

STATE OF COLORADO)
COUNTY OF OTERO) SS
CITY OF LA JUNTA)

*Subject to approval at
the October 7, 2024
City Council Meeting*

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, September 16, 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
Jeremiah Stoker, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: none

Also present: Brad Davidson, Interim City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney (by phone)
Cristian Estrada, Deputy City Clerk
Kristin Carpenter, La Junta
Deanna Barricklow, La Junta
Cathleen Irigiya, La Junta
Liz Roberts, La Junta
Andee Leininger, La Junta
Julie Worley, La Junta
McKensie Avens, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Jeff Richardson, La Junta
Terry Malling, Kitchen of Kindness
Cody Long, La Junta
Kimberly Gallegos, Woodruff Memorial Library
Alvin Gallegos, La Junta
Kristine Rios, Woodruff Memorial Library
Izabel Rodriguez, La Junta
Sara Holt, La Junta
Gil Esquibel, La Junta
Heather Maes, Woodruff Memorial Library
Mark Maes, La Junta
Rosendo Maes, La Junta
Angie Swedhin, Woodruff Memorial Library
Robin Lopez, Woodruff Memorial Library
Jamie McNerney, Woodruff Memorial Library
Jason Key, Kitchens of Kindness
Matthew Deitrick, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

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MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS: Mayor Ayala asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of September 3, 2024. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 3, 2024 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Stoker

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

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

1. Heather Maes, 1220 Edison Avenue: Addressed comments from previous City Council meeting as well as circulating emails. Maes mentioned that libraries are not revenue-generation institutions. The libraries are here for the citizens and prioritize patron knowledge. Maes broke down the budget, and made a mention that up to 80% of the library's budget is staff salaries with benefits included. If salaries are reduced, there won't be enough staff to keep the level of services that the library offers. Maes also mentioned that, since becoming library director, has made many changes to the library's services as well as adding-in many services that are beneficial to the citizens of La Junta. Stated that other libraries do not need to account for maintenance or IT services, as other libraries have those services paid from separate budgets from their city while those service charges come out of Woodruff Memorial Library's budget. The best libraries to compare with Woodruff Memorial Library would be Cortez and Alamosa, not Lamar's Library.
2. Kimberly Gallegos, 1421 Bradish Avenue: Spoke as a concerned employee of the City of La Junta. Mentioned since the passing of 2A, the library has worked extremely hard about the importance of sales tax on the library. The library has always been transparent about the budget. Mentioned that any program needs adequate staffing to promote and ensure the library's success. Also mentioned that many, if not all, were in favor of 2A. Gallegos also shared positive comments made by a few board members from direct communication (messages). Rose questions about why things have changed if there was so much positivity surrounding the libraries and 2A. Reiterated to check over other departments before making staff/budget cuts to the library.
3. McKensie Avens, 1322 Cimarron Avenue: Spoke in regards to the concern on the library's operation. Has lived in La Junta since she was 7 years old and has volunteered at the library for most of her young life. Mentioned that the library has 10 staff members and they all have different roles that are vital to the library's function and provided services. Understands that sanitation and street departments are also important. Mentioned that Heather Maes has already made significant cutbacks to reduce the library budget. The library is the only place that offers community services 6 days a week. While other departments are also beneficial, there is no active presence providing community services as much as the library does. The library is an indispensable part of the community, as are the employees. Proposed that the council delegate members to spend at least one day at the library to give an example of the ongoing at the library. Made mention of all of the many services that the library offers to its patrons. The library is a community hub, safe haven, and a bounty of resources for all ages and the library staff is an integral part of that.
4. Julie Worley, 2417 San Juan Avenue: Concurred with what has been brought up by the previous three individuals. Mentioned that at the previous board meeting, Interim City Manager Davidson confidently stated that the budget for the library was balanced and questioned what has changed. Davidson mentioned that the Director of the Library and himself had a meeting previous to the City Council Meeting.
5. Angie Swedhin, library employee: Read a Library Journal article and survey from the February 12, 2024 budget and funding. Mentioned from the article that staff matters are an integral part of libraries, especially for expanding services. Swedhin also gave a breakdown of numbers from the Library Journal report.

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6. Gil Esquibel, 304 Maple Avenue: Congratulated the library staff for their efforts and hard work in the library as well as their presence at the meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **City Manager Search.** Mayor Ayala gave updates on the applications that have been turned in for the City Manager position. There are 5 applicants so far – 3 from Kansas, 1 from Colorado, and 1 from Pennsylvania. Applications will continue to be received until end of month (September). Will provide further details at a later date. Still working on gathering participants for the committee.
- B. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING AN ANNEXATION FOR PROPERTY OWNED BY PAMELA SISSON.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- C. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NUMBER 1242 (THE ZONING ORDINANCE) OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA AS CONCERNS AN APPLICATION FOR ANNEXATION BY PAMELA SISSON.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Stoker

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- D. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING CAMPING WITHIN CITY LIMITS.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Ochoa

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION:

- Jason Key, Treasurer for Arkansas Valley Kitchen of Kindness, delivered a report on having sanctioned camping until more permanent shelters can be established. Read a report by Seattle University School of Law that explained how sanctioned camping provide a unique resolution for the homeless to keep residents safe. Also mentioned that Denver has followed suit with sanctioned camping (known as “SOS Sites – Safe Outdoor Spaces”) that provided assistance to homeless citizens. These spaces provide safety and stability not only to participants.
- Matthew Dietrick, citizen of La Junta, shared a personal story about hope, resilience, and community, as well as delivered success from using such assistance.
- Jeff Richardson, San Juan Ave., mentioned awareness of both sides (homeless and non-homeless) as he has personal experience with both. Delivered concerns of ordinance being an issue with the homeless community, as homelessness exists everywhere. Also made note of the resources available locally to these communities.
- Rikhof made a mention of her concerns about the camping ban. Rikhof also spoke on how the camping ordinance could be limiting to the homeless community and mentioned that other cities have better alternative options to camping bans. Wants to pause the camping ban and work harder to come up with better solutions other than a camping ban.

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- Ramirez also made a mention that we are dealing with two groups of people: those whom are homeless due to economic impacts on individuals/families, and those whom want to remain homeless of their own choosing. Is still unsure about the camping ban, also as there haven't been many other options visited.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Velasquez, Stoker, Ayala, Ochoa, Pantoya

Those voting NO: Ramirez, Rikhof

The motion carried 5-2

NEW BUSINESS**A. Liquor Licenses**

1. **Application for a Special Events Permit by La Junta Chamber of Commerce, Christina Tozzie, Event Manager. The event is the 3rd Annual Tarantula Festival to be held September 28, 2024 from 12:00 noon to 11:59 p.m. at Live Well Park.** 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 EVENTS PERMIT TO LA JUNTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR THE 3RD ANNUAL TARANTULA FESTIVAL TO BE HEDL SEPTEMBER 28, 2024 FROM 12:00 NOON TO 11:59 P.M. AT LIVE WELL PARK: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 4-0 (Velasquez, Ayala and Ochoa abstained)

2. **Application for Renewal of a Retail Liquor Store License by J & S Liquor LLC d/b/a J & S Liquor Store, 302 E. 1st Street.** The application is in order and has been reviewed by City supervisors for compliance with City and State codes. Appropriate fees have been tendered and the City Attorney recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A RETAIL LIQUOR STORE LICENSE BY J & S LIQUOR LLC D/B/A J & S LIQUOR STORE, 302 E. 1ST STREET: Stoker

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

B. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - The cost to rent the Senior Center will be a \$200 deposit and \$150 per hour after the first hour.
 - There are still no dances scheduled.
 - There will be a work session September 25th.
2. Utility Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Delivered the report from the Board of Utilities meeting and gave explanations/breakdowns of Utilities/goings on of each department. Also brought up October being the City of La Junta Clean Up Month. Any kind of disposal is accepted at the Trash Compactor that usually wouldn't be accepted. This is open to citizens of the City of La Junta free of charge.

C. Interim City Manager's Comments

- Davidson handed out a report from Bill Jackson that outlined the usage of the Tree Dump. It was very active in April/May and usage declined in June/July. Expected to go up in usage in the coming cooler months. Positive feedback received so far.

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- Presented a handout from Heather Maes that outlined the increase in usage by 14% from January to August by library patrons/citizens. Increase in participation to the summer programs, as well.
- Line crew is not only working on powerlines themselves, but they are commencing tree trimming program around power lines to prevent incidents.
- Police Chief Todd Quick brought up to Davidson that he has a cadet in Pueblo and one in La Junta that will be finished with the Police Academy by December, and will join the force afterward.
- Parks & Recreation department has completed the adult softball league with an expectation of increase of participants next summer. Rec youth football and volleyball have commenced.
- The new street sweeper acquired through the supplemental budget will be delivered this week. The company themselves will come down and train the staff on usage and tech updates.
- Fire Department assisted with mutual aid in Rocky Ford with a large abandoned building fire. No other buildings were affected in the area.
- Street Department finished dirt work for Town of Cheraw that had received a grant for a park, also provided mutual aid for the construction of the park.
- EIRS will be here from Broomfield for the Tarantula Fest as an informational booth.
- Velasquez had already touched up on the October Clean Up Month, reiterated that flyers will be sent out in the utility mailing.
- Brick and Tile Park nearing completion of the abatements; projected bridge set date is this upcoming Friday, weather permitting. Hopefully have everything finished up by first or second week of October and trail should be opened back up to the public. Discovered that a section by the Arroyo is privately owned, but will continue to pour concrete.
- Police Department's new canine is training with the handler; will be seen around for introductions.
- Touched on the vandalism/criminal mischief at the City Park playground area and the restrooms; water valve had been broken and water had flooded the playground area. Brick and Tile park had some damages and litter, as well. There are cameras in certain parts, however, not fully covered. Asked the citizens to alert the Police Department with any knowledge on the perpetrator(s). Also touched on the litter build up at the recycling area; the driver had some misfortune with health and has been out, but called action for citizens to help out and use better judgement if the bins are filled to capacity. Thanked Gil Esquibel for taking his own time for cleaning the area and keeping it checked. There are other recycling bins available throughout La Junta, in case of bins being filled.

D. Governing Body's Comments

1. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Questioned what fees are approved and whom approves each fee, specifically regarding the tree dump. Wanted discussion on the breakdown of fees. Thanked library staff and supporters for attending the City Council meeting. Iterated that it has been a long road for the library.
 - Dr. Cara Shellington from Michigan will be visiting the library for the teen activity group from 4:30-6:00 p.m. Tuesday September 17, 2024. and will be at Otero College on Friday September 20, 2024 regarding the tarantulas.
 - Update on Arkansas Valley Housing Task Force meeting held Wednesday September 4th at Otero College. A total of 125 participants with an expectation of 40. The planning committee is curating a resource guide and getting it ready for release. Thanked Adrian Hart for his efforts on being the platform for the resource guide. The Task Force is up to 39 volunteers. Brought up community cleanup with education for the trash that is around town/left around from campers on public properties. The first Task Force meeting is October 14th with more details to follow.
 - Thanked the folks of La Junta, but beyond as well and the task force has become a major multi-county effort.

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2. Council Member Ramiez:
 - Joined Council Member Rikhof thanked all of the library members and supporters for attending the Council meeting. Spoke to Kim about the information about the budget. The information given to us may have been a concern, but the main concern is that other departments are short-handed and have been that way for a long time. The library has nothing to worry about regarding budget/employee cuts. If funding comes along for other departments, they'll revisit their budgets but reiterated that the library has nothing to worry about.
 - Thanked citizens whom spoke about the Camping Ban and resources; appreciated the support there is for the homeless communities. There is still much work to do, but I want you to know to continue what you're doing. We appreciate you.
3. Council Member Velasquez:
 - Agreed with Rikhof and Ramirez concerning the library. Am and have been a regular patron of the library with myself and his children and grandchildren.
4. Interim City Manager Davidson:
 - In reference to the library, I want everyone to understand that the Council's responsibility lies with is to make sure that there is funding for the departments. It's the City Managers and Supervisor's responsibility to make sure everything runs smoothly. There was a balanced budget. I met with Heather today and made sure she knew, but to prepare for the worst at the Budget Work Session. Reiterated that they would never hide anything from the supervisors or blindsided them in any way, and wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page regarding concerns.
5. Council Member Rikhof:
 - I have my usual question regarding next step for the budget; I haven't heard anything about a Budget Work Session and want to know when. Mayor Ayala answered that Cristian Estrada would soon post the information regarding the Budget Work Session occurring this Thursday, September 19, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Rikhof had no idea of the upcoming public session and seemed blindsided that it is in three days. Disagreed with the timing of the posting (at least 24 hours before the Work Session) and there should be more of a notice.
6. Mayor Ayala:
 - Want to mention the Council may have received an email forwarded from Melanie Scofield from Bill Short potentially working with Otero College and SVDC. At the moment, we won't be doing what Bill suggested but will confer with Gary Cranson and President Zant will have more information later.
 - With it being tarantula season, please do not take, pick up tarantulas/snakes or touch them. There will be signage, please slow down. A lot of people from out of town will be here. Do not want any issues occurring in La Junta regarding tarantulas or snakes.
 - Reminded that the Budget Work Session will be this Thursday September, 19, 2024 in the Council Chambers.

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

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor