

## 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



## AGENDA REGULAR MEETING LA JUNTA CITY COUNCIL

La Junta, Colorado  
December 1, 2025  
6:00 PM  
Council Chambers  
Municipal Building  
601 Colorado Avenue

CALL TO ORDER (Mayor Ayala)

INVOCATION (Mayor Ayala)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Mayor Ayala)

ROLL CALL (City Clerk)

Council Members  
Ramirez (Ward 1)  
Velasquez (Ward 1)  
Johnson (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 November 17, 2025
- B. Application for Renewal of a Club Liquor License by BPOE Lodge 701, d/b/a BPOE Lodge 701, 119 Colorado Avenue
- C. Application for Renewal of a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, d/b/a Love's Country Store #12, 308 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Street

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Appoint Council Representatives (Mayor) (Action)
  - 1. **Board of Utilities.** Current Representative: Paul Velasquez
  - 2. **Planning Commission.** Current (Mayor Appointees) Representatives: Chandra Ochoa and Tom Seaba. Current (Council Appointee) Representative: Maureen Rikhof
  - 3. **Recreation Advisory Board.** Current Representative: Damon Ramirez
  - 4. **Senior Citizens Advisory Board.** Current Representative: Paul Velasquez
  - 5. **Tree Board.** Current Representative: VACANT
- B. First Reading/A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM FOR THE USE BY CITY COUNCIL AND DIRECTING STAFF TO CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE ETHICS FRAMEWORK CONSISTENT WITH COLORADO CONSTITUTION ARTICLE XXIX AND STATE LAW (City Attorney) (Action)
- C. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO (City Attorney) (Action)
- D. First Reading/AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF LA JUNTA SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH A PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR LOT MERGES AND TO REQUIRE REZONING REVIEW FOR MERGERS INVOLVING MULTIPLE ZONING DISTRICTS (City Attorney) (Action)

- E. Trailer Parking (Discussion)
- F. Committee/Board Report
- G. City Manager Report
- H. Community Events/Council Report
- I. Governing Body Report
- J. ADJOURN

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 17, 2025**

STATE OF COLORADO )  
COUNTY OF OTERO ) SS  
CITY OF LA JUNTA )

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the City Council of the City of La Junta, Colorado, was called to order by Mayor Ayala on Monday, November 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

**INVOCATION:** MJ Romano gave the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Mayor Ayala led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:** The following Council Members were present:

- Damon Ramirez, Ward 1
- Paul Velasquez, Ward 1
- Carly Johnson, Ward 2
- Joe Ayala, Mayor
- Chandra Ochoa, Ward 2
- Lisa Pantoya, Ward 3
- Maureen Rikhof, Ward 3

  
 Subject to approval at the  
 December 1, 2025  
 City Council Meeting

Absent: none

- Also present:
- Michael Hart, City Manager
  - Erin Harris, City Attorney
  - Melanie Scofield, City Clerk
  - Aliza Libby, Director of Finance
  - Gary Reed, Rocky Ford
  - MJ Romano, La Junta
  - Sandy Lee, Rocky Ford
  - Val Clark, La Junta
  - Scott Johnson, La Junta
  - Jessica LaPage, La Junta
  - Jeni Henry, La Junta
  - Kris Sarlo Koehler, La Junta
  - Angela Ayala, La Junta
  - Ellie Richardson, La Junta
  - Jeff Richardson, La Junta
  - David Polley, La Junta
  - Christine Coffield, La Junta
  - Connie Clifton, La Junta
  - Christopher Menges, La Junta
  - Dottie Burnett, La Junta
  - Maria Lopez, La Junta
  - Nancy Bennett, La Junta
  - Cheryl Lindner, La Junta
  - Steven Cordova, Total Concept
  - Larry Chatman, La Junta
  - Nancy Harrington, SECO News
  - Adrian Hart, SECO News
  - Bette McFarren, RF Gazette



**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 17, 2025**

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

1. There was no citizen participation.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Regular Meeting Minutes November 3, 2025**
- B. Application for Renewal of a Tavern Liquor License by Ross V. Leyba, d/b/a B.J.'s Sports Bar, 10 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street**
- C. Application for Renewal of a Fermented Malt Beverage and Wine Liquor License by Family Dollar Stores of Colorado LLC, d/b/a Family Dollar #25100**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 17, 2025 CONSENT AGENDA: Ochoa

SECOND: Pantoya

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. Second Reading/AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO THE INTERNAL SERVICES, WATER, AND WASTE WATER FUNDS FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2025.** 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: There was no discussion

VOTE: The motion carried 7-0

**OATH OF OFFICE TO NEWLY ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS.** The City Clerk administered the oath of office to newly elected Council Members Damon Ramirez (Ward 1), Carly Johnson (Ward 2), and Lisa Pantoya (Ward 3). She then administered the oath to Joe Ayala (Mayor).

**ELECTION OF MAYOR PRO-TEM.** Mayor Ayala opened the floor for nominations for Mayor Pro-Tem. Council Member Johnson nominated Council Member Rikhof. Council Member Ochoa nominated Council Member Velasquez. There were no further nominations. Those voting for Maureen Rikhof: Johnson, Rikhof. Those voting for Paul Velasquez: Ayala, Ramirez, Velasquez, Ochoa, Pantoya. Council Member Paul Velasquez was elected Mayor Pro-Tem in favor 5-2.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.**

Mayor Ayala: Aliza is available to us at any time for financial help. There's been times when I wanted my financials a certain way and Aliza has been there to tweak things to make it easier for me to digest.

Finance Director Libby: The financials are also available on the website the same day that they are released. I go for the 3<sup>rd</sup> business day. You can also email any questions to myself or Michael or Melanie and we'll get the answer to you. If there is something you would like me to specifically discuss or if there's questions that you have, I'd be happy to answer them.

Council Member Rikhof: We meet in public as a board and it's reasonable to want to discuss what I think is our most important job which is the budget. I get questions about if we're on track. People want to know if we have savings, if we're eating through our buffer, if we're going to have to have another tax increase anytime soon. To me, it's entirely about giving information that gives the public a reason to feel confidence in the excellent system that we have and to point out anything that's deviating wildly from what we budgeted.

Finance Director Libby: Nothing is deviating wildly except for the supplementals that were put in front of you. When you look at the budget, it tells you that the general fund is \$57,000 negative. I'm going to tell

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you that that's okay because there's a lot of things that go on at the end of the year that you will see at the final financial. Anything under \$100,000 plus or minus is a good thing. We're also still waiting on grant moneys.

Council Member Johnson: Does that explain why the intergovernmental revenue is only at 59% for the year?

Finance Director Libby: Most of it is because of the fact that we have not gotten our section 5311. That has been a direct effect of the government shutdown and we've had a difficult time with the state, due to the shutdown, getting a contract signed and approved. We are starting to receive that money now. The other thing is the airport is budgeted for \$600,000 but we have not done that work yet.

Mayor Ayala: Outside of this, you have a third-party auditor that comes in to make sure that Aliza did everything right at the end of the year and gives us updates on what's going on with that, if we're on track, where we might have shortfalls, where we might have concerns, and that is Hancock-Froese who do that.

Finance Director Libby: Yes, and we do have procedures we have to follow with certain steps that have to be taken and they make sure we follow all of those steps.

Council Member Ramirez: So, on the point that Maureen asked, previous to me coming on board, there was a drain on our savings. Can you give us an idea where we're headed on that?

Finance Director Libby: We do have savings at \$2.1 million right now. We've been lucky enough that this council, most of this council, approved me to do a lot more than CD's and we have been able to take advantage of those high interest rates. That has also helped our investments a lot as well as the departments buckling down and of course the 1% was a godsend.

Council Member Rikhof: On that note, I'd like to point out the September sales tax was up this year over last year at 13% which I think is interesting. I don't know if that's tarantula tourism. I think that is commendable and up just under 5% overall where we were this time last year.

Finance Director Libby: What that essentially means is that people are investing in La Junta, shopping in La Junta, doing business in la Junta. It also means that you're doing business with places that do collect sales tax for La Junta. There's a lot of factors that have helped the sales tax grow.

**NEW BUSINESS****A. Homelessness.**

City Manager Hart: I have been contacted by a few different people in the community regarding homelessness and what the city's efforts are in regard to that. I don't know what's been done in the past but I did say I would bring it up at council for discussion to potentially point out some different resources here in the community that may be available.

Jeff Richardson, 617 San Juan Avenue, YEEHAW: YEEHAW (Yielding Effective Entry to Housing & Well-Being) started around a year ago with the warming center that was at Sandy and Marty Lee's Church in Rocky Ford. We had a big snow and a lot of people were put out and a lot of people who were already out didn't have anywhere to go. What we're doing again this year is we're trying to be prepared. We learned a lot last year. We open when the weather dictates that we need to. Typically, that's when there are extremely low temperatures overnight followed by the next day of low temperatures. This is run by people who want to be a part of helping in whatever capacity they can. We're collecting donations, giving money. A lot of times people you see on the streets just need a place to go. We put them in hotel rooms. This is all done with funding that are donations. We've gotten some grants. Otero county Health Department is involved in this. We're just trying to help people get them the next place of where they want to go. We're not about enabling people to stay where they are. There's a lot more involved than just putting someone somewhere. There's a lot more to this kind of service that we provide. We really want to help people get out of that environment if they're ready to do that.

Our biggest donation needed is funding. The Kitchen of Kindness has an office on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street where they've been taking clothing donations. You can donate directly to Otero County Health Department. YEEHAW needs funding. A lot of people are in tough positions that we probably take for granted and don't think about. There are things we try and help people with. There's The Osborn but you just

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 17, 2025**

don't write your name down on the list to get in. You have to have identification, social security card, birth certificate. Those aren't things that people typically have on them while they're homeless. It's a process to get these things for people. Getting them a cell phone is really beneficial because then we can find them because we don't always know where they might go. They could be here today and gone tomorrow. These little things add up. A lot of us have been through this or have known people who have. We know what it is they might need in order to get out of that lifestyle.

Scott Johnson, pastor, Calvary Church, 2407 Johnston Drive: Invited the council for their training on Thursday at 11:30 a.m. If you really want to know what the warming center is about, come and see. We have about sixty people that are going to come and volunteer. If you want to see what we do, what we're about, where we're at. I can't tell you how awesome it is to be a part of this YEEHAW group. This is not just about us. This is all of us together.

Steve Cordova, Executive Director, Total Concept: We are the owner and developer of The Osborn. YEEHAW is a grassroots organization which is absolutely necessary. The housing and homelessness situation is a broad continuum. Over the last twelve months, we've assisted about 1,500 people and 1,200 with direct financial assistance. Totalling about \$5 million and about 300 people in what we call housing counseling, financial fitness and stuff like that. So, by providing them and serving them to understand what their financial situation is, helps them remain housed. The second thing is how do we connect them with the resources necessary to keep them housed and that's where that direct assistance comes in. I strongly recommend reaching out to the Housing Authority, it is absolutely necessary to receive some of those financial resources to keep people housed. You also have social services, your medical providers, all of those others that then can come in and collaborate with what organizations exist such as ours to address those people needing to remain housed. The homelessness, as we're talking about, those don't have a place that they call home, really rely on the grassroots efforts of people like YEEHAW and our permanent supportive housing project housing that will actually provide about \$10,000 of services to those individuals. This is not the rent that they paid. This is the services we provide in the form of mental health services and then potentially health care services. Then we partner with Valleywide. As a housing organization we provide a very robust array of services that don't exist right here in La Junta but our supportive housing project which will open up is in Rocky Ford, that would be a tremendous service in south and eastern Colorado that would not exist otherwise. The resources actually exist. Unfortunately, La Junta is not large enough to have its own fully funded shelter or fully funded anything. Seventy people do not pay the bills unless the cities and the counties want to subsidize that. I don't think anybody has that type of money. That's why the power of these grassroots organizations is so great and why we all need to donate to them and support their efforts because they're the people on the ground that can do the street outreach that organizations like ours and the housing authorities cannot do. It's got to be a community-wide event, effort, leveraging the resources of established organizations and your institutional organizations. But the grassroots organizations are hugely important as well.

**B. Committee/Board Reports**

1. Senior Citizens Center (Council Member Velasquez):
  - In October, I misspoke. I said that Maxie Lu Garcia was the Gem of the Month. It was actually Maxie Lu Carrica. It was properly reflected in the minutes, thank you Melanie.
2. AVRMC (Council Member Velasquez):
  - Had their women's wellness and ribbon cutting for the 3D mammography machine. It was attended by roughly one-hundred people and a lot of area health partners that set up booths or tables within the area. It was a really nice event.
3. Library Advisory Board (Council Member Rikhof):
  - The Friends of the Library received a 3-year grant in the amount of \$125,000 per year to spend on new computers and new technology at the library. They will also be providing more Spanish access to materials and providing programming. It's a partnership with the CSU Extension. Congratulations!

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 17, 2025**

- There are two seats open on the Library Board, the two people whose seats are open are both reapplying but I'm just encouraging everyone, if you want to serve our community, there's a lot of opportunities, including the Library Board.

**C. City Manager's Comments**

- 618 Colorado Avenue: They should be finishing up all the backfill on that property this week.
- Streets: Last day for asphalt will be Wednesday, so tomorrow, they are going to be doing a bunch of utility cut fills on 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Airport: We have a big grant coming to redo the runway. We were contacted by the FAA, they have an additional \$350,000 they are going to award to La Junta for all of the taxi ways.
- Recreation: The tennis courts are up and going. The fencing should be done in the next couple of weeks, then the painting will be dependent on the weather.
- Ark Valley Conduit: A couple weeks ago in my report, I mentioned the Arkansas Valley Conduit and the amount of money that the City's paid into it. The City has paid in about \$1.5 million since 2011 or roughly about \$105,000 a year. The monies are going to development and planning charges, as well as water quality studies for our cost share, if we decide to participate.

**D. Community Events/Council Reports**

- There were no community events/council reports.

**E. Governing Body Reports**

## 1. Council Member Rikhof:

- Met with constituents last Monday from Ward 3. They thanked the City and Michael for getting the tennis courts going and the building across the street being demolished.
- Questions were asked about why the lines haven't been painted at the Wal-Mart intersection.
- We had about two dozen people show up, mostly people who live or own property at the Prairie View Heights with questions about their 25-year agreement with the City that expires at the end of the year. Who takes care of what in the City property that's out there. They want to have conversations about it. I sent an email to Mr. Hart and fellow council person Pantoya, encouraging that maybe the three of us meet with residents out there and try to move those conversations forward with some speed so there's answers by the end of the year when their current agreement sunsets.
- Board openings: Certified Local Government, Housing Authority, Library, Planning, Recreation, Senior Citizens, Tourism, Tree, Urban Renewal and Utility Board.
- Somebody asked me if we could try to be more aware of reading full names when we're voting on things. I think it's good governance so people know what we're discussing and what we're voting on.

## 2. Council Member Ramirez:

- We're nearing the end of the year and there's been some things that we've gone over throughout the year that I feel were dropped or we never followed up on. The vehicle policy for the City. We had some input on that but I haven't seen anything on that. I requested information about a take-home vehicle policy and whether that falls under the same policy. There's nothing really about what the requirements are for a take-home vehicle.
- The other thing, trailer and RV code for the City. I haven't heard anything about that.
- Then there were some processes we talked about maybe putting them on paper or format somehow, like the way this meeting is run. Several things like that and we haven't done anything about that or if we're going to. I just wondered about these things.

City Attorney Harris: I think that the vehicle policy is something that was provided to me by Dawn Block through HR and I think it has actually been finalized. It may not have been something that came back here. We could certainly make that available and if the council has additional comment, you could do that.

City Manager Hart: Previously, when this matter was taken up, I did reach out to everyone and say, hey, give me your takes and, for the most part, people did have some response to

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING – November 17, 2025**

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- it. Both of those policies, the take-home and the general vehicle policy, are complete. I'm more than happy to provide you with a copy of them. To speak to the trailer parking policy. Again, I gave you all my input to the council, ultimately, it's a council decision because it's an ordinance. It's nothing I can do from my office. But I'd be more than happy to re-provide all the previous information that I have given to the council.
- I think my problem is we did input and I never saw anything come back. Maybe I missed it but I don't remember anything coming back on that. So, it would be good to follow up with the trailers and if there's an updated policy on the vehicles.
3. Council Member Rikhof:
- I would like to ask about our Economic Development Council and moving forward on that.
- City Manager Hart: Again, you all have not had it ever and while it is on its way, it does take a little bit of time to put together. There are lots of moving parts to put together with this. It's not something I'm going to be able to whip up in a month's time by any means but it is in the process of moving forward. One of the things that Pam Denahy and I are trying to do is salvage what little bit of an Economic Development Incorporated there was before so we don't have to completely reinvent the wheel. It is something definitely that's going to be coming in 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

**CITY OF LA JUNTA**

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Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

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Joseph Ayala, Mayor

**CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO**  
**RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_-2025**

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM FOR  
USE BY CITY COUNCIL AND DIRECTING STAFF TO CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT  
OF A COMPREHENSIVE ETHICS FRAMEWORK CONSISTENT WITH COLORADO  
CONSTITUTION ARTICLE XXIX AND STATE LAW**

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**WHEREAS**, the City of La Junta is a home-rule municipality operating under Article XX, Section 6 of the Colorado Constitution; and

**WHEREAS**, the City’s existing ethics provisions (Chapter 2.94 of the La Junta Municipal Code) were adopted in 2010 and incorporate limited portions of the state statutory ethics rules; and

**WHEREAS**, subsequent case law and guidance from the Colorado Municipal League indicate that home-rule municipalities must maintain a “sufficiently independent” ethics review process in order to retain local control over ethics matters and avoid referral of complaints to the State Independent Ethics Commission; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has expressed a desire to improve transparency, clarify expectations, and establish consistent practices regarding disclosure of potential conflicts of interest; and

**WHEREAS**, the attached *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form* provides a structured method for elected and appointed officials to voluntarily disclose relevant financial interests, business relationships, or other facts that may be relevant to recusal, public transparency, or ethics compliance; and

**WHEREAS**, adoption of the disclosure form is not, by itself, a substitute for a comprehensive ethics framework under Article XXIX, but is an appropriate first step while Council evaluates further amendments to Chapter 2.94, including establishment of an independent ethics review mechanism;

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**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF  
LA JUNTA:**

**Section 1.** The City Council hereby adopts the *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form*, attached hereto as Exhibit A, for immediate voluntary use by City Councilmembers, board and commission members, and City employees, as appropriate.

**Section 2.** Council acknowledges that the form alone is not sufficient to meet the requirements of Article XXIX of the Colorado Constitution, and therefore directs the City Attorney to prepare

recommended updates to Chapter 2.94, including options for establishing a “sufficiently independent” ethics review mechanism (board or hearing officer).

**Section 3.** Staff is authorized to include the form in orientation materials for new elected and appointed officials and to make the form available to the public as part of the City’s transparency efforts.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_ day of December, 2025.

CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Joe Ayala, Mayor

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_

City Clerk

**CITY OF LA JUNTA**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM**

*(For Elected Officials, Appointed Officials, Board & Commission Members, and Employees)*

**Date of Disclosure:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position/Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**1. Employment, Business Interests, and Financial Relationships**

List all employers, business entities, contracts, or financial relationships (including self-employment and part-time work). Include ownership interests, positions held, or service on boards or advisory groups.

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Do any of the above have **current or potential interactions** with the City (contracts, development, permitting, licensing, regulatory compliance, bid submissions, etc.)?

**Yes**       **No**

If yes, explain:

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**2. Description of Potential Conflict**

Describe any personal, professional, or financial interests — including those involving immediate family members — that could reasonably be perceived to conflict with your public duties.

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**3. Nature of Interest (check all that apply)**

- Financial interest (ownership, investment, contract, or source of income)
  - Business or employment interest
  - Personal relationship (family, close associate, romantic partner)
  - Organizational or civic affiliation
  - Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- 

#### 4. Parties or Entities Involved

Identify any individuals, organizations, or entities relevant to the disclosed interest.

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#### 5. Steps Taken to Avoid Improper Influence

Describe any actions you are taking, or plan to take, such as recusal from discussion or voting, delegating actions, or avoiding staff direction.

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#### 6. Affirmation

By signing below, I acknowledge:

- This disclosure is made in the interest of transparency and public trust;
- I am responsible for complying with the City’s ethics standards and future amendments to Chapter 2.94;
- This disclosure does not determine whether a conflict exists, but may be reviewed by the City Council or any independent ethics reviewer established in the future;
- I will update this disclosure if circumstances change.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Received by (City Clerk or Designee): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor Ayala and Members of the City Council

**From:** Erin Harris, City Attorney

**Date:** November 25, 2025

**Re:** Need for an Independent Ethics Review Mechanism Under Colorado Law

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### I. Purpose of This Memo

This memo provides a *simple and clear* explanation of why the City of La Junta must establish an **independent ethics reviewer or body** as part of updating our Ethics in Government ordinance (Chapter 2.94). This is the first step in ensuring that La Junta retains local control over ethics matters and avoids referral of complaints to the State Independent Ethics Commission.

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### II. Why Our Current Ordinance Is No Longer Sufficient

La Junta's current ethics ordinance, adopted in 2010, incorporates part of Colorado's state ethics standards. However, our ordinance assigns **all enforcement authority to the City Council itself**.

Since 2020, state case law and guidance from the Colorado Municipal League have clarified that:

**A home-rule municipality may only retain local control if it has a “sufficiently independent” ethics review process.**

Because our ordinance directs all ethics complaints back to Council, it does **not** meet this independence requirement.

Without independence, ethics complaints involving City officials or employees may default to the **State Independent Ethics Commission**, which would then handle investigations and make binding decisions for the City of La Junta.

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### III. What “Independent Review” Means

To satisfy Colorado's constitutional requirements (Article XXIX), the City must choose one of the following:

1. **A small, appointed local ethics board**, or
2. **A single independent hearing officer** (often a contracted attorney or retired judge).

Either option is acceptable, and both preserve home-rule authority.

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#### **IV. How the Disclosure Form Fits In**

Council is being presented with a **Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form** for voluntary use.

It is important to note:

- The form **cannot** stand alone as our ethics system.
- The form is **useful** for transparency and early identification of potential conflicts.
- The form is intended to be the **first step** while Council evaluates updates to Chapter 2.94.

The proposed resolution adopting the form reflects this.

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#### **V. Next Steps for Council**

1. Decide whether to pursue:
    - an ethics board, or
    - an independent hearing officer.
  2. Direct staff to prepare amendments to Chapter 2.94 incorporating the chosen structure.
  3. Begin using the disclosure form immediately (if Council adopts the resolution).
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#### **VI. Conclusion**

Updating our ordinance to include an independent ethics reviewer is necessary to:

- Maintain local control over ethics issues,
- Modernize the City's ethics framework, and
- Provide clear, consistent procedures for addressing potential conflicts of interest.

I will be available at the December 1 meeting to answer questions and outline the available options.

**ORDINANCE NO. 1688**

**AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETPLACES TO COLLECT AND REMIT LODGING TAXES ON BEHALF OF HOSTS WITHIN THE CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO**

**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 and Licensing**

1. All hosts operating a short-term rental within the City must obtain a valid City Short-Term Rental License.

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

### **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 January 1, 2026 following final passage and publication as required by law.

**INTRODUCED AND PASSED** on first reading this 1<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2025.

**ADOPTED AND APPROVED** on second reading this \_\_\_\_\_ of December, 2025.

**CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Ayala, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Melanie R. Scofield, City Clerk

**ORDINANCE NO. 1689**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF LA JUNTA SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH A PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR LOT MERGERS AND TO REQUIRE REZONING REVIEW FOR MERGERS INVOLVING MULTIPLE ZONING DISTRICTS**

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**WHEREAS**, the City of La Junta currently provides for the division of property through its Lot Split Procedure as set forth in Section 6 of Article IV of the City’s Subdivision Regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, the City has not previously adopted a formal procedure for the consolidation, or merger, of two or more contiguous lots under common ownership; and

**WHEREAS**, the absence of a clear process for lot mergers has created uncertainty in the recording of merged parcels, zoning compliance, and the administration of building and development permits; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of La Junta finds it necessary to establish a defined procedure for lot mergers, consistent with the existing lot-split process, to ensure accurate land records, consistent subdivision practices, and compliance with the City’s zoning and subdivision standards; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council further finds that when property proposed for merger includes lots located in multiple zoning districts, such action shall first require rezoning review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council prior to merger; and

**WHEREAS**, this amendment is adopted pursuant to the authority granted to home-rule municipalities by Article XX, Section 6 of the Colorado Constitution, and the powers conferred upon municipalities to regulate the subdivision of land under C.R.S. § 31-23-301, et seq.;

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

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**Section 1. Amendment to Article II, Section 2 – Definitions**

Article II, Section 2 of the *Subdivision Regulations of the City of La Junta, Colorado* is hereby amended to add a new definition immediately following the definition of “Lot Split,” to read as follows:

**Lot Merger or Lot Consolidation.**

The administrative process by which two (2) or more contiguous lots or parcels under identical ownership are combined into a single lot of record, eliminating interior lot lines between them.

A lot merger does not constitute a subdivision if no additional lots are created and the resulting lot complies with all applicable zoning and subdivision standards.

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## **Section 2. Addition of New Section 7 to Article IV – Application Procedure and Approval Process**

Article IV of the *Subdivision Regulations of the City of La Junta, Colorado* is hereby amended by adding a new Section 7, entitled “Lot Merge (Lot Consolidation) Procedure,” immediately following Section 6, to read as follows:

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### **SECTION 7. LOT MERGE (LOT CONSOLIDATION) PROCEDURE**

#### **1. Applications for Lot-Merge Approval.**

Applications for lot-merge approval shall be made by the owner of record to the Engineering Department for action by the Planning Commission. Four (4) copies of a survey or scale drawing showing existing lot lines, proposed new boundaries, structures, easements, and rights-of-way shall accompany the application. The application shall also include legal descriptions for each lot to be merged and for the proposed consolidated parcel.

#### **2. Eligibility.**

No lot merge shall be approved unless all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- a. All lots share a common boundary.
- b. All lots are under identical ownership.
- c. All lots are located within the same zoning district, unless a rezoning is approved by the Governing Body as provided herein.
- d. The resulting lot complies with the minimum lot area, width, frontage, and other applicable zoning requirements.
- e. All property taxes and assessments are current.
- f. The merger does not create or increase any nonconformity under the City’s zoning regulations.

#### **3. Zoning Review for Multi-District Parcels.**

If any lot included in the proposed merger lies within a different zoning district, the applicant shall first obtain a recommendation from the Planning Commission and approval by the City Council for a zoning map amendment pursuant to LJMC § 17.20.030 prior to approval of any merger.

A variance under LJMC § 17.40.180 shall not be used to authorize or substitute for such rezoning.

4. Review and Action.

The Planning Commission shall, within twenty-five (25) days of the date of application, in writing, approve, disapprove, or continue for cause those applications which, in the opinion of the Engineering Department, do not meet the requirements of these regulations.

5. Certificate of Lot Merge Approval.

When the lot-merge application has been approved, and after all conditions have been met, the Chairman and Secretary of the Planning Commission shall sign the following certificate of approval for the merge drawing or survey:



CERTIFICATE OF LOT MERGE APPROVAL

STATE OF COLORADO )

COUNTY OF OTERO ) ss

I hereby certify that this lot merge has been examined and found to comply with the Subdivision Regulations of the City of La Junta, Colorado, and is therefore approved for recording.

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Planning Commission Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Planning Commission Secretary \_\_\_\_\_



6. Filing and Effect of Approval.

A copy of the lot-merge approval shall be filed by the Engineering Department with the official designated to issue building and/or zoning permits.

Two (2) copies shall be furnished to the applicant and two (2) copies retained by the

Engineering Department, one of which the applicant shall file with the Otero County Clerk and Recorder.

Upon recording, the merged parcels shall constitute one (1) lot of record and may not thereafter be subdivided except through the City's subdivision process.

All existing easements, covenants, and restrictions on the original parcels shall remain in effect unless expressly vacated.

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### **Section 3. Rezoning Review for Mixed-Zoned Mergers**

The Planning Commission will not approve mixed-zone mergers. When property proposed for merger includes lots located in more than one zoning district, the applicant must first apply for a zoning map amendment under the City's zoning ordinance.

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### **Section 4. Recording and Fees**

All recording fees shall be paid by the applicant. The City may establish administrative review fees for lot-merge applications by separate Council resolution.

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### **Section 5. Codification**

The provisions of this Ordinance shall be codified into the *Subdivision Regulations of the City of La Junta, Colorado*, as amendments to Article II and Article IV, and may be renumbered or reformatted as necessary for consistent codification.

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### **Section 6. Effective Date**

This Ordinance shall take effect thirty (30) days after final publication in accordance with the City Charter and shall thereafter be incorporated into the official *Subdivision Regulations of the City of La Junta, Colorado*.

**INTRODUCED, READ, AND PASSED ON FIRST READING** this 1<sup>ST</sup> day of December 2025.  
**ADOPTED AND PASSED ON SECOND READING** this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2025.

CITY OF LA JUNTA, COLORADO

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Joe Ayala, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Melanie Schofield, City Clerk

## **Background Info**

1. Current city code/ordinance does not allow for trailers, campers, RVs, etc. to be parked on the right of ways for more than 48 hours. The definition of parking is a trailer that is unhitched from a vehicle.
2. Current city code/ordinance does not speak to a timeframe for vehicles that are parked on public rights of ways.
3. State statute dictates vehicles cannot be parked on public right away from more than 48 hours unless there is a local ordinance that allows for a longer period of time.
4. Current city ordinance does not identify what junk vehicles are and vehicle vehicles are. It basically states they cannot be in disrepair or without current license.

## **Options**

1. Do nothing and continue to enforce as it currently is.
2. Change the trailer parking ordinance to allow parking in the street for longer than 48 hours
3. Create ordinance for vehicles parking on the road to align with trailer parking ordinance
4. Establish designated parking area for trailer parking. This would involve more discussion and more moving parts.