets for longer than 48 hours. Option #3 is to create an ordinance for vehicles parked on the road to align with the trailer ordinance. Option #4 is to establish a designated parking area for trailer parking. This would entail a lot of extra moving parts.
- There is an increase in stray dogs running around town. In 2023, there was a total of 530 stray dog cases. Of those, 251 of the dogs were actually captured. That's about a 47% catch percentage. In 2024, 562 stray dog calls with 273 that were captured. That was up to about 49%. Current year, right now, 313 calls so far, 131 dogs captured or about 42%. So, the thing that would help out the officers the most, is if the person making that call was able to stay there and keep eyes on the animal and let them know if it moves somewhere else. What happens is by the time code enforcement gets there the dogs gone and the report caller. I think it would lead to a higher catch ratio but that's a matter of getting folks to stay with that animal until it's able to be picked up.
- We've had some violence over the last couple of weeks here. I talked to Chief Quick and the plan right now is we're going to be putting together information packets for the public. with information, resources, and phone numbers to call. The crimes that we've had here recently have been person to person. People aren't breaking into stuff, households or carjacking. It's unfortunate but bad people do bad things. With the laws here in Colorado, it's not going to change much because these criminals know that they can do things and they'll get right back out. One of the best things that Chief Quick and I talked about that could help deter crime is to form neighborhood watches. Chief Quick is more than happy to sit down with anyone at any time to help organize a neighborhood watch in order to be able to deter some of the crime that's going on.
- Business licensing here in town is something we've talked about before. It helps us better track the businesses that are in town to know how many of the different types of businesses we have. It could potentially stop an illegal business from popping up. It can ensure that businesses are conducting business in a properly zoned area of the city.
- The Electric Department will be doing some more siren testing. They are waiting on some relay switches to arrive.
- Sanitation Department wants to remind everybody that the October Cleanup is coming up. They will also be doing some painting of the crosswalks around the school; however, the paint machine is not working at this time. They're waiting on the part to get in. The 10th and Barnes curb and gutter project is scheduled to start in two weeks.
- Been working very diligently with all the different supervisors getting the budget figured out and am happy to report, as of right now, we have a balanced budget for next year.
- Encourage everybody to go check out the library and all the services they have to offer.

E. Governing Body's Comments

1. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Happy six-month anniversary to Michael Hart. Glad that you're here and we have already talked about the process that will be commencing to do an official 12-month review in February. Wanted to acknowledge your milestone and thank you.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 18, 2025

2. Mayor Ayala:

- The executive session tonight was a six-month review. That's not a normal review date but we had to prepare for budget time and his hire date falls outside of our annual budget. When we do get closer to his 12-month anniversary, then we will have a specific procedure on how that looks for his actual review.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor