

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – December 1, 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, December 1, 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
Carly Johnson, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
John Hannel, Associated Charities
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
David Polley, La Junta
Nancy Harrington, SECO News
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette


Subject to approval at the
December 15, 2025
City Council Meeting


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

1. John Hannel, Associated Charities: Thanked the City of La Junta for supporting them with the food donations. All foods, except for homemade goods, are being accepted on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 1:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.
2. David Polley, 622 Colorado Avenue: Had some questions regarding who authorized the clean-up at 618 Colorado Avenue and when along with who contacted the EPA. The FBI tip line is 303-629-7171. The tip prompt is the fire at 618 Colorado, La Junta, Colorado, September 4th.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. **Regular Meeting Minutes November 17, 2025**
- B. **Application for Renewal of a Club Liquor License by BPOE Lodge 701, d/b/a BPOE Lodge 701, 119 Colorado Avenue**
- C. **Application for Renewal of a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by Love’s Travel Stops & Country Stores, d/b/a Love’s Country Store #12, 308 E. 1st Street**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 1, 2025 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

NEW BUSINESS

A. Appoint Council Representatives.

1. Board of Utilities

MOTION TO REAPPOINT PAUL VELASQUEZ TO THE BOARD OF UTILITIES: Ochoa

SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

2. Planning Commission (Mayor Appointees)

MOTION TO REAPPOINT CHANDRA OCHOA AND TOM SEABA TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

3. Planning Commission (Council Appointee)

MOTION TO REAPPOINT MAUREEN RIKHOF TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

4. Recreation Advisory Board

MOTION TO REAPPOINT DAMON RAMIREZ TO THE RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD: Johnson

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

5. Senior Citizens Advisory Board

MOTION TO REAPPOINT PAUL VELASQUEZ TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD: Ochoa

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 5-0 (Velasquez abstained/Pantoya absent)

6. Tree Board

MOTION TO APPOINT CARLY JOHNSON TO THE TREE BOARD: Rikhof

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 5-0 (Johnson abstained/Pantoya absent)

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- B. A Resolution Adopting a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form for the Use by City Council and Directing Staff to Continue Development of a Comprehensive Ethics Framework Consistent with Colorado Constitution Article XXIX and State Law.** Resolution No. R-13-2025 was presented for council's consideration.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-13-2025: Velasquez

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was concern regarding having more clarification on how the form is used and what to expect along with what the procedures are and what the staff develops for review.

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

- C. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO.** This is a lodging tax just like the hotels. We are currently at twenty-four short term rentals and revenue is projected to be about \$15,000. This ordinance is the beginning phases.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: We are still building the policy/license. Passing this ordinance was the first step in letting Airbnb's see that we were doing this. It would be an overall business license which would further disclose those who are doing the short-term rentals.

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

- D. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF LA JUNTA SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH A PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR LOT MERGES AND TO REQUIRE REZONING REVIEW FOR MERGERS INVOLVING MULTIPLE ZONING DISTRICTS.**

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was a lot of discussion about this ordinance at Planning Commission regarding how to move forward with this.

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

E. Trailer Park Discussion

Council Member Ramirez: I was wanting to see where we were at and where we were moving on it. If it was necessary for us to do something. We had one citizen come forward pertaining to this issue. If it's an issue for one person, it's probably an issue for more people.

City Manager Hart: Back in August, all I was doing was providing background information and giving you all a few options to proceed. Since then, I have not been given any direction with the exception of visiting with the one lady who came to council.

City Attorney Harris: Last Christmas, there was some discussion with the police chief because he was getting questions about whether folks who had family visiting from out of town might have RV's or something parking. He was asking if the city would consider a permit for a certain length of time parking to accommodate some of these special needs that happen on a more limited basis. When I was talking with Chief Quick, I believe that the feeling from the council was that we were not ready to administer a program because it would take administrative issue to pay for a permit, know where to post the permit, know how to enforce the permit, and at the time, we weren't at that moment, not even really sure what the policy was overall for the regular dates, let alone a special time like Christmas.

Mayor Ayala: It sounds like a good idea to do something like that but then the logistics of it gets in the way.

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Council Member Velasquez: Then there would be the space usage. If you issue the permit, it would have to be for a specific location. That way, somebody just couldn't go park a 5th-wheel trailer and obstruct somebody's driveway or an alleyway. At this point, it's more trouble than it's worth.

City Attorney Harris: Even if we've decided that permits aren't the solution, what councilman Ramirez was asking last time is, do we have any possible solutions?

Council Member Ramirez: This was just a follow up for me because we had the option to respond to Michael with some feedback. If we don't feel it's necessary. I'm absolutely fine with that.

Mayor Ayala: My thought is, at this time, I don't think we should do anything to change what we already have on the books.

Council Member Rikhof: I would defer to Chief Quick and the officers if it's something that they see a need for. I would be happy to entertain something if it's brought forward by those who deal with this in the city but I don't think it makes sense for us to try to put something together.

Council Member Velasquez: We have an existing code regarding that. I'm fine with it.

City Attorney Harris: One of the issues is the current code doesn't have a timeframe. That was part of what Ms. Matthew's concern was that she had been parking for a long time and code enforcement had not been aware of it or whatever the case was so that when she finally did receive a citation, it was a surprise. I think it certainly challenging because we know how difficult it is to have one code enforcement person who is trying to do everything. The primary issue that we may have with any change is trying to make sure that the public in the city is aware that this is an enforcement that we may do so that everyone is aware going forward.

It was the consensus of the council to not take any action at this time.

F. Committee/Board Reports

1. Utility Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - RO Plant inspected the reserve and west tanks using divers.
 - All the well houses have been winterized.
 - Distribution crew installed a 6" tap on a 10" main and installed a new fire hydrant at 4th & Park Avenue.
 - Replaced a leaky fire hydrant service at 1st & Steen Avenue.
 - Working with a potential pilot program for a RO concentrate treatment technology.
 - Coming up will be the electric Christmas lighting contest from the 15th – 19th and judged on the 18th. First place is \$300, Second place is \$200 and Third place is \$100.
 - There was a brief interruption of services in the electrical department that was caused by either a bird or squirrel.
 - Worked hard getting the Christmas decorations up.
2. AVRMC (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Ron Hogan is now the CEO for the hospital.
3. Senior Citizens Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Meeting will be this Thursday at the City Municipal Building here in the chambers.
4. Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Discussed the lot merger policy which was brought forward and passed on first reading.
 - Had a conversation about Conex boxes, the Construction Express boxes, and people using them as storage or placing them on their property and if we were going to consider some policies or regulations around that.

C. City Manager's Comments

- New library calendar is out for the month. On the 19th is the free movie day at the Fox. Choices are between the Grinch and The Christmas Carol both featuring Jim Carey.
- The demo of 618 Colorado Avenue should be finished up by Wednesday or Thursday, then the guys will move over to 1220 Rice Avenue to complete that demo. After that, they're going over to the Plaza to prepare for the concrete work for the asphalt next spring.

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- The sweeper is operational and will begin getting the streets swept.
- Dump trucks are getting ready for the snow this week.
- Sanitation will be rolling out the cardboard program this month.
- The concrete is done at the tennis courts.
- Dibble is going to do a walk through on Thursday for the runway project next year.
- Parks Department is installing the frisbee golf baskets at the City Park.
- Santa Claus will be at the Parade of Lights this Saturday and will be riding on the fire truck.
- Sent our 3rd or 4th RFP for the MMOF to CDOT for them to consider and accept and hopefully give us some input so we can go out for bid.

D. Community Events/Council Reports

- 3rd Annual Frost Fest at Otero College this Thursday evening from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Ward 3 Listening will be next Monday at the CDS Building located at 200 Burshears.
- Fundraiser for YEEHAW on the 12th at Wild Roots Kava Bar.
- Picketwire Players will be performing Little Town of Christmas and the Best Worst Christmas Pageant Ever on December 11th – 13th at 7:30 p.m. and December 14th at 2:30 p.m.
- La Junta High School band doing a holiday craft fair at the high school from 9:00 a.m. – noon Saturday.
- “Let’s Celebrate La Junta” at Dickeys Bar-B-Q at 3:00 p.m. Saturday.
- S’mores for Smiles at 5:00 p.m. on Santa Fe Avenue this Saturday.
- Parade of Lights and Christmas tree lighting starting at 6:00 p.m. Saturday.

E. Governing Body Reports

1. Council Member Velasquez:
 - Happy birthday to David Polley and on December 7th, happy birthday to Bette.
2. Council Member Rikhof:
 - Some of the items we have presented have gone through a committee process and have had a chance to be looked at different directions, a chance for interacting with staff to ask them questions about things like I’m thinking about the Planning Commission. We did work on the signs. We’ve done work on the lot merge. But I think when things go through a committee that they are better vetted and we’re making better policy. I think the short-term rental; I’m just concerned that we just passed something on first reading that has language in it referencing a form that doesn’t exist. I worry that when we pass things that aren’t, that haven’t been through much of a process. When we get the agenda items the Thursday evening before council meeting on Monday, it’s hard to go through things and really digest them. So, it occurred to me that maybe we should institute, maybe we should try to have things heard at the committee level. Instead of just showing up on agendas.

City Attorney Harris: Let me just share one piece. Everything that goes through the Planning Commission is because of Title 17. The zoning statute has baked into it that amendments to that have to be dealt with differently. So, the reason that those things go through Planning Commission is because it is specially required under our zoning code which is Title 17. We have a special set of rules for that, a special set of noticing it. So, you do see that those get additional attention because there’s special ways that those can be amended. So, for anybody considering this, we would also talk about whether or not that means that we would bake in changes in other places within the statutes or ordinances that we use. The reason that we do see these coming up in Planning Commission is because it is specifically required that we do so. It is not required in any other statute that amendments require that kind of additional time. It’s because of this specific nature of the Planning Commission.

Council Member Rikhof: Okay, good clarification. I appreciate that. I think my comment in general is more, I don’t think as a council, we have a forum for talking about things and I think that the trailer situation is the perfect example. We had an issue brought up and it bounced around. It kind of wallowed. We weren’t sure what to do with it but I feel like we just don’t have a structure for when an issue gets brought up, what we as council do with it. So, it occurred

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to me that having items discussed at a committee level might help with that and I would say that everything that was on the agenda today, obviously your liquor licenses don't need a committee, but it's just an idea for how we could do business better.

3. Mayor Ayala:

- Per our Streets, Wastewater and Water guys. We cannot leave leaves on the curbs. We need to make sure that we're doing our best to bag them up and get them off the curbs. If they get into the storm drains, they can cause blockages or at least restrict flow until they are washed out of the system. It does become a serious problem for not just our storm drains but the whole system when we get leaves accumulating. Make sure you're bagging or composting your leaves.
- Want to talk about a big drug bust that was recently in the news here in the La Junta. I want to highlight that in 2024, CBI in partnership with La Junta Police Department established a specialized investigation team and they began sending us help to help with shooting and drug related investigations. This partnership has significantly enhanced our manpower and our ability to make a positive impact in our city and keep our citizens safe. So, I want to give a huge shout out to CBI and to Chief Quick for making sure that that partnership is strong and for them doing the work to get these drugs out of our community as best they can. I also want to say that once they do that job, they have nothing else to do with the process. It goes to the district attorney and it goes to the judge, the courts after that. Our guys are doing the work with these partnerships and we have to make sure that we're giving them kudos and thanking them for the work that they do to help keep our community safe and to get these drugs out of our community. We appreciate all of our partners.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor