Minutes of the Blythe City Council Meeting
February 10, 2026

The February 10, 2026 meeting of the Blythe City Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers by Mayor DeConinck. Also in attendance were Vice Mayor Rodriguez and Council Members Halby, Burton and Spraggins. Staff in attendance included: Interim City Manager and City Clerk Crecelius, City Attorney Roberto, City Treasurer and Finance Director Elms, Chief Building Official Brown, Public Works Director Elegores, Acting Police Chief Walnoha and Fire Chief Hasler.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor DeConinck.

The Invocation was led by Council Member Burton.

REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION:
City Attorney Roberto stated there was no reportable action.

PRESENTATION:

Recognition of Palo Verde Unified School District's Educators of the Year: Shelley Hillman, Sylvia Hernandez, Lora Rodriguez, Gerardo Rios, Ronald Davidson, Angelina McCaslin, Maribel Rivas, Felipe Vasquez, Monique Sain, Kimberly Hafen and Timothy Rymer.

Presentation of Lifesaving Pin and Certificate to Police Officer Bobby Valdivia and Police Cadet Nadya Diaz.

CONSENT CALENDAR: *Items on the Consent Calendar are considered routine and will be enacted with one motion of the Council. If any item requires individual consideration, it will be removed from the consent calendar and acted upon separately.*

3. **Posting of the Agenda.**
The agenda was posted on the bulletin boards on the outside of the public entrance to the Council Chamber and near the inside entrance of the Council Chamber and on the City's website on Friday, February 6, 2026.

4. **Approval of the Warrant Register.**
Recommendation: Approve **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 11390 through 11414 and 80597 through 80642 in the amount of $839,659.74; **2/10/26,** Utility Billing Refund warrants numbered 80643 through 80654 in the amount of $1,679.88, and **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 11415 through 11432 and 80655 through 80685 in the amount of $165,227.06.

5. **Approval of the Payroll Register.**
Recommendation: Approve **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 55577 through 55578 in the amount of $662.55; **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 55579 through 55594 and Direct Deposits warrants numbered 64207 through 64286 in the amount of $310,966.13; **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 55595 through 55608 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 64287 through 64365 in the amount of $307,753.38 and **2/10/26,** warrants numbered 55609 through 55620, and Direct Deposits warrants numbered 64366 through 64462 in the amount of $80,712.27.

6. **Minutes of the January 9, 2026 Special City Council Meeting.**
Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the January 9, 2026 Special Meeting.

7. **Minutes of the January 13, 2026 City Council Meeting.**
Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the January 13, 2026 Meeting.

8. **City of Blythe Permits Issued in the Month of January 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.
9. **City of Blythe Fire Department Monthly Activity Report for January 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.
10. **City of Blythe Police Department Monthly Activity Report for January 2026.**
    Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.
11. **Quality of Life Program Activity Report for January 2026.**
    Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.
12. **495 N. Main Street – Proposed Lien for Costs of Abatement.**
    Recommendation: Determine the proposed lien in the amount of $112,907.11 for the cost of abating the public nuisance at 495 N. Main Street become a lien against 495 N. Main Street and direct staff to record the lien.

No public comment. Council Member Burton moved approval of staff's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Council Member Spraggins with a unanimous aye vote.

PUBLIC HEARING: None

CONTINUED BUSINESS:

Palo Verde Hospital Ad Hoc Committee Update. Interim City Manager Crecelius provided updates on the County's $1 million stabilization loan to PVHD to provide continuity of operations. The County estimates this loan will last about a month. The terms of the loan include a strike team to stabilize and manage the ER Department for a period of 180 days led by RUH and Emergency Management. They will do a top-down review and make recommendations at the end of the 180 days. There are two open Board seats which have been referred to the County for appointment.

The item was received and filed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Report on Emergency Action Taken by Interim City Manager for the Emergency Repairs to the Sinkhole, Sewer Main and Manholes Near 900 N. Broadway. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated On January 8th I determined the sinkhole and collapsed sewer line on N. Broadway constituted an emergency, as defined by Public Contract section 1102. At the January Council meeting, a report was provided to council justifying the reasons why the emergency would not permit a delay resulting from competitive bidding and why the action was necessary to respond to the emergency. The initial time for project completion was 14 working days. Once work commenced, the repairs could not be completed due to the significant amount of groundwater entering the work area. Dewatering was not initially contemplated in the scope of work, based on assumptions that the work could be completed without dewatering. An amendment was entered on January 23rd to amend the scope of work to include de-watering, increase compensation for the repair to $256,382 and extend the time for completion to 54 working days. The emergency action is still necessary to repair the collapsed sewer line, manholes and the street to protect public health and safety and avoid potential fines from the State of California. Therefore, it is recommended that Council review the emergency action taken by the Interim City Manager for the emergency sinkhole, sewer main and manhole repairs near 900 N. Broadway. It is further recommended that Council, by a 4/5 vote, determine there is a need to continue the emergency repairs.

No public comment. Vice Mayor Rodriguez moved approval of staff's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Council Member Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

Preparation of an Ordinance Relating to the Regulation of the Sale and Distribution of Kratom Products in the City of Blythe. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated Council Member Spraggins directed staff to place this item on the Agenda for discussion. Staff would like direction from Council on the preparation of an Ordinance to prohibit the sale and distribution of concentrated synthetic 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH) and regulating natural kratom in the City of Blythe. In October, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors adopted an Ordinance regulating kratom-based products. Orange County and the cities of San Diego, Oceanside, Newport Beach, Solana Beach, Jurupa Valley and La Quinta have implemented similar Ordinances. I will turn it over to Council Member Spraggins for more information on the proposed Ordinance.

Council Member Spraggins stated this item is not about banning Kratom, it's about making sure it is regulated properly and accessed appropriately while protecting our community from synthetic 7-OH. 7-OH is a dangerous synthetic and highly addictive substance. We want to regulate Kratom responsibly, but 7-IH is a different monster. It is sold unregulated. This is a public safety issue, especially for our youth. I don't want it to harm anyone, especially when it is easily accessible at gas stations and smoke shops.

Public Comment. City Clerk Crecelius stated there were several emails sent to Council over the last few days related to natural Kratom. I received a Public Comment from Jennifer Gilis related to support for the use of natural Kratom and support for the regulation, not prohibition of the natural whole leaf Kratom.

Council Member Halby would like to match the Riverside County Ordinance.

Councilman Burton moved approval of the recommendation to model an Ordinance after the Riverside County Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Rodriguez with a unanimous aye vote.

Non-Health Hazard Secondary Contaminants, Hardness and Total Dissolved Solids for City of Blythe's Drinking Water per Secondary Drinking Water Standards. Public Works Director Elegores stated the City's groundwater supply is characterized by a high hardness and elevated total dissolved solids (TDS). These conditions are common in desert and alluvial aquifers, where long residence time and mineral-rich geology contribute to naturally high mineral content. While these water-quality characteristics do not pose health concerns, they do affect customer experience, plumbing longevity, and system operations. Traditionally, reducing hardness and TDS requires large-scale treatment processes such as ion-exchange softening, reverse osmosis, or blending with imported water. However, these solutions involve significant capital investment, high operational costs, and substantial brine disposal requirements costs that are not feasible for the city at this time. Given these constraints, the city is focusing on practical, low-cost strategies that improve water quality impacts without requiring major infrastructure upgrades. These strategies allow the City to mitigate the impacts of high hardness and TDS while avoiding the substantial financial burden associated with full-scale treatment

facilities. As funding opportunities, grants, or regional partnerships become available, the City can reassess long-term treatment options. In the meantime, the focus remains on cost-effective, sustainable measures that protect infrastructure, support customers, and maintain regulatory compliance. Hardness represents the concentration of Calcium and Magnesium Ions in water. Seasonal fluctuations are consistent with groundwater source characteristics. Blythe being an agricultural municipality, recharge from irrigation or return flows that percolate back into the aquifer carrying calcium, magnesium, carbonates and sulfate increase hardness**.** Hardness is just one of the components of Total Dissolved Solids, therefore it does not determine the TDS value**.** Total Dissolved Solids consist of the dissolved inorganic salts like Calcium, Magnesium, Sodium, Potassium, Bicarbonate, Chloride, Sulfate & Nitrate and small number of organic matters. TDS is calculated by summing all measured ions with conductivity based – TDS meters. Water softeners work by exchanging Calcium & Magnesium for Sodium on the resin. For every hardness ion removed, the softener releases multiple Sodium ions into the water. This increases the total number of dissolved ions which directly raises TDS. The WWTP do not remove dissolved solids, whatever TDS enters, the same amount leaves unless Reverse Osmosis or Ion Exchange is introduced. To install an RO system at the Water Treatment Plant, initial investment will easily cost hundreds of millions of dollars and an annual operating cost of approximately a half million just for chemicals alone. To process wastewater at the WWTP before dumping to percolate, equipment with initial installation cost of $10M is needed. Another avenue to explore is to request the California State Water Resource Board (SWRCB) for a review and revision of the City's TDS limit. Staff reached the Colorado Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 7) as the agency responsible for enforcing TDS limits for groundwater protection. The Board does not discourage the request but expressed their opinion of an uphill battle with extensive highly technical supporting data with little chance to be granted the request. Staff contacted Environmental Engineering Consultants for possible provision of Feasibility studies in line with the application. The amount of money that the city must put up to prepare the application package does not equate to the chance of getting a positive result. None of the three methods presented above are feasible considering the city's budget capability. Staff suggests the following options for review to address the water quality issues: Water softening using Culligan Exchange Tanks, softening both hot & cold-water supply or treats hot water only to reduce 50% of usage; Exploring the feasibility of Life Source Water Conditioning or a Brine Capture System. The system uses a conventional water softener, but the brine used in backwashing and the rinse water is captured and transported to the Blythe Wastewater Treatment Plant's Brine Evaporation Pond. In light of the financial constraints identified in the assessment, it is recommended that the City Council require hotel owners to implement and manage the necessary water supply and wastewater treatment solutions.

Public Comment. John Paul Wherli of 245 Eunice Circle stated another option to look into is low pressure vapor distillers. You already have the equipment capable of doing that.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez moved that staff continue with the current recommendations and bring back the research on the other item presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

ORAL REPORTS:

Acting Chief Walnoha reported on Blythe Police Department's presentation of the BPD Drone Program at the CVAG Public Safety Committee Meeting on February 9th**.**

Vice Mayor Rodriguez stated our staff did a great job at the CVAG Public Safety Meeting. He discussed a regional drone program the Coachella Valley is creating.

Fire Chief Hasler reported on a Fire Training the Department attended related to electric vehicle fires.

Council Member Spraggins announced a rodeo would be coming to Blythe in February 2027.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

ADJOURN: The City Council meeting was adjourned at 6:53pm.

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Joseph DeConinck, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Mallory Crecelius, City Clerk