

*Subject to approval at
the November 20, 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, November 6, 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 Velasquez 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
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Paula Mahoney, Admin. Asst.
Aliza Libby, Director of Finance
Brock Hinkhouse, Director of Parks/Rec
Gary Cranson, UB Vice-Chair
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Don/Marita Vickroy, La Junta
Alvin/Kimberly Gallegos, La Junta
Cathy Hurd, La Junta
Cassie Campos, La Junta
Susan Dietrich, La Junta
Meghan Yergert, La Junta
Scott Wiker, La Junta
Angela Ayala, La Junta
Angie Swedhin, La Junta
Jamie McNerney, La Junta
Kristine Rios, La Junta
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

PROCLAMATION – NOVEMBER 2023 AS HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE MONTH. Mayor Ayala proclaimed November 2023 as Hospice and Palliative Care Month.

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 16, 2023. Hearing none, the mayor asked for a motion to approve the minutes as published.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE OCTOBER 16, 2023 MINUTES AS PUBLISHED: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

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

1. Kimberly Gallegos, 1421 Bradish Avenue: I made it my personal goal to make sure I did everything I possibly could to educate our citizen about sales tax. Something that many may not understand is the state of our mental health at this point. I can say that mine has pretty much been trashed. The strain of an unknown future has weighed heavy. But the election is finally here. I along with any city worker is job is on the line, we're ready to move forward either way. I'm very thankful that tomorrow is right around the corner. I want to address a few things that I've heard on Facebook or seen at these city council meetings. Many who have spoken on Facebook or here, have been spreading a lot of misinformation. I have to say thank you to all who have corrected that misinformation. I'm asking you to please stop. We've got tomorrow until this decision is made. One of the things most recently was the option of volunteers running the places that are on the chopping block. The library, the golf course, the senior center and the pool. Suggesting that any of these departments could be run by volunteers is absurd. The comparison that was made was to the Grand Theater. I have to say the Grant Theater is run by volunteers but when you compare any one of those places to those four on the chopping block, I have to say that is like comparing apples to hot dogs. You're talking about two completely different things. There is no way to sustain any of those places by volunteers. If any of you have ever been a part of a board or a committee, you know that a lot of times is the same few people that that are on everything. Let's say we have a hundred volunteers that would be willing. Which of the volunteers are going to pay the bills that come with maintaining the buildings. Those properties would still be owned by the city. Right now, we have all seen the numbers. \$1.4 million dollars. Where does that come from? You could take off salaries. You're still in a place that you're not going to be able to pay that. Part of this response is an answer to somebody that posted, going as far as creating a logo that says vote no on 2A and it happened to be a friend of mine. One of the hardest things, through all of the time and effort, to get people educated about the importance of sales tax and why we need this increase, is to discover that people who I know love their community still saying no to 2A. I'm so confused. Even as of today, we're still hearing words such as blackmail, scare tactics and threats. There is no mystery to where this money is going. The budget has been presented to the community. It's all there. I'm still asking people. Educate yourselves before you check that box. Whatever your decision is. Too costly, too risky. No, it's not. This decision will decide the future of La Junta. I want to give thanks to all the people on the 2A4LJ committee who invested their time to educate our community. It's been amazing to be part of a team striving towards the best for La Junta's future. I am grateful to god, the one who holds my future does not have any political title. Therefore, I trust that he will place me where he sees fit to continue his good work. I pray for the future of La Junta and that we will be united on making this a place where the next generation desires to invest their futures. May god cover this election. Good luck to you, Joe.
2. John Garcia, 1406 Colorado Avenue: I was here about a year ago asking about the paving there in front of my house. It's about three feed wide and a good sixty feet long. It seems to be the only area on Colorado that doesn't have the paving. It's about six inches deep now. I have a problem getting in and out of my driveway. It catches my bumper. It's tearing up my car. About a year ago, I was told there was no asphalt. I just want to know if and when it's going to get done or if it's not going to get done.

NEW BUSINESS**A. Liquor Licenses**

1. **Application for a Special Event Permit by American Legion Auxiliary #9, Angela Davis, Event Manager. The event is their 5th Annual Veteran's Day Gala to be held November 11, 2023 from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at 118 Steen 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 Manager recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT TO AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY #9 FOR THEIR 5TH ANNUAL VETERAN'S DAY GALA TO BE HELD NOVEMBER 11, 2023 FROM 6:00 P.M. TO 11:00 P.M AT 118 STEEN AVENUE: Vela

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SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

2. **Application for Renewal of a Beer & Wine Liquor License by Family Dollar Stores of Colorado LLC d/b/a Family Dollar #25100, 614 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 Manager recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A BEER & WINE LIQUOR LICENSE BY FAMILY DOLLAR STORES OF COLORADO LLC D/B/A FAMILY DOLLAR #25100, 614 E 1ST STREET: Velasquez

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

3. **Application for Renewal of a Club Liquor License by BPOE Lodge 701 d/b/a BPOE Lodge 701, 119 Colorado Avenue.** 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 Manager recommends approval.

MOTION TO GRANT A RENEWAL OF A CLUB LIQUOR LICENSE BY BPOE LODGE 701 D/B/A BPOE LODGE 701, 119 COLORADO AVENUE: Vela

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

B. Approval of the 2024 Proposed Budget

1. **A Resolution Approving the 2024 Proposed Budget.** Resolution No. R-15-2023 was presented for council's consideration as follows:

WHEREAS, a proposed budget for the City of La Junta for the year 2024 has been prepared in conformance with the La Junta City Charter; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing has been held on September 20, 2023 regarding the proposed 2024 budget for all funds for the City of La Junta;

NOW, THEREFORE, Be It Resolved By the City Council of the City of La Junta that the proposed 2024 budget for income and expenditures of all funds be approved as follows:

General Fund	\$ 8,514,100.00
Library Endowment Fund	\$ 500.00
Internal Services Fund	\$ 1,973,300.00
Employee Benefit Claim Fund	\$ 2,407,500.00
Economic Development Fund	\$ 101,700.00
Property Management Fund	\$ 1,340,800.00
Lodging Tax Tourism Fund	\$ 247,000.00
Electric Fund	\$12,206,700.00
Water Fund	\$ 3,818,700.00
Sewer Fund	\$ 3,503,900.00
Sanitation Fund	\$ 1,513,500.00

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Moving Violation Surcharge Fund	\$	600.00
Cemetery Endowment Fund	\$	10,300.00
Conservation Trust Fund	\$	391,000.00

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-15-2023: Vela

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

2. **First Reading/AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE MILL LEVY FOR ASSESSMENT OF VALUATIONS FOR THE YEAR ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2023 (FISCAL YEAR, 2024).**

The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Vela

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: This averages around \$118,000 per year.

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

3. **First Reading/THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE: APPROPRIATING SUMS OF MONEY TO DEFRAY EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO FOR THE CITY'S FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024 AND ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2024.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Pantoya

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: If 2A passes, changes will be made for the second reading. This is first reading only.

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

C. **Authorization to Commence Condemnation – 1220 Rice Avenue.** Mr. Klein asked for this to be tabled because the city has been working with the Vickroy's and they have complied.

MOTION TO TABLE AUTHORIZATION TO COMMENCE CONDEMNATION – 1220 RICE AVENUE: Ochoa

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

D. **Committee/Board Reports**

1. Senior Center Advisory Board (Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez):

- Thanksgiving meal will be November 16th at noon. You will need to reserve your meal for \$5.00. There will be to-go boxes available.

E. **City Manager's Comments**

- Two power poles had been hit.
- There was a fire at the Halloween Shop.
- Have started placing concrete between 4th and 5th Street for the Brick and Tile trail by TLM Constructors.
- Weeds!

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- Working with consultants on federal funding to help with water mains, meters and valves.
- We reconstructed Carson Avenue between 1st and 5th Street. The water department raised their valves. We are pouring pans on 4th Street.
- Fire department sent personnel to the St. Charles fire which is mutual aid. They will reimburse us for labor. They are back now.
- The Senior Center has started a bird watching class, Chinese food cooking class, and live story book time.
- The EPA is moving in the week of the 6th.
- We installed cameras at Brick and Tile park.
- Football has ended.

F. Governing Body Comments**1. Council Member Ramirez:**

- The Chamber of Commerce is holding a Veterans Day ceremony at the La Junta Intermediate at 10:00 a.m. on November 9th.
- Attended a session at Clean Valley Recycling, Elizabeth Chapman, the director of Recycle Colorado, was there. Recycle Colorado is a non-profit there to promote the advancement of circular economies and improving recycling in Colorado. Their goal is to push Colorado to above 50% in recycling. Right now, Colorado is at a 15% recycling rate. She was there talking about House Bill 22-1355.

2. Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez:

- I'd like to thank all of the Veterans for their service and to my fellow marines, 240 birthdays coming up.
- Thank you to the city crew for working on the water break in an expeditious manner at the 1300 block of Bradish and to all the entities that hosted an afternoon of trick or treating in La Junta.

3. Council Member Pantoya:

- Please let me know if any of you will be attending the Chamber of Commerce Veterans Day ceremony.

4. Council Member Vela:

- Concerning the election, I had about fifty yard signs to put out across town for my candidacy and within eight days, I have nine left. Forty-one of them disappeared. If you're doing it, please don't take mine. Or if you have them, return them. I'll take them back.

5. Mayor Ayala:

- Attended the first ever panel setup between a small group of mayors throughout our state of Colorado. Our two large populations, Denver and Colorado Springs. The mayor of Grand Junction was representing the western side of the state and then my self was representing La Junta in the eastern side of the state. I was a great discussion on what we can do to work together, where we can, and how we can unify and help bridge the urban rural divide.
- The other big thing is that we elections we're about to have tomorrow. There are different people that come in and out in these elections. So, we want to build something that's going to be there no matter who the mayo is at any certain time. We want this group to always be working together no matter who the mayor is. So, whatever happens and whatever we get set up, if it's not me, I will make sure that I share those contacts with whoever comes in to do that so that this goes forward. We don't want to have any more than ten mayors in this group. If you get too many mayors, it's just too much going on and you not getting anything done. It's not productive. Big thanks to Phil Weiser, Ryan Heckman, this is going to be a very big thing going forward.

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- Now, thoughts on this election. While I appreciate the First Amendment and all that comes with it, I would like to say that we are playing a big of a dangerous game when it comes to the future of La Junta City Council and other board positions. When we say certain things about people running for office, it could be very dangerous. When I ran two years ago, I didn't agree with the direction that the mayor then was steering our city. I didn't like the way we did certain things. There were things I felt we needed our city manager to do differently. But I never once attacked them personally. I never once called them names or said things that would imply that they were in danger of losing their jobs. This time, I have not even once mentioned my fellow candidates running for this office. I think it's important to be honorable when you run for public office. Just because you can say something, doesn't mean that you should say something. Let's stick to the issues. We can disagree on the issues but let's tick to the issues. Let us be truthful in what we say because there are people who look to us and believe us when we say things. So, if we're not being truthful, we're giving them bad information and that's not right. Let them vote with the right information, not information we feel is important. The reason I say this is because I get asked all the time, why don't more young people get involved? It's because they don't want to get attacked like this. They don't want to be put out on the stake. Mr. Malouff says, as a public figure, that's part of the game. I can see that but when you have people that don't run for office in the future, it's because of stuff that's happening in this election. So, when we have open board seats, it's because we're doing stuff like this. I'm asking, if you have anything to say, keep it about the issues. Keep it about where we can agree or where we can disagree but let's not just go off the rails. To do an interview and say false things about our council and our employees and claim we are a bunch of criminals, arsonists, embezzlers, running an escort service, without any evidence to back those claims, is a horrible thing to do and it's dangerous. Because then it makes it harder for this council going forward to gain the trust of the people. Can you do it? Sure you can. But should you? No. There is no conspiracy against any council member up here. I can tell you for a fact that we are all very busy. The last thing we want to do is say, you know what would be great? Is if we had to take time and resources away from our city business to deal with local news from here to Colorado Springs, asking us questions that we shouldn't be answering because we should be focused on doing the business of the city. To say that that's something we strove to do and wanted to do is absolutely ridiculous. These aren't government elections. Make sure that you keep that in mind when running a campaign in future elections. This is a place where we see each other at grocery stores, at sporting events, at arts, and all these different things in the community. We can't be saying these things about one another. You don't have to tear someone else down to build yourself up. Lastly, I want to thank the people who made these last two years a great experience for me. First of all, obviously, my lord and savior Jesus Christ, my church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Saind Patrick, Father Joseph, and all the members who pray for me and let me know they are thinking of me and my family. All of our faithier community for their prayers and especially Matt Whitt and MJ Romano for doing our invocations for our councils during the last two years. I want to thank Nancy Bennett, Cynthia Nieb, and the Urban Renewal Board. John Yergert, Pam Denahy, Ron Davis, and the Tourism Board. Frank McKenzie, Mike Bourget, Gary Cranson, and the Utility Board. And all the city employees, especially Chief Quick, Deputy Chief Copley, Fire Chief Brad Davidson, thank you for doing your best in keeping this community safe. Also, I'd like to Brock Hinkhouse, Dawn Block, Aliza Libby, Deb Fraker, Melanie Scofield, Paula Mahoney, for always keeping me informed and on track and reminding me of certain things. My assistant Mireya for making sure I can keep my work and mayor's schedule straight. Bill Jackson, whenever I need something or a question answered, you have always been there available to me, and I thank you for that. Phil Malouff, you are amazing at what you do and we are lucky to have you. I can always count on you to give me your honest opinion even if I don't want to hear it at the time. I very much appreciate it. Rick Klein, your love for La Junta is unmatched and it has been great to work alongside you through council and the work you do with Action 22. That work will bring more rural voices to the forefront for years to come. You are the ultimate connector. The city council, you all do a wonderful job and always remember to communicate with your wards. You represent

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and serve them to the best of your ability. A special thanks to Chandra and Lisa, two of my most trusted allies. I appreciate all your hard work for your community, with 2A and always making sure that certain allegations have a response and for encouraging me when I need it most. Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez, I know if I ever need to be away for city business, it will be handled properly and carefully. Thank you for always doing that. Former mayor Don Rizzuto, your knowledge and expertise is always welcomed. And then, I have some special people that aren't here physically but have ended up being a big part of La Junta. My grandparents, Joe and Virginia Ayala, who decided to raise their family here in La Junta. My grandmother was a homemaker raising nine kids and cleaning homes when she could. My grandfather had to leave school in the fifth grade to work to help his family. He later returned to school getting his GED through Otero and going on to work for CDS until his retirement. I thank them because two of their grandkids have now served this city with the third running for a ward seat tomorrow. Michael Moreno was a ward 3 city councilman. I am currently the mayor and Zeke Ayala is running for ward 3 in tomorrow's election. So, I'd like to thank them and my family. Especially my mom for always supporting me, telling me not to read Facebook. My amazing wife and daughters who are always in my corner and who are the reason I volunteer and the reason I keep going. And lastly, the citizens of La Junta. It has been an absolute honor to be your mayor for the last two years. I'm extremely grateful and will always remember this. Thank you.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joe Ayala, Mayor