

*Subject to approval at
the November 6, 2023
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, October 16, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

INVOCATION: Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Council Member Ramirez 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
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Edward Vela, Ward 3
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3

Absent: none

Also present: Rick Klein, City Manager
Bill Jackson, Asst. City Manager
Phil Malouff, Jr., City Attorney
Debra Fraker, Admin. Asst.
Paula Mahoney, Admin. Asst.
Aliza Libby, Director of Finance
Gary Cranson, UB Vice-Chair
Susan Dietrich, La Junta
Meghan Yergert, La Junta
Scott Wiker, La Junta
Liz Roberts, La Junta
Connie Shane, La Junta
Cathy Hurd, La Junta
Julie Worley, La Junta
Elaine McIntyre, La Junta
Pauline Foss, La Junta
Jeremiah Stoker, La Junta
Bethany Bender, La Junta
Angela Ayala, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Ron Hall, La Junta
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 October 2, 2023. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 2, 2023 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Vela

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (5-minute time limit per person):**

1. Pauline Foss, 321 Lewis Avenue: My issue is weeds. Recently, Code Enforcement came by and told me I had to chop down these particular grasses that I have. I wanted them there. They grew up on their own. They were pretty. They were uniform in color and height. They hid one side of the house which is what I wanted it to hide. To me, they're not a weed. A weed is something you don't want. A weed competes with what you do want. I want them but I was told I had to cut them down. So, what is the definition of a weed in La Junta. That's what I would like to know. (Mr. Klein and Mr. Malouff will look into this matter.)

Also, are there ugliness citations? I walk my dog around and I walk past all these bare dirt yards, maybe a little trash. A dried-up plant or two. They should get a citation too. Do you want this town to look nice? In the backyards, some of these places are actually full of garbage, junk, six or seven junk cars. Isn't there some kind of ordinance to provide for that?

2. Angela Ayala, 1514 San Juan Avenue: I wanted to fill the city council in on the clean-up that I did of the weeds in Highway 50. We had over sixty plus volunteers come from Otero College and the community to come and help clean the weeds along Highway 50. We had participation from WW Feeds as well as BNSF to allow us on their property to get it done. They made quick work of it. I wanted to thank publicly the Otero Men's and Women's basketball teams as well as the wrestling teams and their coaches. Several members of the community came out and helped. Other people joined in on the other side of the highway. It was good to see and it looks a lot better.

The second thing I wanted to say is the Tarantula Fest went very well. We doubled in size from the previous year. We had lots of vendors, lots of outsiders to our community taking part in the festivities. We took away some negatives from the event which we can only hope to grow upon for next year but I really wanted to give a big shout out to the City of La Junta and all of their employees for stepping in and stepping up and helping where needed. The utility crew worked tirelessly to make sure everything goes off without a hitch. Engineering knew I forgot to call for dumpsters but they made sure I had them anyway. Everybody just really stepped up and made sure it went off really well. Our community gets to be highlighted and there were lots of outsiders that came in to enjoy the festivities. I wanted to thank everybody for their help in that event because it's not a one-woman show. It's not even a 12-person committee. It was much more than that.

3. Liz Roberts, 914 E. 6th Street – (read and submitted the following statement): Libraries are no longer just the book warehouses you remember fondly from your youth. They serve people of every age, income level, location, and physical ability. They advocate for everyone's right to read and the right to privacy. Freedom of information is fundamental to the American way of life, and it sets us apart from many countries. Libraries and librarians are committed to preserving the freedom to read to enhance learning and to ensure access to information for all. Libraries are an essential community hub where they connect people to information and connect people to people. Providing WiFi 24-7 especially in the time of the Pandemic.

I have been a Woodruff Memorial Library staff member for 34 years now. We have two employees with 30+ years (I am included in this number), two with 15+ years, one with 10+ years, three with 5+ years, and one under a year. One staff member retired this year after 14 years. While I've loaned out a lot of free books during that time, I've also helped people learn new skills, discover new authors, connect with new technology, and so much more. Something I've noticed after telling my peers I'm a librarian is that a lot of them haven't set foot in a library since they were a kid. Below are just some of the things that people are overlooking that they easily can get for free, simply by using their library card at Woodruff Memorial Library.

1. Digital media.

eBooks and audiobooks, which can be downloaded for free right to your phone or tablet. Downloaded from January 2023 to September 2023 from Cloud Library and Overdrive: 3,562 eBooks downloaded, and 2,925 of audiobooks. A total of 7,973 items have been downloaded. My friend once found herself on a long bus trip with nothing to read. No problem – she just opened her Libby app and downloaded an eBook to keep her company along the way. Travel eBooks for long trips are great so you don't need to lug around the physical travel guide.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023

2. Free passes.

Woodruff Memorial Library offers free passes to several wonderful places such as Pueblo Zoo, Sangre de Cristo Arts and Conference Center, Rosemount Museum, Western Museum of Mining & Industry, Space Foundation Discovery Center, and even State parks. Which can be borrowed for a week.

3. Personal Development. If you prefer to spend your free time on personal or professional development, the library can help with that too. Access to resources, if you'd like to add a language skill to your resume, you can take advantage of Mango Language. You can learn Mandarin in your spare time or prepare for that trip to Paris you've been saving up for. Universal Class offers over 500 online continuing education courses.

4. Unexpected, Non-Book Items. Woodruff Memorial Library loans out a collection of "things" like puzzles, Steam kits, Early Literacy kits, Hotspots, Laptops, Kill-a-watt Meters that help you discover how much electricity is being used. We also have musical instruments. You can try out that new hobby you've always been meaning to pick up without spending a dime. That way you can see if your dream of learning to play the Ukulele is something you'd like to pursue before going out and buying.

5. Promotes Literacy. Through access to materials and Library programming, Woodruff Memorial Library promoted Literacy to all ages. Programs include: Winter Adult Reading Program, Summer Reading Program, Story Time, Friday Fillers, WML Lego Club, and Teen Activities Group. We are also a partner in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

T.T. Woodruff created the first Young Folks Library in 1888. He saw the potential in La Junta and that vision continues today.

4. Meghan Yergert, 320 N. Main Street – (read and submitted the following statement): Hello everyone. My name is Meghan Yergert, I live in North La Junta, and I work at the city's RO plant as the operator in responsible charge. I wanted to come up today to discuss a little bit of what has been going on at the plant and hopefully give you all another perspective to think about. I have heard so much conversation about 2A and what happens if it does or does not pass. There has been a lot of good and bad information thrown around, so I wanted to set a couple things straight, as we view it from the plant.

First of all, I'd like to share my thoughts on the \$17 charge for the water plant loan on everyone's utility bill. I truly don't believe that anyone has an idea of what really goes on at the plant or beneath our roads, besides the people who really have to deal with it every day, and that's okay; it's not your job to know all about it, it's mine. But just to give you a little bit of an idea, I have made a list of a few of the things that will need replaced as soon as we get the parts in, or that have been replaced over the last couple months.

We are in need of parts for actuators that operate valves in the plant and new actuators. There are almost 30 of these actuators in the plant currently. I received a quote for all things necessary for \$20,363 total.

\$1,277- Caustic tank level sensor- Not necessary to run but without it we don't know the actual level in the tank

\$8,173- Finished water flow tube and transducer- Necessary to run- showing signs of failure

\$47,463.50- Pre-treatment Plus 0100- Chemical required to run

\$8,204- Chlorine analyzer w/probe- If down, operators must sample every 4 hours

So, in total, from the month of August until now, just on the "big stuff" in the plant we have received quotes, or purchased, depending on which listed item, of \$85,480.50. That's in 2 months... and it's only for the big stuff that I remember, since I wrote this this morning on a lack of sleep and one cup of coffee.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023

We have also received a quote for rehabilitation of our Main Storage tank otherwise known as “Tiger tank” for almost \$600,000 that we are going to have to put off until later because we just don’t have the money for it.

I can’t speak to the distribution system, as that’s not my department. So, all of this is ONLY the treatment plant, and doesn’t include all of our expenses.

I’d like to point out something that was brought up during the budget work session Aliza and Rick did in September. We recently signed a contract with Browns Hill Engineering to update our SCADA system. This contract will cost us \$150,000 per year for 5 years and includes all of the installation of the new system, as well as regular upkeep, routine maintenance, and troubleshooting. I cannot stress how much the plant needs this. Just about a week and a half ago, the plant’s SCADA system went completely blank. Showing all zeroes on all of our totals yet the plant was still running as it should. We spent all day trying to fix this. The problem turned out to be an issue with information piling up on our main PLC. Long story short, our older system (that not many can even work on anymore) is just too old and obsolete.

The water plant needs the \$17 charge. Plain and simple. We are barely getting by as it is.

I would also like to point out that inflation does not help the city like I’ve heard many people say it does. I have received quotes from vendors who charge extra just because we are a municipality. We are also dealing with inflated prices. For example: Totalizers for our ROs were just over \$1000 in 2015, they are now \$3100. And we have about 20 in the plant.

Secondly, I’d like to just give my point of view if 2A does not pass and how it will affect the water department. If 2A does not pass, the golf course, pool, library, and senior center will be shut down (obviously we’ve heard all about it), but the biggest place this effects the water department is the pool and the golf course. We at the plant can see a visual difference from when the golf course does and does not water the greens. This year we have been very lucky to get a lot of rain, and even though there’s still water, when necessary, the plant has been running less and less this year. We have not had a day where the plant has put out over 5 million gallons. Last year our high was 6.2 million gallons for the day. That’s a massive difference in water sales. So, as another perspective, if the golf course closes, that’s around \$100,000 in revenue that the water department no longer gets, just from the golf course. That money is going to have to come from somewhere. I can’t predict the future, but I can take a guess on where we’ll get it from, and it won’t be from every person that comes in to La Junta to purchase something. It will come from increased rates, from City of La Junta water users only, and I doubt it will be just an extra \$1 per \$100 that we spend. So, I really encourage everyone to think about those consequences as well.

Thirdly, I’d like to address the \$5/ hour pay increase for City of La Junta employees. Before this raise, I was offered a job at another city with less responsibility, better hours, and a \$30,000/year increase in pay. I went to Tom and Rick and said “I want to stay in La Junta, but I can’t turn down that much. What can we do?” And they told me to give them some time and they would figure it out. Several other employees, also had other job offers. I truly believe we were on the verge of a mass walkout. And still a lot of us are working long hours and can’t keep up with the work we do have.

Lastly, I would love to encourage absolutely anyone that wants to see what we do to come take a tour of the plant. We are all very proud of it and love to show it off. If you would like to schedule a tour, please get a hold of me after the meeting or I’m sure Rick could get you in touch with me later as well. Thank you.

5. Aliza Libby, Director of Finance: I had a couple people come into my office and they asked me a question. The ballot measure says, “Shall City of La Junta taxes be increased by approximately \$1.4 million in 2024 and then annually by whatever additional amounts are raised.” A couple people have misinterpreted that to mean that we could raise the sales tax again and I have informed them that no, it just means if we receive more than \$1.4 million, that the city would be able to keep it. The only other thing I wanted to remind people is that on October 25th at 5:30 p.m., Rick and I are going to do another Facebook Live. You’ve heard a lot of people talking, giving information, and if you would like

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023

us to answer these questions, we will be available. I know this budget inside and out. Rick knows it inside and out and we would be happy to answer any questions regarding any of the numbers, costs, whatever.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING AN ANNEXATION FOR PROPERTY OWNED BY BOB G. VIGIL.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Ramirez

SECOND: Vela

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

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

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Vela

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

- C. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING AN ANNEXATION FOR PROPERTY – Tract 1.** 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: Vela

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

- D. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NUMBER 1242 (THE ZONING ORDINANCE) OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA AS CONCERNS AN APPLICATION FOR ANNEXATION BY PEGGY VALERIO, PATRICIA MEMBRENO, DIANA ALCARAZ, IRENE LEYBA AND ROSS LEYBA.** 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: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: This applies to the property around the restaurant. It does not include the restaurant itself.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ramirez, Velasquez, Ayala, Ochoa, Pantoya
Those voting NO: Vela
The motion carried 5-1 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

- E. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING AN ANNEXATION FOR PROPERTY – Tract 2.** 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: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ramirez, Velasquez, Ayala, Ochoa, Pantoya
 Those voting NO: Vela
 The motion carried 5-1 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

- F. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NUMBER 1242 (THE ZONING ORDINANCE) OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA AS CONCERNS AN APPLICATION FOR ANNEXATION BY PEGGY VALERIO, PATRICIA MEMBRENO, DIANA ALCARAZ, IRENE LEYBA AND ROSS LEYBA – Tract 2.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Ramirez

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ramirez, Velasquez, Ayala, Ochoa, Pantoya
 Those voting NO: Vela
 The motion carried 5-1 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

- G. **Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AN ORDINANCE (ORDINANCE NUMBER 1579) WHICH ESTABLISHED THE CITY OF LA JUNTA HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY AUTHORITY, PROVIDING FOR THE DESIGNATION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS, HISTORIC BUILDINGS, HISTORIC SITES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS; PROVIDING FOR NOTIFICATION TO THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY AUTHORITY OF THE INTENDED ALTERATION, REMOVAL OR DEMOLITION OF DESIGNATED HISTORIC BUILDINGS, LANDMARK SITES AND DISTRICTS; PROVIDING FOR THE REVOCATION OF DESIGNATIONS OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS, HISTORIC BUILDINGS, HISTORIC SITES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS; AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE FOR THIS ORDINANCE.** 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: Vela

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Application for a Special Event Permit by Arkansas Valley Hospice, Cassie Campos, Event Manager. The event is their Annual Open House/Business After Hours to be held November 3, 2023 from 5:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 531 Lewis Avenue.** 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 ARKANSAS VALLEY HOSPICE FOR THEIR ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE/BUSINESS AFTER HOURS TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 3, 2023 FROM 5:30 P.M. TO 11:00 P.M AT 531 LEWIS AVENUE: Pantoya

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ward 2 Vacancy)

B. Committee/Board Reports

1. Senior Center Advisory Board (Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez):
 - Would like to commend the members of the advisory board on their getting out into the public, setting up information booths, and assisting with the Tarantula Fest. I appreciate that from them.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023**C. City Manager's Comments**

- The Brick & Tile trail has started.
- Ayres Associates are our contractors for the \$500,000 Brownfield grant.
- Weeds! Weeds! Weeds!
- Working with consultants on federal funding to help out with the water mains, water valves, and meters.
- We've reconstructed Carson Avenue from 1st through 5th Street.
- The Fire Department has been experiencing a lot of calls lately. Be safe out there.
- The Senior Center has started bird watching classes and Chinese food cooking classes.
- The owner of 218 Harriet turned over their property.
- We've installed cameras at the Brick & Tile park.
- K-2 basketball registration is open until November 3rd.
- Joe Ayala and Lisa Pantoya, along with Daniel Horton, went through the Action 22 Leadership and Governance Program. I want to say how proud I am and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

- The City Wide clean up for October is going well.
- We will be setting up the speed trailer as you come into town to see what is needed in regards to the excessive speeding.

D. Governing Body Comments**1. Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez:**

- There's been some concern regarding the employee raises and why the public wasn't allowed or didn't have a say on voting for an employee raise. That's just not the way it works. It's up to the council upon recommendation of the city manager. It's not that we're edging out the community. That's just the way it works. It wasn't a tax issue, which would require a vote of the citizenry. By what Meghan said tonight, it's needed just to maintain a competitive workforce and keep the talent that we have available.
- On the east side of town, we heard a loud explosion and then the power went out. That was at 8:03 this morning. At 8:15, our city crew shows up and by 8:51, the powers restored. Shout out to the utility crew.
- The Chamber of Commerce hosted an Office of Economic Development International Trade out at the golf course and had a very robust conversation about the City of La Junta. At the conclusion of the meeting, they were excited with some of the resources that may be able to leverage, namely, our airport and our airspace.

Council Member Pantoya: We also gave them information on the police training area. It kind of opened their eyes. I think we had a really good meeting. Thanks to Julie's son, David. He is born and raised in La Junta and lives in Denver. He loves La Junta and was an advocate for us and I appreciate him.

- Within our community, we have a large population of people that just go out there and get it done. They work their regular jobs. Sometimes they work two shifts and then they're coaching a softball team at the rec league level, high school level, or even at the college level. Or we see them out there at a football game coaching and volunteering their time. They do it for their love of La Junta. It's not just sports. It's everybody in La Junta that does something that just makes it work here for us. I think I don't thank them enough and I'm just taking this time to thank them for all that they do for our community.

2. Council Member Pantoya:

- I wanted to say that I completed the 2023 Police Citizens Academy and I enjoyed myself. It was a 5-week training and we learned a lot. I learned about the code enforcement and the dispatch, the police force, and the history of the La Junta Police Department. It was a really good learning experience and if they have enough

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 16, 2023

participants next year, they'll have another one and I highly recommend it to anyone who's interested. You'll learn a lot of information about how the Police Department operates. Thank you.

- The 2A4LJ Committee is going to be tailgating for the Tiger game. It's their last home game. The game starts at 7:00. We'll be on the south side of the entrance. We will have hot dogs, drinks, chips and we'll also be out there for anyone that still has some questions about 2A. We also have our own Ethan Leyba. He's been selected to go to Dallas Texas to play in the All-American Bowl. There might be one other student athlete. It's Monday, January 8th, 2024. He had a fundraiser yesterday, a cornhole tournament, and he has a Venmo, a Cash App, and a GoFundMe. I want anyone that can help support him to get him there to reach out to either me, his mom, Dee, or Gilbert Leyba and we also have it on our Facebook page. He's a really good athlete and he deserves to go.

3. Council Member Vela:

- To the Nazarene Church at 10th and Topeka, I want to commend them for their weed control. They have for years done such a magnificent job. They got about three or four acres because they own property from Topeka all the way to Belmont. You always see their property tip top from the grass and everything. So, to the Nazarenians out there, thank you. And thank you to the Jehovah's across the street for their beautiful building. They're maintaining it picture perfect. Also, for the Clinica del Valle that is also very very nice. Very good upkeep in that area. Evergreen Gardens, the same way. The only one that I saw a little deficient was the one that we look at every morning, the city, but that's under construction under the Brick and Tile park. Got a lot of weeds there. So, thank you Nazarenians, Jehovah's, Clinic people, Evergreen Gardens people. We appreciate it.

4. Mayor Ayala:

- A lot of you got an invitation for the grand opening of the Blue Stem Nursing Home. Myself and Rick Klein attended that event. It was a great turnout and I hope it's a very successful thing for our area.
- I will be traveling this Thursday. I got a phone call from Phil Weiser about two months ago. They're having a Mayor's Summit. It's only going to be four mayors. The mayors of Denver, Colorado Springs, Grand Junction and myself representing La Junta and the southeastern plains. The goal for this is to try and bridge the gap between metro and rural and to show them that just because a law works in a bigger city doesn't always correlate to the rural city. We're going to be doing Thursday and some Friday. I am going on my own and paying for everything. The city is not pitching anything in on that. I look forward to representing, not just La Junta, but the southeastern region and the whole eastern half of Colorado. I will report back on what we do and what we solve when we go up there.
- Want to encourage my daughters and everyone else that comes out to these meetings to keep coming. It really makes a difference. We enjoy serving you all and it's a lot easier when there's a lot of people in the audience who are taking the time to care about their community. We can't help fix things or shape new ordinances if we don't get this feedback from you guys. Thank you all for coming out and thank you for spending your evenings with us. We're really close to making this community what we want it to be. I appreciate everyone that comes out and let's their voice be heard.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joe Ayala, Mayor