



MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL  
LA JUNTA, CO  
MAY 18, 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, May 18, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

**INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)**

Pastor Scott Johnson with Calvary Church 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  
                      Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3  
                      Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

Absent:            Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2

Also Present:     Melanie Scofield, City Clerk  
                      Dawn Block, Personnel Director  
                      Tom Seaba, Director of Water Utilities  
                      Elaine McIntyre, La Junta  
                      Ron Hogan, AVRMC  
                      Jennifer Hinkhouse, La Junta  
                      Ed Wiker, La Junta  
                      Kasey Miehle, La Junta  
                      Sherry Johnson, La Junta  
                      Scott Johnson, La Junta  
                      Carly Johnson, La Junta  
                      Cheryl Lindner, La Junta  
                      CaSandra Thomas, La Junta  
                      Gary Reed, Rocky Ford  
                      Nancy Harrington, SECO News  
                      Adrian Hart, SECO News  
                      Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

### **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)**

1. Gary Reed, 18975 State Highway 202, Rocky Ford: Want to talk about this ordinance about the business registration. The way this thing stands, this is just a paper that says give me \$25.00. It's so vague. I'm not sure that it can even be enforceable the way it stands. Changes need to be made mostly for clarification. Businesses that are doing business in La Junta should have a registration. My big questions is, is everybody going to have to have this? Or is it just certain businesses. I'm thinking Starlink satellite, Verizon, Dish Network, all these other guys. How are they even going to know that they need to have a business registration? If we have a traveling nurse that comes in, does home health, and she has her own business. Maybe she comes from Pueblo or Rock Ford. Do they have to have that same registration? The next thing, we talked about fees and I don't think anybody is ever going to complain about \$25.00. I've been in business a long time. I'm not sure if this registration fee is going to do anything for the business. What is the business going to see for this \$25.00? It's going to be listed on the website? Is there going to be some kind of promotion for these businesses? What happens if they don't pay? There's a \$50 late fee up to \$100. Most businesses, you already know who's here. There the one's that are probably going to pay it anyway. It's the one's that we don't know that's here that we're targeting.

2. Carly Johnson, 602 Belleview Ave., La Junta: Speaking in opposition to the proposed business registration ordinance. I support communication and collaboration between the city and local businesses. However, I do not believe this ordinance is necessary. Businesses are already registered through multiple existing systems including the Colorado Secretary of State, State and Local sales tax licensing, health permits and building permits. The ordinance never clearly explains what specific problem this new registration system solves that current systems do not already address. I'm also concerned that while the ordinance repeatedly states this is not regulatory and not a licensing scheme it still creates annual renewals, penalties, municipal infractions and court enforcement. There is also language that is overly broad and open to interpretation, including allowing the city to request any other information reasonably necessary from municipal administration. That gives future administrations wide discretion to expand requirements over time. My concern is not really about the \$25.00 fee its about creating another layer of bureaucracy for businesses that are already dealing with rising costs, heavy regulations, and one of the highest sales tax rates in the state. While the fee may be small today, the ordinance already allows future councils to increase fees and penalties by resolution. That is why many business owners are concerned about future expansion. If our goal is economic development and revitalization, I believe we should focus on reducing barriers for businesses, not creating additional administrative requirements without clear demonstrated need. For those reasons, I respectfully ask council to vote no.

3. Cheryl Lindner, 16 E. 22nd Street, La Junta: Thanked the city for the nice job they've done at the park with the pickle ball and tennis courts. It's exciting to see people utilizing them like they do at the college.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- A. AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR DISCUSSION OF A PERSONNEL MATTER UNDER C.R.S.24-6-402(4)(f) AND NOT INVOLVING: ANY SPECIFIC EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE REQUESTED DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER IN OPEN SESSION; ANY MEMBER OF THIS BODY OR ANY ELECTED OFFICIAL; THE APPOINTMENT OF ANY PERSON TO FILL AN OFFICE OF THIS BODY OR OF AN ELECTED OFFICIAL; OR PERSONNEL POLICIES THAT DO NOT REQUIRE THE DISCUSSION OF MATTERS PERSONAL TO PARTICULAR EMPLOYEES (Interim City Attorney)

MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION: Velasquez

SECOND: Ramirez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: the motion carried 6-0 (Ochoa absent)

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes May 4, 2026

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MAY 18, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO, AMENDING TITLE 17 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE TO ADD A DEFINITION OF "SHIPPING CONTAINER (CONEX BOX)," TO AMEND TABLE 17-B (SCHEDULE OF USES), AND TO CREATE SECTION 17.40.215 ENTITLED "SHIPPING CONTAINERS" (City Attorney) (Action)

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

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON SECOND READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: This was discussed extensively at Planning Commission prior to coming to the council.

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

- B. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO, ADDING CHAPTER 5.12 TO TITLE 5 OF THE LA JUNTA MUNICIPAL CODE ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT WITHIN THE CITY (City Attorney) (Action)

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

Mayor Ayala: Had discussions with a lot of business owners, a lot of people that wanted more understanding on where we were at with this. So, before we vote, I'm putting three clarifying amendments into ordinance 1700. They reinforce and clarify each addressing a public concern raised since the first reading. I reached out to CML on these. I'm satisfied that these fall within the scope of clarifying amendments permissible on a second reading under Colorado Municipal Law. (See attachment "Ordinance No. 1700 – Proposed Amendments" dated May 18, 2026). I think this meets us halfway and this is just the foundation. If everything goes as planned, no business owner is going to be paying until 2028.

Lengthy discussion continued regarding the following points:

- Asked about striking 5.12.100 Enforcement of Civil Penalties.
- We're not enforcing imprisonment but we need some kind of teeth. The \$50 - \$100 isn't a deal breaker.
- Language is being added that is not necessary or helpful, this section doesn't make sense.
- If this is about encouraging participation and not enforcement, this section isn't necessary.
- Still need some kind of penalty.
- The ordinance doesn't need to be perfect tonight, that's what resolutions are for. Things can be addressed as they come up. Tonight is laying the foundation.
- There's also a safety aspect. The emergency personnel can use reverse 911 if needed.
- We need to be accountable for the businesses that are here.
- Having a list of contractors, electricians, plumbers and other services would be helpful for new businesses coming to La Junta.
- Discussion on not striking 5.12.100. The language is pretty basic. Nothing is written to where it is an absolute.
- Seems that we may be losing the original intent. If it's just a voluntary help our businesses be better and grow or is it truly a licensing wrapped up into some kind of penalty assessment for those who don't register.
- Need a one-stop shop for people looking to open a business in La Junta. We have other programs to offer.
- As a council, as a city, we should know how many businesses we have, what type of business they're conducting, are they who they say they are. This protects the health and welfare of our citizens.
- If this is the best vehicle that we have, we may need to do more work to make sure its solid. Or is there another way to get to our ultimate goal?

**MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE WITH THE AMENDMENTS PROVIDED**

**EARLIER: Velasquez**

**SECOND: Pantoya**

**DISCUSSION: Council Member Rikhof:** On the issue of City Council setting fees, as a body, we should decide who sets fees. It should be administrative. I don't think the City Council should be in the business of setting fees. I agree that we need to do something that is supportive of businesses and I agree you have to start somewhere. We had a conflict-of-interest policy, let's pass this and then we'll figure out what it looks like and

how it's implemented and it's been several months and there's been nothing. I don't think we have a good track record for let's just start it and see how it goes, get more information later. There are some good reasons to do this. What we've got is very convoluted and does not match our goals. Just passing it would not move us down the road.

VOTE: Those voting YES: Ayala, Pantoya, Velasquez  
Those voting NO: Copley, Ramirez, Rikhof  
The motion failed 3-3 (Ochoa absent)

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. AVRMC Consolidation Agreement - Second Amendment (Mayor) (Action)**

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE AVRMC CONSOLIDATION AGREEMENT – SECOND AMENDMENT: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: Council Member Rikhof: Mr. Hogan has given us a heads up two meetings ago and referenced it last meeting. She appreciates his hard work and the hospital.

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

### **B. A Resolution of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, Declaring a Stage II Water Shortage Pursuant to Section 13.04.315 of the La Junta Municipal Code and Implementing Stage II, Level A Water Restrictions (City Attorney) (Action)**

Resolution No. R-12-2026 was presented for the council's consideration.

Tom Seaba: This would be a request of people to reduce the amount of watering by time. Residents with even numbered addresses may only irrigate on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Odd numbers would be Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Commercial users would be Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You can still water your plants, trees, hanging baskets whenever you would like to, as long as you're utilizing a watering device with a positive shut-off valve.

Everybody knows we had a miserable winter when it came to snowfall in the mountains. When it comes to water, the City of La Junta utilizes well augmentation from our project water from the Frying Pan Arkansas Project. That water is transported from the western slope over to the eastern slope, goes from Turquoise Reservoir and is held in Pueblo Reservoir. That's where our storage is at. The City of La Junta maintains approximately 5,200 standard acre feet for storage plus an additional 600-acre feet that we can get access to by being a current participant in the Arkansas Valley Conduit project. This year, because of the lack of snowfall, they were only able to transfer over a very minimal amount of water. After they do some general water accounting to take care of certain aspects that they need to do either at the reservoir or with Kansas, it left them with only 55-acre feet of water in excess. To put that into perspective, the City of La Junta alone received 1,100-acre feet as our water allotment. Currently we stand with just over 4,300-acre feet in current storage. That's about 2 ½ - 3 years of storage at

normal operation. Not knowing what future weather patterns are, knowing that it takes multiple years to overcome reduction in storage that we will have this year; by receiving no allotment, we would like to try to reduce the amount of water required to draw on our storage in replenishments of our well augmentation decrees.

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. R-12-2026: Ramirez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

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

- C. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO, ACTING BY AND THROUGH ITS WATER ENTERPRISE, AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A LOAN AGREEMENT AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY BOND WITH THE COLORADO WATER RESOURCES AND POWER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY FOR THE FINANCING OF WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING LEAD SERVICE LINE REPLACEMENTS; AUTHORIZING THE PLEDGE OF NET REVENUES OF THE WATER ENTERPRISE; AUTHORIZING CITY OFFICIALS TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS AND TAKE ACTION NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE FINANCING; AND PROVIDING OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO (City Attorney) (Action)

Tom Seaba: This project could be considered phase 2 of what has become a 3-phase project out of something that was devised in 2015. At that time, it came back as too expensive. The 1st phase on this was to replace our south booster station right by the big 3-million-gallon tank that takes care of the south tank up at 26th and Santa Fe Avenue. It had three pumps in it. We were down to one functioning and on its last leg. The 2nd phase is to take care of the transmission lines that goes up to the south tank. A proposed replacement of that tank would be phase 3. With a much larger water storage tank. It's a 250,000-gallon tank but it's responsible for about 40% of the city's customers.

The scope of this project would be to replace all of the distribution main and water service lines, meters, fire hydrants. It would start at 10th and Colorado, Colorado to 22nd, Cimarron from 16th – 22nd, Raton from 20th – Mountain View, Smithland from 16th – 22nd, 22nd Street from Smithland to Santa Fe, then Santa Fe from 22nd – the tank at 26th. This will give us brand new transmission lines. It'll also put in a 12" line that would go over to about 22nd and Smithland which is kind of the area that has been engineered, what would be phase 3. We hope to install a new approximately 1.2-million-gallon water storage tank. Along with this is the replacement of any lead service or anything that requires replacement from the new lead and copper revised rules. We will be receiving that \$6.245 million in principle forgiveness and then we will just take on the remaining \$8.715 million and change as moneys we need to repay at 1.7% over 30 years.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Rikhof

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion  
VOTE: The motion carried 6-0 (Ochoa absent)

#### D. Committee/Board Report

##### 1. Utilities Board (Council Member Velasquez):

- Congratulations to Catherine Mondragon for being the recipient of the ARPA/Electric Department scholarship. She'll be going to UCCS in Colorado Springs.
- Extend a Thank You to Mr. Mike Bourget for almost a decade of service on the Utility Board. He'll be leaving us because he's selling his house and will no longer be a resident of La Junta.

##### 2. Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):

- The six-word story winners. They are fantastic. It's on their Facebook page.
- The Summer Reading Program kickoff is June 1st from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

#### E. City Manager Report

(Given by Dawn Block)

- Mr. Hart apologizes for not being in person. He is attending college graduation for his oldest son Austin in Las Vegas.
- Road Repairs: Cimarron, Belleview and Lincoln Avenues – 1st – 3rd Street; 9th Street from San Juan to Belleview Avenues; 14th Street from Santa Fe to Colorado Avenues; (the intersection of 5th Street and Colorado Avenue; looking at possibly doing concrete.)
- The pool opens June 1st.
- CML District meeting on May 21st at Otero College.
- CML Conference is June 22nd – 26th.
- Mayor Ayala and City Manager Hart had a great visit and tour at Auggie's. The store is looking great! Nolan indicated they are still working to open sometime this month.
- Will be bringing Economic Development recommendations to the June 1st meeting to get that kicked off.
- The tennis courts/pickleball court opening is getting closer. Brock is working on the pickleball tournament/grand opening. Pickleball community members, please get in touch with Rufus or Brock.
- Mr. Hart sends his sincerest appreciation to Ron Hogan and AVRMC in negotiating the consolidation agreement. He really enjoyed the opportunity to get to visit with Ron and other staff members on multiple occasions to get this to where it is now. He looks forward to working with AVRMC for many years to come.

#### F. Community Events/Council Report

- They did a phenomenal job at the Picketwire with Come From Away.

#### G. Governing Body Report

##### 1. Council Member Velasquez:

- Congratulations to the Class of 2026.
2. Mayor Ayala:
- We will be getting negotiations started with some legal professionals that CML has given us for an interim basis as we work on a long-term plan for our City Attorney.
  - Nolan and crew invited me and City Manager Hart to go take a tour of Auggies. It's amazing.
  - Next week we will be doing another tour of Bents Fort with Jacob Topping and hopefully State Representative Ty winter.
  - I was able to take another Bents Fort tour with CSU Pueblo Trio. They are a college access program geared toward low income, first-generation college students
  - Myself and City Manager Hart also went to the Catholic Church as they made a check presentation to Associated Charities in the amount of \$2,000 from the St. Pat's Dinner Auction committee.
  - Special congratulations to our two new officers. Officer Hall and Officer Hoffman. Me and City Manager Hart also attended the PD graduation of our two new officers.
  - I also want to say Thank You very much to my dear friend Mike Bourget and the years of service that he gave to the Utility Board.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

---

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

---

Joseph Ayala, Mayor