



AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL
LA JUNTA, CO
AUGUST 3, 2026
6:00 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
601 COLORADO AVENUE

COUNCIL GOALS

Envision a safe, flourishing downtown that provides a strong commercial tax base.
Strive to be active stewards of existing aging infrastructure.
Recognize importance of experience, well trained, and community minded staff.
Ensure its electorate is well informed of on-going successes and future plans.
Envision a safe, secure community for its families and youth.
Promote redevelopment of existing businesses and neighborhoods and increase quality of life for all its residents.

INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Mayor Ayala)

CALL TO ORDER (Mayor Ayala)

ROLL CALL (City Clerk)

Council Members
Ramirez (Ward 1)
Velasquez (Ward 1)
Copley (Ward 2)
Ayala (Mayor)
Ochoa (Ward 2)
Pantoya (Ward 3)
Rikhof (Ward 3)

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Regular Meeting Minutes July 20, 2026

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1688
REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND
REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA
JUNTA, CO (City Attorney) (Action)

NEW BUSINESS

A. Conflict of Interest Document(City Attorney) (Action)

B. Committee/Board Report

- C. City Manager Report
 - D. Community Events/Council Report
 - E. Governing Body Report
- ADJOURN



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL
LA JUNTA, CO
JULY 20, 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 20, 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 — via Zoom. Melanie Scofield, City Clerk. Aliza Libby, Director of Finance. Paula Mahoney, Exec. Asst. Gary Reed, Rocky Ford. Kasey Miehlike, La Junta. Sandy Leonard, La Junta. Ed Wiker, La Junta. Ben Mason, La Junta. Ann Weaver, La Junta. Kathy Benz, La Junta. Nancy Bennett, La Junta. CaSandra Thomas, La Junta. Cole Smith, La Junta. Roberta Calkins Mendoza, La Junta. Diane Rikhof, La Junta. Frederik Rikhof, La Junta. Renee Vigil, La Junta. Adrian Hart, SECO News. Bette McFarren, RF Gazette

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

A. June 2026

1. Cindy Leyba - 5 Years

Hired 06/01/2021 - Accounting Clerk II in Finance (Utility Office)

B. July 2026

1. Issac Vasquez - 5 Years

Not present

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

1. Sandy Leonard, Ward 3: Shared the importance of nonprofits and all the services they provide. The only way they succeed is with donations, community support and grants. They've rehabbed buildings and brought grant money to La Junta instead of the front range. She encourages us to donate our money and time to our local nonprofits.
2. Ben Mason, Sutherlands: Thanked Brad and the men and women who showed up at the store for a dumpster fire. They were incredibly professional. He also thanked Marilyn for her help in getting the dumpster replaced.
3. Roberta Calkins-Mendoza, La Junta Chamber: Early Settlers Day has been moved this year to Saturday, August 1st. There will be things downtown, then at the park, then back downtown. This will be in celebration of the commemorative 250 for America and 150 for Colorado. August 1st is also Colorado Day.

INFORMATION

A. 9/11 Memorial

Mayor Ayala: We will be having a 9/11 remembrance and community action scheduled for September 11 & 12, 2026. Twenty-five years ago, our nation changed forever. This September, La Junta will gather to honor the memory of the victims, heroes and survivors of that day. More importantly, the milestone anniversary is an occasion for our country to express our deepest gratitude and recognition for our local first responders and veterans who dedicate their lives to serving and protecting us. On Friday, September 11th, you can join us at City Park from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The day will feature a formal commemoration ceremony at 1:00 p.m. A special tribute to our veterans and first responders and the 9/11 display of Colorado Victims and Veterans at the north gazebo. In coordination with the Chamber of commerce, there will be a parade downtown at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, followed by a fundraising banquet on Saturday evening. Our tribute continues on Saturday with the community-wide day of service from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., meeting at the City Park north gazebo. Our youth and community volunteers will unite for local town beautification projects to give back to a city that we love.

Betty Blanco: This year we've got a trifecta. We have the 250th of the United States, the 150th of Colorado and the 25th anniversary of 9/11. This was not intended to be a time of grieving but rather to turn our grieving into something that we can be proud of so that we can do good things and not let the bad guy win. La Junta is our home, and it's up to all of us to take care of it and make it a better place to live. That's why on September 11th and 12th, La Junta will come together to honor our heroes, reflect on our nation's resilience and pass these values on to the next generation. Our weekend features a solemn remembrance ceremony. We're going to be burying a time capsule. On Saturday, we will have the Staff Sergeant Brian Cowdrey memorial 5K. We'll have fourteen community cleanup projects and restoration projects. A big portion of this is

going to be run by a grant that we got from the National 9/11 Day for Youth. This effort belongs to all of us, and we especially appreciate Mayor Ayala's leadership and the vital partnership of the City Council and our local emergency services and community volunteers as we finalize the logistics of this big project. Thank you for making this vision a reality.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes July 6, 2026
- B. Application for a Change of Trade Name/DBA only by Mini Mart, Inc. from Loaf N Jug No 13 to Cumberland Farms #750013, 918 W. 3rd Street (Liquor License)

MOTION TO APPROVE THE JULY 20, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ochoa

SECOND: Velasquez

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

FINANCIALS

- A. 1st Quarter 2026 (Director of Finance)

Each quarter, Director of Finance Aliza Libby, will focus on different areas of the financials to further educate the community. This quarter she focused on the balance sheet. Questions were taken from the council. The 2027 Budget Planning & Community Engagement Session will be Wednesday, August 5th, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the La Junta Senior Center.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Ayala turned the meeting over to Mayor Pro Tem, Councilman Velasquez and City Attorney Clay Buchner.

- A. Citizen Complaint (City Council) (Possible Action)

City Attorney Buchner: I'm putting together advice for an upcoming work session on how to handle complaints in the future based on CIRSA ethical guidelines so that we can provide a platform for complaints and parameters of how those complaints will be reviewed and/or investigated in future times.

- 1. Disclosure of City Manager Application

City Attorney Buchner: The original complaint as we put on record discussed that the disclosure of the city manager's application for another job was not disclosed or made transparent to the public. I want to advise council that Colorado and other states protect the names of applicants for city manager and other executive positions pursuant to law. That law was passed in House Bill 21-1051, and it's since been codified in CRS 24-72-204 and CRS 24-6-402, wherein it actually states that you do not have to disclose applicants. Almost every state has a law along these lines. This is to prevent the chilling of good applicants and strong applications for these executive level positions. This particular issue is not an issue. It should not be disclosed, and the other state had no

obligation to disclose it to us either. My advice to the council is that this issue and the complaint requires no further investigation.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: The council has been sufficiently advised in this matter. I would ask if there is any member of the council who would like to make a motion on the type of action or any action, to please do so. Hearing no motion, the issue is resolved.

2. City Attorney and City Manager Conflict of Interest

City Attorney Buchner: There's no doubt that that created a conflict of interest. Under rule 1.7 of the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct, if an attorney has a conflict of interest that their personal interest materially limits their ability to represent their clients. Romantic relationships are per se a personal interest. The reason that it's conflict obviously is because it compromises the ability of the parties to independently and objectively advise the city council on performance contracts, potential misconduct, etc. and that could affect day to day operations. This is not an automatic legal violation. It does happen. The typical appropriate action for the situation is a resignation and/or removal of one of the parties and/or other HR intervention. In this case, the issues mute because the city attorney did, in fact, resign, which would have been the advice of anyone if they hadn't done it on their own. As I noted, the city attorney did the right thing and resigned. I looked back at the time period in which the complaint was mostly concerning, which was May 1st through May 9th. First of all, the city attorney and city manager don't make unilateral decisions, they carry out board direction. But during that time, there didn't appear to be any decisions made and/or discretionary decision-making by staff or the city attorney that had anything to do with the alleged relationship because the city attorney resigned, and the situation was handled appropriately. I think this is again a non-issue. We would have required resignation from one of the parties and that's already happened. I don't know what else could be uncovered here. I advise that no action is necessary.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: We have been sufficiently advised by counsel recommending that no action be taken. Do I have any comments or is anybody going to make a motion on any further action regarding this matter? Hearing none, this matter is closed.

3. Exclusion of Council Members

City Attorney Buchner: A specific council member had been excluded, that being Council Member Rikhof. I know that if any council member is being excluded from public meetings or public communications that have been noticed to council as a whole, that is easily identifiable and that must be corrected. There cannot be exclusion of a council member from any public meeting or other local government legislative hearings, etc. However, that should be obvious because those have to be properly noticed, or they'd be in violation of COML (Colorado Open Meetings Law). Otherwise, I think a third party complaint regarding exclusion is not actionable. It's not an actual issue for the council. I know, having spoken with Council Member Rikhof and other council members, that the board is comprised of respected professional adults, and they can raise their own

concerns, if any, with the council regarding allegations of exclusion. Again, I don't think there's any actionable item here. I would just say to the board that anything that involves government and the use of the local governing body should be inclusionary of all council members, but outside of that advice, I do not recommend any further action on this issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: Upon advice of counsel, are there any comments from any of the council members present? Ms. Rikhof, you were named in this. Do you have any comments or concerns or anything you'd like to say at this time?

Council Member Rikhof: I appreciate counsel's acknowledgment that we're professionals, and we can speak out for ourselves. I did speak up, and I brought it up at a city council meeting. I'm just curious if anybody else has a problem with knowing that communication happens, and I'm excluded from those conversations. Is that okay with the city council going forward?

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: Does anybody have any questions of Ms. Rikhof? Hearing no questions, upon advice of counsel saying that this is a non-issue because it is a third-party complaint, do I have any motions for any further action? Having none, we'll move on to the next item considering that number three is concluded.

4. Mayor's Involvement in March 2026 Incident

City Attorney Buchner: The mayor needs to recuse himself and step out of the room for this discussion.

(Mayor Ayala exited the Council Chambers.)

City Attorney Buchner: The allegation is that the mayor was somehow involved in an incident that had to do with fireworks and then an incident of an assault that occurred at a residence within La Junta. I did look into the issue. I did speak with local law enforcement and that's the appropriate investigating body here. If there was any allegation of criminal behavior, that's left to law enforcement. That's not something appropriately investigated by the council. As the town prosecutor, I can look into allegations and bring charges. However, the criminal investigation itself comes to law enforcement and typically citations are written by law enforcement. This is one of those issues that's not appropriate for city council interference. The evidence shows that the mayor was not seen at all in or around the fireworks. There's no evidence that the mayor interacted with anyone at the scene, including the police. I believe that was part of the issue that the complainant was concerned that the mayor was there but then was hiding from police. In this case, that was probably the right thing to do. My advice is that you council members and mayor, mayor pro tem should not interfere with law enforcement investigations because that could also be seen as an abuse of authority. The proper parties were charged criminally. So, the person that committed assault was charged with assault, and they are facing prosecution in county court. There's no law that was violated in the municipality as we are not under fire restrictions and even if we were and that law had been violated, the mayor was not seen in or around the

fireworks, or the group where the assault happened across the street from that residence. I've already talked to law enforcement. They've taken appropriate action based on their investigation. I'm advising you that that has been handled, and it would be unethical to advise and/or direct me to file complaints or otherwise tell me how to prosecute cases. That's my prosecutorial discretion and that is done so that these issues are siloed so that there's no unlawful interference by council members with criminal investigations because you are the hiring authority for myself and for the chief of the police department. So, really, there's no further action to be taken.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: On the advice of counsel, are there any comments or any motions for further action in this?

Council Member Rikhof: I'd like to know if the mayor has anything that he'd like to say about issue number four.

City Attorney Buchner: I think afterward maybe, but it's inappropriate for the mayor to weigh in on this issue. It's something that the board needs to look at. The question becomes, is the mayor's possible presence at a house that had fireworks unethical and/or a violation to the level that the council wants to take action? There's no criminal behavior, but the discussion might be without the mayor present, because he's recused himself and he has a conflict here. That would be what you would look into. If, in fact, the council determined that this was something that needed to be actioned and the council wanted to take removal action and/or admonishment action, then there would need to be a public hearing and the mayor would be able to weigh in on this issue. But at this point, it's not appropriate, and I do caution the council. Typically, things like traffic tickets, possible misdemeanors, and lower infractions that don't interfere with the council members or, in this case, the mayor's ability to perform his public responsibility, are best left to that criminal investigation, because what we see here is as we go down the rabbit hole, are we going to be discussing council members and mayors traffic tickets, jaywalking, any sort of speeding tickets, misdemeanors, or infraction behavior but that's up to the council to decide. I'm just saying from my perspective how I've seen this go historically and in other jurisdictions.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: Having asked for a motion and hearing none, unless anybody's changed their mind, we'll consider this matter resolved and move on to item number five.

5. City Manager's Involvement in March 2026 Incident

City Attorney Buchner: The issue here has the same set of background facts. There was a fireworks incident wherein the neighbor confronted the people who were shooting fireworks. It was on the sidewalk in front of the residential home of the town manager. The police were called after the assault occurred. What the evidence showed was that the town manager was not the person lighting the fireworks. He had no involvement directly with the fireworks being lit and once the altercation began, you can see very clearly that the town manager put himself in between the two parties, which were very heated. So the town manager was the one who actually broke up the fight. Having

spoken with the Chief of Police, they did properly charge the instigator of that assault and again, that person is facing criminal charges in county court. There's no municipal criminal charge here, and it's my understanding that the PD has no further charges affiliated with this case of this investigation. So the discussion becomes is being present for the lighting of the fireworks, an offense that the council considers would interfere with or make it such that the town manager is unable to perform his public responsibilities, and that would be the discussion regarding any action that the council would want to take because of the town manager's presence while the fireworks were being lit.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: Having been advised by counsel, does anybody have any comments or would like further discussion?

Council Member Rikhof: Same question as before. This hasn't been a small issue in this town. It's been going on for months. I don't think it's just one written complaint that we got that has brought this to our attention. I'm wondering if Michael Hart has any comments.

City Manager Hart: No, thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Velasquez: Do any other council members have any other comments or questions? Does anybody have a motion for any action? Hearing none, we'll consider the matter concluded. For this matter involving this citizen complaint, consider the matter closed and move on with the agenda.

(Mayor Ayala entered the Council Chambers and resumed the meeting.)

- B. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1688 REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, CO (City Attorney) (Action)

City Attorney Buchner: This ordinance creates a requirement that every hosting platform that facilitates a collection of a short-term rental transaction in the city will remit the applicable lodging taxes on behalf of the host using the platform. It is a very common requirement and is necessary for the proper collection, remission and remittance of lodging tax.

Director of Tourism Denahy: This is an amendment that the Tourism Board is suggesting. Since the registration and licensing didn't pass, we removed that language under section 2. We want to make sure this is not held up any longer.

MOTION TO PASS THE ORDINANCE ON FIRST READING: Ramirez
SECOND: Rikhof

DISCUSSION: For clarification, the penalty for failing to register applies to the hosting platform, not any individual host. Also, the effective date will be changed.

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

C. Conflict of Interest (Mayor) (Discussion)

Mayor Ayala stated that a conflict of interest disclosure form was approved in December, but the process for overseeing arising conflicts remained unresolved. He shared a personal example of recusing himself from a prior complaint during a transition period between city attorneys, noting that there was no policy requiring him to do so. He emphasized that the disclosure process is necessary to prevent individuals from using their positions to benefit personal business interests or gain unfair contract advantages. He noted that the form and relevant details had been forwarded to City Attorney Buchner to determine how the city should evaluate potential conflicts.

City Attorney Buchner advised that the City Council should address the matter, noting that self-disclosed conflicts are part of a broader macro-level issue regarding how the city responds to complaints and assertions of conflict. He suggested that a broader discussion would help the City Council decide whether to establish an ethics board or utilize an independent hearing officer. He explained his historical practice of reviewing potential conflicts brought forward by council members, noting that financial conflicts are legally clear, while personal interests and the appearance of a conflict are typically determined by the individual council member. He referenced a November 25, 2025, memorandum from the previous city attorney that explained the robust disclosure form adopted by resolution in December 2025. Furthermore, he emphasized that best practice and case law strongly encourage recusing members to physically leave the room, as failing to do so has previously resulted in overturned municipal decisions due to perceived intimidation. He asked the City Council to discuss how they wish to handle personal conflict disclosures, noting this process should be kept separate from third-party citizen complaints.

Mayor Ayala inquired about oversight options, noting that the city could create an independent ethics board of community members, appoint a single individual such as the City Attorney, or have the City Council act as the oversight board. He expressed concern that having the City Council oversee its own members could be problematic and asked for the City Attorney's perspective.

City Attorney Buchner stated that creating an ethics board for initial self-disclosures might be excessive for straightforward financial or minor ethical matters. He recommended that if a council member refuses to follow the City Attorney's advice regarding a conflict, it may then be appropriate to involve an outside committee to recommend actions like removal or admonishment. However, he maintained that initial self-disclosures are easily discoverable and generally do not require a full committee hearing.

Mayor Ayala asked if other municipalities utilize their Human Resources (HR) departments to handle these reviews.

City Attorney Buchner confirmed that HR interventions are used in some jurisdictions

but warned that a conflict of interest involving a council member could create a perception of subjectivity or intimidation, as the City Council serves as the hiring authority for city staff. He suggested that if HR were utilized, the process should include obtaining an advisory opinion from the City Attorney.

Mayor Ayala noted that the item was for discussion only, urged the City Council to review the options, and stated that the topic would be placed on the next meeting agenda.

Council Member Rikhof recalled that the original intent of the approved form was to apply to council members, board and commission members, and city employees, and asked if it was now strictly limited to the City Council.

Mayor Ayala clarified that he believed it applied to all boards but was uncertain regarding its application to city employees.

City Attorney Buchner clarified that the disclosure form explicitly applies to both elected and appointed officials, board and commission members, and city employees. He confirmed that conflict of interest scenarios can arise at any level of city operation, from staff members to elected leadership.

Council Member Rikhof noted that when the item originally appeared on the agenda in December, she had advocated for careful, thorough consideration rather than rushing the measure through the City Council. She expressed frustration that nearly eight months later, the implementation process remained unresolved. She stated it was ironic that the matter was being delayed for an additional two weeks for further discussion when her original request for a thoughtful review had been bypassed, adding that she looked forward to the upcoming discussion.

D. Brick & Tile Park (Copley) (Information)

Council Member Copley expressed gratitude for a recent tour and discussion regarding the park and parking lot. He noted that the recommendations provided by the City Manager were accurate and presented opportunities for expansion, specifically mentioning potential mitigation options for the parking lot. Additionally, he highlighted the availability of grant money for advanced lighting and security camera systems to address ongoing issues in both the parking lot and the park itself, stating that further research would be conducted. He commended the collaboration on the issue, noting the willingness of the City Manager to assist and acknowledging County Commissioners Knaubenshue and Oquist for their attendance and input. He concluded by stating that he would present action items and further information in the future to continue working toward a solution.

Council Member Ramirez thanked Council Member Copley for the approach taken. He noted that the matter originated from public discussion, which council members listened to and directed to the appropriate personnel. He then questioned whether the standard process had been followed, asking why the City Council was now required to make a

decision instead of the matter being handled directly by the Parks and Recreation Department.

City Manager Hart explained that after the public presented the matter to the City Council, he committed to investigating the issue and reporting back with findings and recommendations. He noted that he, along with staff members Brock and Martin, conducted a site visit and subsequently provided the City Council with three options in a mid-June memorandum. He clarified that Council Member Copley's current presentation appeared to be a modification of those options.

Council Member Ramirez asked for clarification regarding whether the complaints of disturbances were fully investigated to justify action, and whether the Parks and Recreation Department had been authorized to make an operational decision, such as installing a gate.

City Manager Hart stated that installing a gate was included as an access control option in his previous report, but no formal action had been decided by the City Council regarding the parking lot. He noted that staff would be willing to make the operational decision, but ultimately take direction from the collective City Council.

Council Member Ramirez expressed the view that such operational issues and complaints should be forwarded to the City Manager and the Parks and Recreation Department to handle independently without City Council involvement.

Mayor Ayala clarified that if an operational decision requires funding outside the approved budget—such as installing a gate or a camera system—the matter must come before the City Council for approval.

Council Member Ramirez responded that the Parks and Recreation Department could bring budget amendments to the City Council for approval after making the operational assessment.

Council Member Copley clarified that he took the personal initiative to review the park site and understand the complaint, noting that his actions were not directed by anyone. He agreed that collaborating with city agencies to find a solution was the appropriate route.

Council Member Rikhof agreed with the collaborative approach and recommended including Police Chief Quick in future discussions. She noted that because the complaints primarily involved behavioral disturbances like reckless driving, the issue falls under public safety rather than park maintenance, concluding that the final operational decisions should not be made at the City Council level.

City Manager Hart noted that none of the citizens who spoke at the previous meeting had contacted him directly, despite having his contact information. He added his understanding that Council Member Copley and the county commissioners had been

contacted directly to arrange the site meeting, to which he was not initially invited.

Council Member Copley clarified that he personally took the initiative to set up the site meeting and reiterated that the ultimate goal is to form a city partnership to resolve the entire issue.

E. Committee/Board Report

Utility Board (Council Member Velasquez):

- The Electric Department was busy with replacing three poles. One was from fire and two were due to vehicle crashes knocking down the poles. One of the poles hit they replaced while it was live for concern for the citizenry. If they had to shut down that power, it would have affected about 1,200 customers.
- The Light Plant roof is already complete. It came in and remained at the bid amount.

Planning Commission (Council Member Rikhof):

- Approved the merger of two lots.

F. City Manager Report

- Replaced the lights in the Council Chambers with new LEDs. Will be replacing the blinds with solar-blocking blinds to help keep the room cooler.
- To help with the smells associated with the lagoons at the Industrial Park, a deodorizer was sprayed on the sludge. They've also been spaying for flies. Training on the bio press machine will be the week of August 10th. After that, nothing else will be taken to the lagoons.
- Fire Department did three mutual aids with the Aspen Acre fires in Rye and Beulah. They also assisted with a structure fire last night in Rocky Ford.
- Still in Stage 2 fire restrictions.
- Police in the Park is on August 14th at 6:00 p.m.
- Completed 16 blocks worth of chip seal between 10th and 14th on Raton and Cimarron. Then between 10th and 16th on Smithland, then on 16th between Smithland and Raton.
- We will be doing complete rebuilds over on 9th between San Juan and Belleview, and then 14th from Colorado to Santa Fe.

G. Community Events/Council Report

- Next Wednesday is trivia night at the Otero Museum starting at 5:00 p.m.
- Early Settlers Day is August 1st beginning at 8:00 a.m. through after dark.

- Police in the Park is on August 14th.
- This Saturday, the Tiger Pride Marching Band Golf Tournament at the La Junta Golf Course.
- We had Plays in the Park, which was the Lion King.

H. Governing Body Report

Council Member Rikhof: Expressed discouragement, stating that a division exists between the constituents who communicate with her and those who communicate with the rest of the City Council. She objected to council business being conducted in a manner that excludes her, arguing it is unfair that she is not invited to the same meetings and events as other members despite being elected to represent the community. She expressed disappointment that other council members did not share her concern regarding discrepancies in city communication, noting that the evening's proceedings clearly illustrated how different council members represent the public.

Council Member Pantoya: Expressed mutual disappointment, stating that Council Member Rikhof's public behavior did not align with her actions in private settings or site visits. She recalled a conversation from the previous year regarding homelessness and substance abuse where, after sharing her personal experiences and asking for her perspective, Council Member Rikhof told her it was none of her business. She explained that she stopped communicating with her as a result of that interaction. She characterized her public statements as a show, accusing her of cornering city officials, including Mayor Ayala, while demanding respect. She asserted her own dedication to serving the public, noting that she handles resident complaints and achieves results through background work without publicizing it. She concluded with the observation that Council Member Rikhof's actions repeatedly undo the progress made by the City Council.

Mayor Ayala: We will have a council work session next Monday, July 27th, at 5:00 p.m. to go over the CIRSA handbook as well as the complaint process going forward with City Attorney Buchner.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor

ORDINANCE NO. 1702

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 1688 REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, CO

WHEREAS, the City of La Junta imposes a lodging tax on the rental of rooms and accommodations for periods of less than thirty (30) days; and

WHEREAS, the growth of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb, VRBO, and other similar marketplaces has created challenges in lodging tax compliance and enforcement; and

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the City Council to ensure equitable tax collection and remittance for all lodging providers, including those utilizing online platforms; and

WHEREAS, the State of Colorado has entered into agreements with short-term rental marketplaces, including Airbnb, for the collection and remittance of state-administered local lodging taxes; and

WHEREAS, the City of La Junta wishes to align its local ordinance with those state-level agreements to ensure consistent and enforceable compliance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO:

Section 1. Definitions

Short-Term Rental: The rental of any dwelling unit, or portion thereof, for lodging purposes for a period of less than thirty (30) consecutive days.

Hosting Platform: A person or entity that facilitates reservations or payments for short-term rentals on behalf of a host, including but not limited to Airbnb, VRBO, and similar services.

Lodging Tax: The tax imposed by the City of La Junta on the price paid for short-term lodging accommodations, as established in Chapter 3.15 of the La Junta Municipal Code.

Section 2. Registration

1. All hosts operating a short-term rental within the City must register with the City and provide contact information for compliance purposes. There will be no charge for registering with the City.

2. Hosting Platforms operating in the City must register with the City and provide contact information for compliance purpose.

Section 3. Tax Collection and Remittance by Hosting Platforms

1. Every Hosting Platform that facilitates or collects payment for short-term rental transactions within the City shall collect, report, and remit the applicable lodging taxes on behalf of the hosts using the platform.

2. The tax shall be collected at the time of booking or payment by the guest, whichever occurs first, and remitted to the City in accordance with the procedures set forth in Chapter 3.15 of the La Junta Municipal Code and the City's established tax remittance schedule.

3. Hosting Platforms must file regular lodging tax returns with the City and provide summary data identifying:

- The number of nights rented;
- The total amount paid by guests;
- The total lodging tax collected and remitted.

4. Hosting Platforms that have executed a Voluntary Collection Agreement (VCA) with the Colorado Department of Revenue for the remittance of state-administered local lodging taxes shall be deemed in compliance with this ordinance, provided that:

a. The City of La Junta is a participating jurisdiction in the state-administered lodging tax program; and

b. The Hosting Platform remits taxes directly to the Colorado Department of Revenue on behalf of the City.

Section 4. Liability

1. A Hosting Platform shall be deemed the taxpayer for all purposes of this ordinance and shall be jointly and severally liable with its hosts for failure to collect or remit lodging taxes.

2. Nothing in this ordinance shall relieve individual hosts from the obligation to register with the City or comply with other applicable local laws and regulations.

Section 5. Enforcement and Penalties

1. Failure of a Hosting Platform to comply with the provisions of this ordinance may result in:

- Revocation of registration;
- Fines not to exceed \$1000 per violation;
- Other enforcement actions as provided by law.

Section 6. Severability

If any section, clause, sentence, or provision of this ordinance is found to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the remaining parts of this ordinance.

Section 7. Effective Date

This ordinance shall take effect on August 3, 2026 following final passage and publication as required by law.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED on first reading this 20th day of July, 2026

ADOPTED AND APPROVED on second reading this 3rd day of August, 2026

CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO

Joseph Ayala, Mayor

ATTEST:

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk