



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

INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Mayor Ayala)

Mayor Ayala led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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, July 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

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. Clay Buchner, City Attorney. Melanie Scofield, City Clerk. Heather Maes, Library Director. Gary Reed, Rocky Ford, Kasey Miehlike, La Junta. Diane Rikhof, La Junta. Nancy Bennett, La Junta. Julie Worley, La Junta. Terry Smalling, La Junta. Erin Harris, La Junta. Cisco Perez, La Junta. Santiago Palacio, La Junta. Alison Penner, La Junta. Bethany Bender, La Junta. Rick Ward, La Junta. Cheryl Lindner, La Junta. Douglas Golding, La Junta. Craig Flick, La Junta. Tim Snyder, La Junta. Stacey Ayala, La Junta. Lisa Doney. Adrian Hart, SECO News. Bette McFarren, RF Gazette.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

City Attorney Bucher: A four-part complaint was submitted by a citizen: 1) There was an issue regarding a search transparency issue. It came to light that our town manager had become a finalist for another town manager position. The complaint was that this should have been publicly noticed. 2) Had to do with a conflict of interest in the timeline regarding the previous city attorney and the city manager who were working together and started a personal relationship. 3) Has to do with administrative retaliation or exclusion which has to do with Council Member Rikhof. 4) An issue of a public safety breach having to do with the firing of some fireworks that occurred with some staff and council members present.

I'd like to speak with the council in a work session or other public setting. I do think it's important that the public knows our process for this. Typically, a formal complaint should be made under the penalty of perjury, that would include an affidavit. There has to be more than an accusation. There has to be a reason behind the allegation. The process you've adopted is the process that CIRSA has put out, which also requires a pre-investigative query so that we're not spending a ton of time on unfounded accusations. It's important to come up with some resolution that sets out a complaint timeline process. I look forward to deeper discussion and some direction once we have more information.

MOTION TO MOVE INTO 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 (Complaint against the City Manager) AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING POSITIONS RELATIVE TO MATTERS THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS, DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR NEGOTIATIONS, AND/OR INSTRUCTING NEGOTIATORS, UNDER C.R.S. §24-6-402(4)(e) (Workforce Analysis Contract): Velasquez

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

The Council went into Executive Session at 6:19 p.m. and reconvened at 7:37 p.m.

PRESENTATION

A. American Legion Post 9 (Rick Ward/Tim Snyder)

Rick Ward: The American Legion Post 9 hosts a Coffee and Donuts at the La Junta Senior Center every Wednesday. We also receive a Veteran's Trust Fund every year. These funds help transport veterans to their medical appointments, help with rent, utilities, food security, housing and vehicle repairs. We provide military honors at funerals and twice a year we put wreaths at the veteran's grave sites. We work very closely with the City and the Chamber of Commerce to provide the Color Guards for the different activities downtown and the parades. We are also working on the Honor Flight of Southern Colorado which is dedicated to honoring veterans with a life-changing journey to Washington, D.C. at no cost.

Tim “Radar” Snyder: Our focus, of course, is our veterans, their families and also the community. Every Veterans Day you’ll find us in the schools providing programs. The event I’m going to talk about is Wreaths Across America. It will be December 19th. We’ll meet at the La Junta Cemetery at 10:00 a.m. It’s all about kids and family. Remember, Honor, Teach.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

1. Lisa Doney: Has filed a complaint against Erin Harris to the Bar Association. Discussed concerns regarding Police Department procedures. Has enough evidence to sue the City of La Junta for misconduct.

REPORTS

A. Library Advisory Board

Terry Smalling, Chairman, shared with Council the board’s annual report containing strengths, weaknesses, short-term goals, long-term goals, capital improvements, policies, procedures, programs, and requests. (Report Attached)

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Regular Meeting Minutes June 15, 2026

B. Application for a Special Events Permit by La Junta Chamber of Commerce, Christina Tozzie, Event Manager. The event is Early Settlers Day to be held August 1, 2026 from 4:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. at the Santa Fe Plaza

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JULY 6, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2025 Audit Presentation (Director of Finance)

Aliza Libby went over the ratio analysis worksheet that shows the key financial ratios for the General Fund, Electric Fund, Water Fund, Sewer Fund and Sanitation Fund. Audits may be found on www.lajuntacolorado.org under the “Finance” tab. (Report Attached)

B. Review of 2026 Financial Statements (Director of Finance) (Discussion)

Aliza Libby answered questions from the Council. Beginning at the next meeting, quarterly updates of the financials will be presented.

C. MEMORANDUM: Brick & Tile Park Parking Lot Concerns (City Manager) (Discussion)

During the June 1, 2026 City Council meeting, several residents expressed concerns regarding the parking lot located on the east side of Brick and Tile Park. Following the

meeting, staff reviewed the concerns raised by residents, as well as additional comments provided by Council Member Rikhof via email. Mr. Hart's findings and recommendations are attached.

D. Committee/Board Report

1. Senior Citizens Advisory Board (Council Member Velasquez):
 - Dave Polley is the Gem of the Month for June.
 - Water exercise classes at the City pool have started continuing through July every Monday and Thursday.
2. La Junta Development Inc. (City Manager Hart):
 - LJDI was put together in the late 80's early 90's. It looks like they've existed for approximately 17-18 years. They stopped their filings with the IRS in 2010. To get back in good standing, the IRS requires three years of financials, which we don't have. It was discussed to create a new board and establish new Articles of Incorporation the same way it was done with LJDI and make sure we have proper record keeping. Once back in good standing, City Council can amend Chapter 2.44 which is the LJDI ordinance that put's that organization under the City umbrella.

E. City Manager Report

- The Fire Department received a total of 146 calls. There were 141 EMS and 5 for fire.
- There were two more rescues out at Picketwire Canyon.
- We are in Stage 2 Fire Restrictions in the city and county.
- The Police Department had 1,810 calls for service, 157 traffic stops, 15 accidents, and 87 arrests.
- Code Enforcement had a total of 165 calls. There were 75 for animals, 51 for weeds, 10 for trash, 7 muni-code violations, 8 parking violations and 14 junk cars.
- The Street Department has completed their chip seal prep. The project will begin on the 14th.
- The City is working with Clean Valley Recycling to provide free curb side residential recycling to the community of La Junta.
- The airport runway and taxi-way project are being coordinated so that the airport doesn't have to be shut down any longer than necessary.
- The tennis courts are done.
- The toilets for the park ended up being the wrong ones. We are waiting on the correct ones.
- The library has the coolest stuff going on: Lego night, citizenship classes, movie day. Go check them out.

F. Community Events/Council Report

1. City Manager Hart:
 - Footloose starts Thursday and runs through Sunday at the Picketwire.
 - Early Settlers Day is August 1st and Colorado's birthday (and Michael's birthday).

2. Council Member Pantoya:

- This weekend is the 104th Annual Catholic Church Bazaar Our Lady of Guadalupe Saint Patrick Parish.

3. Council Member Rikhof:

- The Economic Development Summit was June 17th. There were about thirty participants (city, local, college, hospital.) It was another very good effort. What we accomplished last year with next steps was very impactful.

G. Governing Body Report

1. Council Member Rikhof:

- Welcomed the new city attorney. Would like to request that the conflict-of-interest policy be placed on the agenda and how to be compliant with sunshine laws.

2. Council Member Ramirez:

- Thanked the citizens of La Junta for their compliance during the 4th of July.

3. Mayor Ayala:

- Recognized the 2026 AVRMC years of service awards.
- The community lost a very cherished member with Mr. Tom Pulido.
- Thanked Tivoli Brewing for their tour.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor