

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 20, 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, October 20, 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
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3


Subject to approval at the
November 3, 2025
City Council Meeting


Absent: none

Also present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Elaine McIntyre, La Junta
David Polley, La Junta
Jennifer Hinkhouse, City of La Junta
Brock Hinkhouse, City of La Junta
Tammy McCann, La Junta
Bethany Bender, La Junta
Nancy Harrington, SECO News
Adrian Hart, SECO News
Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

A. October 2025

- 1. Brock Hinkhouse, Parks/Rec Director – 10 years.** Brock started as a seasonal Assistant Pool Manager and Pool Manager from 2002 – 2015. On October 1, 2015 he became the Recreation Coordinator becoming the Director of Parks/Recreation, Cemetery, Sr. Center and Transit in August 1, 2019. Beginning January 1, 2025, the Industrial Park, Golf Course and Property Management were added.
- 2. Jennifer Hinkhouse, Purchasing Director – 5 years.** Jennifer worked as a seasonal Pool Concession Stand Manger in 2012 then became the Purchasing Director on October 19, 2020.

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

- 1. Bethany Bender, Otero College: International Food Night** will be held November 7th. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. and dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$45.00 for single and \$80.00 for a couple.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – October 20, 2025**CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes October 6, 2025**
- B. Application for Renewal of a Retail Liquor Store License by J & S Liquor LLC, d/b/a J & S Liquor Store, 420 E. 1st Street**
- C. Application for Renewal of a Retail Liquor Store License by Punjabi 4 Corp., d/b/a Big D's Liquor Mart, 26730 W. US Hwy 50**
- D. Application for a Special Events Permit by Our Lady of Guadalupe/St. Patrick Parish, Delbert DeLeon, Parish Administrator. The event is their Annual Winter Festival to be held December 13, 2025 from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Church Parish Hall**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 20, 2025 CONSENT AGENDA: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA AMENDING TITLE 17 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE REGARDING EXPEDITED REVIEW FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS.** 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: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

- B. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA AMENDING TITLE 17 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE REGARDING SIGN STANDARDS.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING WITH THE AMENDMENT OF SECTION 17.10.040, TYPES OF SIGNS, UNDER LETTER "A", TO BE ADJUSTED TO SEVEN (7) FEET ABOVE GRADE: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

NEW BUSINESS**A. Approval of the 2026 Proposed Budget**

- 1. A Resolution Approving the 2026 Proposed Budget.** Resolution No. R-12-2025 was presented for the council's consideration.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-12-2025: Rikhof

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There were concerns regarding police officers and whether the focus should be on retention or on the number of officers. Also, it was questioned why the general expense line item for miscellaneous was increased considerably from last year. It was discussed that the expense for AirMed comes out of the budget line and the budgeted amount for 2025 was not enough so it was increased for 2026.

VOTE: The motion carried 7-1

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2. **First Reading/AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE MILL LEVY FOR ASSESSMENT OF VALUATIONS FOR THE YEAR ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2025 (FISCAL YEAR, 2026).** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Johnson

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

3. **First Reading/THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE: APPROPRIATING SUMS OF MONEYS TO DEFRAY EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO FOR THE CITY'S FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026 AND ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2026.** The ordinance was introduced by title only, there being copies available to those in attendance.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Velasquez

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

B. Committee/Board Reports

1. AVRMC (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Attended a tour, presentation & luncheon that the hospital hosted last week. The tour were amazing and showed how robust the hospital is by offering so many different services and sharing what services are coming down the pike. Hopefully in November, they'll be setting up a 3D imaging for detecting breast cancer earlier. The hospital is being run very well and the staff they have are amazing. Thank you to all those who attended.
2. Utility Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - The Board voted to increase the rates in the Electric and Sanitation Departments. The new minimum rate for the Electric Department will be \$12.30 and for the Sanitation totes, it will be raised to \$14.33 and \$8.34 for an additional tote. The increase will be effective January 1, 2026.
3. Senior Citizens Center (Council Member Velasquez):
 - The Gem of the Month for October is Maxie Lu Carrica. She's been involved with the Senior Center for quite a long time.
4. Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):
 - Had discussion regarding the need for policy language around merging lots. There is lot splitting language in the ordinance but nothing on lot merging.
 - Discussed business licenses and what that would look like. Currently La Junta does not have procedures for a business license.
 - Also discussed subdivision review. It is done annually and was very thoroughly looked at last time around so there's nothing hugely important with this review.
5. Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):
 - It's officially Friends of the Library Week and they are having their 30th anniversary at the Woodruff Memorial Library. They're celebrating by having a silent auction and a candy guessing game.
 - The activities have started up again. Friday Fillers and Teen Activities Group. We're looking for some new champions for those coming to these activities.
 - Halloween is next Friday. Stop by for a treat and show off your costume. The Library staff has an awesome theme costume again this year.

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C. City Manager's Comments

- AVRMC: It was a great presentation and tour. The big thing is they want us to get out and advocate for them and be the voice for them. We need to be using the hospital.
- Halloween: Last meeting I outlined several different Halloween things going on. Please be looking out for kids out trick-or-treating.
- Board Vacancies: We have several positions open. Some boards have multiple positions. I encourage everyone to take a look at that list.
- 618 Colorado Avenue: I've mentioned at previous meetings that we applied for some emergency funding through the EPA. It looks like that funding is going to be coming through for us. The only thing is the government is currently shut down so I don't have a timeline for you just yet.

D. Community Events/Council Reports

- Inspiration Field, Monster Bash, Death by Rock'n Roll. 14th Annual Costume & Dance party to be held Saturday, October 25th.
- La Junta Chamber of Commerce, on Halloween, Trick-or-Treat Street from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. for all businesses participating.
- Inspiration Field, Trunk-or-Treat on October 30th from around 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
- La Junta High School Jazz Band will be playing at Wild Roots Kava Co. on Friday. It is free of charge.
- Lady Tigers Softball Team recognition: Marli Gonzales-Lathrom, Natalya Herrera, Ramie Gonzales-Lathrom, Jaisa Ramirez, Julianna Vasquez, Chloe Numez, Izzy Aragon, Kat Mondragon, Madalyn Tafoya, Ayanna Torres and Alyson Pounds. They are state bound and send off will be Thursday.
- The High School band is going to state and their leaving on Sunday.

E. Governing Body Reports

1. Mayor Ayala:
 - Thanked Brock and Michael for the Property Management tour. There will be some more questions from it but it's a good start.
2. Council Member Lisa Pantoya:
 - Thanked the City of La Junta for cleaning up the property at 10th & Topeka Avenue.
 - Clarification on the ballot that you have to reside in the ward of the person who's running to be able to have them on your ballot.
 - Also gave thanks for the sidewalk on the west side of 10th Street, near Topeka.
3. Council Member Velasquez:
 - The west side of the train on Train Hill is looking a little worn. It could probably use some upkeep.
 - Wasn't present for the last council meeting. I encourage citizens participation. I think that's the best part of this is when a citizen can come up and exercise their constitutional right freely. I do have some questions for a gentleman who is present tonight. It was almost accusatory towards our Fire Department and to our City and I do take issue with that. To insinuate, or to accuse our Fire Department that it was an intentional thing. That didn't quite set well with me. These fellows risk their life on almost every other call they go on. It's a hazardous job. I know the gentleman that spoke has some background in firefighting. It's a dangerous job and all our city employees do what they can for our city to keep the lights on, to keep the infrastructure going, the water going. They all go above and beyond and I just can't sit up here in good conscience as a representative for the people and not say anything about that. So, if the gentleman would like to stay after and have a discussion with me, I'll make myself available.

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4. Council Member Johnson:
- Would like to dive further into what Maureen was bringing up with the Police Department. I have also heard that they've lost upwards of seven people recently. So, we probably need to have a discussion about what's going on with the retention in the Police Department.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor