

*Subject to approval at
the September 3, 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 19, 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:

Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 3
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
 Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3

Also present: Brad Davidson, Interim City Manager
 Erin Harris, City Attorney
 Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
 Brock Hinkhouse, Director of Parks/Rec.
 Josh Harris, La Junta
 Dave Jacob, La Junta
 Chad Penner, La Junta
 John Smith, La Junta
 Erika Lively, La Junta
 Nancy Bennett, La Junta
 Douglas Golding, 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 5, 2024. The mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE AUGUST 5, 2024 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

INFORMATION

A. Eagle Scout (John Smith, Troop 232): Having a food drive for his Eagle Scout project. It will benefit the Rocky Ford Food Share Program. Will be hosting some food drives to collect canned foods and non-perishable foods. He has already hosted one food drive that was very successful. There are three more food drives scheduled: August 24th, D.O.C. Barbershop, La Junta; September 22nd, The Frontier Diner, Cheraw; and September 28th, The Clothespin Laundry, La Junta. There is a donation box set up at the Rocky Ford High School. Monetary donations will be used to purchase additional canned foods and non-perishable foods.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 19, 2024

- B. La Junta Cemetery (Brock Hinkhouse, Director of Parks/Rec.):** Answered some questions regarding maintenance of the cemetery.

Lawn Care

- Last year was an extremely wet spring and the cemetery was gorgeous. This spring has been dry, windy and a little warmer.
- There is not a sprinkler system. The nicest cemetery in the Valley is in Las Animas, which is a private district with a sprinkler system.
- Watering has to be done during working hours into the evening. Then an employee goes back out to shut the water off. It's not very efficient.
- Water lines have to be replaced that are 80–90 year-old cast iron. As they have been being replaced, there has been chunks of the line missing.
- Water line replacement has been being done for about 8-10 years at a cost of around \$15,000 per budget. They are about 2/5 done with the replacement.

Ground Maintenance

- Fertilize and aerate twice a year.
- There is a combination of around fifteen different types of grasses from Bermuda to Bluegrass to Fescue.
- Bermuda will get green later in the year and brown up in the fall quicker than the rest.

Decorations on the Graves

- There are over 14,000 graves with only four gentlemen to weed eat around each headstone.
- The volume of decorations that there are creates a challenge. Even though its not allowed in the bylaws, it's been allowed to go on for a long time. At this point, there's no plans to do anything different.
- Through this summer, the grass has grown up through the decorations about 8-10 inches.
- For the last eight years, the decorations have been removed from the headstone to weed eat. The old, faded and damaged decorations are thrown away. The others are put in a bag and placed on the headstone.
- The cemetery has to be cleaned of things that are hanging around those headstones.

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

1. David Jacob, 4202 San Juan Avenue: Is concerned about the homeless problem. There's got to be something done or it's just going to get worse. If there aren't rules to be enforced, there will be more and more issues.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. City Manager Search.** One finalist was interviewed for City Manager. He met with the selection committee first, then the public at large, and then the City Council. After deliberations with the council, it was decided not to proceed with Mr. Comiskey at this time. The search will go back out. There will be no additional professional costs with the continued search, just some advertising costs. We have a wonderful Interim City Manager who gives us the flexibility to be able to do this and not be forced to select just any candidate.

Some changes were made to the listing and it should go out on Wednesday. One of the changes was to open it up to non-traditional candidates. The council did listen to a lot of feedback from the public after the first meeting with the candidate. All angles were looked at. With the research that was received from SGR, the council was able to make an informed decision.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 19, 2024**NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Application for a Special Event Permit by La Junta Chamber of Commerce, Christina Tozzie, Event Manager.** The event is **Early Settlers Day to be held September 7, 2024 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. The City Attorney recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT TO LA JUNTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR EARLY SETTLERS DAY TO BE HELD SEPTEMBER 7, 2024 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 4—0 (Ramirez and Pantoya absent; Ochoa abstained)

- B. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE INTERNAL SERVICE FUND FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2024.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance. Interim City Manager Davidson explained that this is a one-man operated machine with multiple functions. A few of the items it has are: brushes on the front to sweep, a large vacuum to pick up leaves and debris, a small water tank and a high-pressure washer that can be used for graffiti removal. Getting the right equipment for the right job helps eliminate wasting man hours on one project.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Ochoa

SECOND: Stoker

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

C. Committee/Board Reports

1. Utility Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Congratulated Jan Fisher and Keith Manweiler who are retiring on August 30th.
 - The RO Plant acquired a significant break in the chlorine line on July 3rd. It was found and repaired quickly.
 - The Water Department is applying for a grant to test for PFAS.
 - They are also helping to initiate the County Agricultural and Municipal Partnership Project. It's a holistic approach to deal with high levels of naturally occurring contaminants.
 - Raul Ortiz will be the new Water Quality Technician. Chris Menges is leaving for a new job opportunity.
 - The Electric Department replaced two poles due to automobile crashes. One at Highway 50 and Lewis Avenue and the other at Highway 50 and Belleview Avenue.
 - Maintenance was performed at the Rodeo Grounds for the 87th Kids Rodeo.
 - On July 15th, we were asked to shed some of the electrical load off the system due to Tri-State having transmissions issues.
 - This past Sunday on the 18th, there was a planned maintenance outage at 4:00 a.m.
2. Planning Commission (Mayor Ayala):
 - Approved one annexation for Mrs. Sisson at the end of Raton Avenue.

F. Interim City Manager Comments

- The new city website should go live on August 30th around 5:00 p.m.
- Received the final and approved stamped plans from Dibble Engineering for the bridge at Brick & Tile Park.
- Last Saturday was Dog Days at the pool. They had around 25 dogs.
- Hats off to the city departments who have been working out in the heat and getting up early to work on their projects.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – August 19, 2024

Mayor Ayala: Martin and his crew will be cutting weeds tomorrow along Highway 50.

G. Governing Body Comments

1. Council Member Velasquez:
 - Reminder that schools are back in session.
2. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Looking forward to starting the Police Citizen Academy tomorrow night.

There being no further business, the regular meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor