

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL
LA JUNTA, CO
AUGUST 17, 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, August 17, 2026, at 6:01 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL (City Clerk)

Present: Damon Ramirez (Ward 1)
 Joe Ayala (Mayor)
 Chandra Ochoa (Ward 2)
 Lisa Pantoya (Ward 3)
 Maureen Rikhof (Ward 3)

Absent: Paul Velasquez (Ward 1)
 Scott Copley (Ward 2)

Also Present: Michael Hart (City Manager), Clay Buchner via Zoom (City Attorney), Melanie Scofield (City Clerk), Marilyn Schleich (Engineering), Dawn Block (Personnel), Chris Arguello (Electric), Anthony Aguilar (Electric), Thomas Mascarenas (Industrial Park), Kasey Miehlike (La Junta), Gary Reed (Rocky Ford), Paul Anderson (La Junta), ReNae Anderson (La Junta), Ron Hogan (AVRMC), Susan McConnell (La Junta) Benjamin Price (La Junta), Bob Klinkerman (La Junta), Marilyn Fisher (La Junta), Jim Fisher (La Junta), Jim Ridgwell (La Junta), Edward Vela (La Junta), David Archer (La Junta), Ed Wiker (La Junta), Nancy Bennett (La Junta), Merina Lopez (La Junta), CaSandra Thomas (La Junta), Scott Johnson (La Junta), Larry Chapman (La Junta), Roberta Calkin Mendoza (La Junta), Everett Ediger (La Junta), Murissa Jackson, Jill Doney, Nancy Harrington (SECO News), Adrian Hart (SECO News), Betty McFarren (RF Gazette)

PROCLAMATION

A. Declaring La Junta a Purple Heart City

Mayor Ayala and the City Council of La Junta, Colorado proclaimed La Junta as a Purple Heart City. The residents of La Junta are encouraged to show their appreciation for the sacrifices of all Purple Heart recipients.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS

A. August 2026

1. Anthony Aguilar - 5 years

08/02/2021 - Full-time Laborer Electric Department
01/01/2022 - Started Apprentice Lineman Program
03/16/2023 - Second Year Apprentice
02/01/2024 - Third Year Apprentice

01/01/2025 - Fourth Year Apprentice

01/01/2026 - Journeyman Lineman

2. Marilyn Schleich - 5 years

08/16/2021 - Full-time Engineering Secretary

3. Thomas Mascarenas - 35 years

1977 - During high school worked in Fire Department

09/1987 - Assistant Code Enforcement Officer

03/21/1990 - Part-time Laborer Street and Park Departments

11/01/1990 - Part-time Sanitation Collector

08/01/1991 - Full-time Sanitation Collector

03/01/1998 - Street Maintenance Worker I

01/01/2000 - Street Maintenance Worker II

04/01/2000 - Street Maintenance Worker III

10/01/2009 - Maintenance Worker II Industrial Park

02/16/2022 - Maintenance Worker III Industrial Park

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION (5-minute time limit per person)

1. Lisa Doney: Addressed the council regarding a compounding crisis of leadership, transparency and accountability with the La Junta Police Department and city administration. Public trust cannot exist when systematic conflicts of interest and mishandling of evidence are allowed to bypass standard legal oversight. She plans to turn over her evidence to an outside law enforcement agency for review.
2. Murissa Jackson: Believes the HR investigation of Chief Todd Quick was not neutral and cannot be trusted. HR is Dawn Block, Quick's former spouse. The documents provided to her were heavily redacted without providing a CRS citation as to why. She is asking the council to reject HR's investigation and order a new independent investigation by an outside agency, provide the CRS citation for the redactions made and create policy preventing HR from investigating anyone they have personal ties to.
3. Merina Lopez: Is a mother advocating for the safety of her four-year-old son who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder Level 2. Her son experiences an elopement, also known as wandering. This is not simply a child running away. It is a medically recognized behavior associated with autism that can place children in immediate life-threatening danger. She requests approval to install an Autism Childhood Area Sign in their neighborhood.

INFORMATION

A. Kitchen of Kindness

Kasey Miehlike, President: Kitchen of Kindness started in 2022 with around five people at Santa Fe Plaza. They are now serving up to 150 plus meals and on July 30th, actually served 213 meals. They are in need of volunteers and are struggling financially. They are community-based and do apply and receive grants; however, they also rely on the community for funding as well. They have closed their location at 109 W. 2nd Street but will still be serving meals at the River of Life Church.

B. YEEHAW

Larry Chapman, YEEHAW Task Force: A total of 63 people have benefited from the services provided in this area. They continue to support the residents through the YEEHAW service pantry, which helps with bathroom and kitchen items not purchasable with food stamps, as well as individual support services. Volunteers are the core of YEEHAW and both community business partners and the community at large. There will be six community volunteer development sessions that are free to the public. Three have been held on ethics and motivational interviewing, three more on self-care, trauma-informed care and substance use and mental health awareness will also be presented. YEEHAW has also made several small and important contributions to the community that includes phones, clothing, food, cars, P.O. box rentals and even small car parts that have aided in supporting the unhoused neighbors on their journey home or just keeping them alive.

C. AVRMC (Ron Hogan)

Ron Hogan, AVRMC: The financial audit for fiscal year March 31 came back as a clean audit. Their financial position has gotten stronger. They still have no debt and their cash position has gone from roughly 20 to 68 days now. Three of the four covenants in the consolidation agreement were met to be in compliance. They continue looking to recruit physicians and announced they've got a new surgeon coming to town, Dr. Joy Dunn, from New Mexico. She anticipates arriving around the end of September. They have another nurse practitioner that will go to Rocky Ford, Jennifer Pekarik. She will start roughly the same time as the end of September. The recruitment has been positive. They are also looking to do a couple more tours over the next two to three months, potentially bringing in some elected officials from the Denver area and the western side of the state so they can understand what takes place on the eastern side of the state. Especially with rural health care when they're making decisions that impact us on this side of the state.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Regular Meeting Minutes August 3, 2026

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 17, 2026 CONSENT AGENDA: Ramirez

SECOND: Ochoa

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 5-0 (Velasquez and Copley absent)

NEW BUSINESS

A. Committee/Board Report

Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):

- Congratulations to Heather. She is going to be participating in the Colorado Association of Libraries Leadership Institute. It will be a great opportunity.
- The Summer Reading Program was extremely successful. Lots of community volunteers helped to make it happen.

Utilities Board (Mayor Ayala):

- Tom Seaba talked about the smell at the Industrial Park and golf course. They're working on the bio-press and making sure that the sludge is taken care of at the Wastewater Treatment Center.
- Martin Montoya talked about the merger between Clean Valley Recycling and Southeast East Central Recycling that will be happening by the first of the year.

B. City Manager Report

- The MMOF Design & Engineering phase has started with Ayers.
- La Junta Development Inc. will be meeting on Wednesday to work through final drafts of the necessary documents needed to get back up and going.
- The budget process has officially started. Met with some of the supervisors today.

C. Community Events/Council Report

- Welcome back to Otero students.

D. Governing Body Report

- Tourism work session tomorrow from noon to 1:30 p.m. Eric Leonard, superintendent of Bent's Fort, will be talking about concepts for what they see going forward. All are welcome.

- Arkansas Valley Fair starts this week. The parade will be on Friday.
- Budget Meet & Greet was at the Senior Center. Need to figure out a different way of doing it. Maybe a different location.
- There was a great turnout at Police in the Park. Lots of kids and community members enjoying the night.
- Back to school, not just the college but for many of the schools. Watch out for the kids.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF LA JUNTA

Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

Joseph Ayala, Mayor