



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL
LA JUNTA, CO
APRIL 20, 2026
6:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
601 COLORADO AVENUE

CALL TO ORDER (Mayor Ayala)

The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, was called to order by Mayor Ayala on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL (City Clerk)

Present: Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
Scott Copley, Ward 2
Joe Ayala, Mayor
Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent: None

Also Present: Michael Hart, City Manager
Erin Harris, City Attorney
Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
Tom Seaba, Water/Wastewater
Jesse Singleton & Family, Water
Jim Armendariz & Family, Water
Ron Hogan, AVRMC
Brad Roe, Valley-Wide
Ben Mason, La Junta
Betty Velasquez, La Junta
Kara Copley, La Junta
Julie Worley, La Junta
Liz Randall, Resource Center
Carlos Angel, La Junta
Niels Rikhof, La Junta
Nancy Bennett, La Junta
Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
Bette McFarre, RF Gazette

PROCLAMATION

A. National Crime Victims' Rights Week (April 19 - 25, 2026)

Mayor Ayala proclaimed the week of April 19–25, 2026 as "National Crime Victims' Rights Week."

Lisa Randall, Crises Manager: The Resource Center serves Bent, Crowley and Otero Counties with financial assistance, criminal justice and civil legal advocacy, shelter relocation assistance and peer counseling. All victims of violent crimes are to be treated with respect and fairness by everybody within the criminal justice system. They have the right to be present at critical stages during their case.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

A. March 2026

1. Jesse Singleton - 5 years

03/01/2021 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator

Has obtained "B" certification in Wastewater Treatment and Level "2" certification in Wastewater Collections.

B. April 2026

1. James Armendariz - 40 years

04/03/1986 - Hired as seasonal labor at Wastewater

07/16/1986 - Full-time meter reader Water Department

03/01/1989 - Maintenance Worker Water Department

02/08/2002 - Resigned

03/01/2002 - Rehired with seniority Maintenance Worker Public Works

11/01/2002 - Maintenance Worker Wastewater

04/30/2026 - Retirement

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

Carlos Angel, 1319 Carson Avenue: Owns the property located at 1015 E. 4th Street and feels that the City needs to do something about the smell of the sewage plant because it stinks. He pays \$70 a month now in utilities and is getting a vacant lot fee also. The fees are too high, and he can't sell the property because it stinks. The City needs to do something.

INFORMATION

A. City of La Junta Project Water (Tom Seaba)

The City receives its water via the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project, which diverts Western Slope water through the Continental Divide to Turquoise Lake, eventually storing it in the Pueblo Reservoir. Of this supply, 51% is allocated for municipal and industrial use, with La Junta holding a 13% share of that portion. We utilize this allotment primarily for well augmentation; per the Colorado-Kansas Compact, every drop pumped from our 14

North La Junta wells must be returned to the aquifer or the river.

Despite a strong snowfall last year that allowed us to reach our full 5,200 acre-feet of storage capacity, the region is facing a historic drought. For the first time since the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District was formed in the 1970s, project participants will receive a zero allotment this year.

As of May 15, our carry-over storage of 1,100 acre-feet will bring our total to approximately 4,300 acre-feet. After accounting for evaporative losses and our annual augmentation debt - managed by AGRA and offset by credits from irrigation, wastewater treatment, and RO plant brine discharge - we expect to have 3,000 to 3,300 acre-feet remaining in storage.

Because we cannot recharge our storage this year, conservation is critical. We entered Level 1 restrictions on April 15, encouraging "smart watering" (avoiding the 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. window, fixing leaks, and ensuring positive shut-off valves).

However, following the official district determination on May 15, I recommend moving to Level 2a restrictions around June 1, This level maintains all prior rules but limits outdoor watering to three days per week, as defined by municipal code. We will present a resolution for this transition to the Utility Board for their recommendation before advancing it to City Council.

B. Veteran Outreach Event - Bradley Roe

The 2nd Annual Veterans Outreach Event will be July 11th at the Rocky Ford Fair Grounds. The Lower Arkansas Valley Veterans Advisory Group, which consists of leadership from American Legion District 1 in partnership with the Valley-Wide Outreach Team, came up with the idea for this event in late 2024. The intent of this event is to foster a relationship between our communities and the Veterans who live among them. The funds collected through sponsorship and donations are used to create a resource fund for the host American Legion Post. These funds are used to provide resources for Veterans both in the community and those that may be just passing through and need some assistance. This helps to relieve stress from community grant funds used to provide Veteran's transportation to medical appointments, food assistance and other needs within the community. This year's event is being hosted by American Legion Post 8 located in Rocky Ford. Last year's inaugural event was located at the Crowley County Fairgrounds and was hosted by American Legion Post 94 in Ordway and raised about \$5,000.

C. Arkansas Valley Regional Medical Center - Ron Hogan

CEO Update Provided to the La Junta City Council.

Operational and Financial Status overall:

- Growth in inpatient volume overall and outpatient services
- Emergency department services are stable and maintain around 1,000

visits/month

- Cash position improved 71%, now at 63 days
- Financial results trending positively
- No outstanding indebtedness; leases utilized in a few clinical areas, volume insignificant

New Services:

- Outpatient Pulmonary Rehabilitation
- Sr. Life Solutions
- Interventional Pain Management
- Re-opened North Entry to allow covered patients drop off/pick up
- 3D Mammography installed
- After-hours radiology services on a scheduled basis

Initiatives:

- Raise awareness regarding AVRMC services provided, reduction of citizens' drive time to care
- Grant funding application for asbestos abatement, Miller Hall options, radiology, elevator mechanical systems, Electronic Health Record replacement
- Physician recruitment
- Arkansas Valley Health Foundation

Administrative Matters:

- Ron Hogan hired as CEO — July 2025; Austin Palmer hired as CFO — March 2026
- Christina Tozzie — hired as Director of Business Development — March 2026

Other Matters:

- By-laws updates — personnel references, committee updates, and catastrophe responses
- Consolidation Agreement simplification — metric updates to pertinent targets

D. Lewis Bolt & Nut - Brett McIntosh

Lewis Bolt & Nut began as a partnership between the City of La Junta and our owner, Mark Paper, in moving the business from Minnesota to La Junta back in 1991. We started a small operation with twenty-five jobs at that time, and today we're currently at 280 employees operating in about 200,000 square feet with different manufacturing plants. The Anchor Plant with new operation back in 2006 and has expanded a couple of times already. Our Shear Building is for off-loading steel. We're about three weeks away from that being finished. As a primary job, we're shipping material all over North America. Last year we produced over thirty million fasteners and did roughly \$75 million

in sales last year, and we're continuing on a great growth path. We brought fifty million pounds of steel through La Junta. This is great for our community. We had \$19 million come back into the community in payroll. We have people up and down the Valley that work for us.

Again, it's a partnership. I think having businesses of all sizes come and address the council is important and a great opportunity for them to address the council as well as the community and let them know what they're about, what their focus is. Being someone who grew up in the Valley, it's awesome to have a career in a company where I've celebrated twenty-nine years. We have a core group of employees who have served over twenty years. Their creativity has lessened the gap in technology with robots. We currently have ten robots working in our facility. It makes things work smoother and faster. They're also innovative. We have so many patented products that we have developed through the years. I want to thank the team for all their dedication and hard work.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes April 6, 2026
- B. Application for a Special Events Permit by Southeast Colorado Creative Partnership, Nancy Ascherman, Event Manager. The event is their Annual Brew Fest to be held June 12, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. at the Santa Fe Plaza
- C. Application for Renewal of a Hotel & Restaurant Liquor License by Fargerson LLC, d/b/a Boss Hogg's Saloon & Restaurant, 808 E. 3rd Street

MOTION TO APPROVE THE APRIL 20, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Recommendation from the Historic Preservation Advisory Board (CLG) to approve the Local Landmark Application for 902 Belleview Avenue (Mayor) (Action)
- B. Recommendation from the Historic Preservation Advisory Board (CLG) to approve the Local Landmark Application for 322 Santa Fe Avenue (Mayor) (Action)

MOTION TO APPROVE THE LOCAL LANDMARK APPLICATIONS FOR 902 BELLEVIEW AVENUE AND 322 SANTA FE AVENUE: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Rikhof abstained)

- C. Committee/Board Report

Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):

- Moved forward the business registration requirement. The final language will be coming to council soon.
- Also moved forward with the shipping container initiative, final language will be coming to council on this also.
- Michael Yerman came to discuss changes to our Title 17 zoning portion of our Charter.

Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):

- The Board did an annual report last year and one of the items was that they asked for assistance in reviewing the library ordinance to see if it's still relevant.
- It's National Library Week.

D. City Manager Report

- The hybrid courts at the City Park are done.
- Offers have been extended for seasonal positions with the exception of the Street Department.
- New employee orientation will be on Friday.
- The pool will open on June 1st.

E. Community Events/Council Report

- April 21st (tomorrow night): Joint AVRMC and City Council meeting.
- April 23rd (Thursday): La Junta is celebrating 145 years. In honor of that, Dickeys is making a special menu for the occasion.
- April 23rd (Thursday): Harlem Wizards basketball at the college.
- April 24th (this Friday): Otero Museum is having their Annual Wine Tasting event.
- April 25th (Saturday): Inspiration Fields 60th Annual Block party all day.
- April 25th (Saturday): Historic Preservation Outreach event from 10:00 a.m. - noon.
- April 24th-26th: Otero students are putting on their spring play. It's a musical called Mr. Burns A Post Electric Play.

F. Governing Body Report

Mayor Joe Ayala:

- Honored Officer Beacham for doing a great job. Noticed him around 11:00 p.m at City Park. He put his spotlight on the pond, walked the playground, skate park

and hybrid court. We appreciate his dedication.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor