Minutes of the Blythe City Council Meeting
May 12, 2026

The May 12, 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, Public Works Director Elegores, Chief Building Official Brown, 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 Teachers of the Year. Superintendent April Smith presented the 2026 Teachers of the Year: Terra Hickox a Special Education Teacher of Civics, Economics, English and Study Skills at Palo Verde High School, Ashley Vargas a 1st Grade Teacher at Appleby Elementary, Luis Benvenutti a Special Education Teacher in TK-2nd Grade at Ruth Brown Elementary, Bernadette Wells a 5th Grade Teacher at Margaret White Elementary and Ariel Tennefos, a Math Teacher at Twin Palms High School.

PROCLAMATION:

May is Building Safety Month.

Celebrating Bethel AME Church and National Day of Prayer, May 7, 2026.

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.*

4. **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, May 8, 2026.

5. **Approval of the Warrant Register.**
Recommendation: Approve **5/12/26,** warrants numbered 11516 through 11530 and 80909 through 80951 in the amount of $309,505.65; **5/12/26,** Utility Billing Refund warrants numbered 80952 through 80964 in the amount of $1,588.36 and **5/12/26,** warrants numbered 11531 and 80965 through 81016 in the amount of $261,283.16.

6. **Approval of the Payroll Register.**
Recommendation: Approve **5/12/26,** warrants numbered 55726 through 55741 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 65051 through 65125 in the amount of $286,428.34; **5/12/26,** warrants numbered 55742 through 55758 and direct deposit warrants numbered 65126 through 65200 in the amount of $301,208.27; **5/12/26,** warrant numbered 55759 and Direct Deposit warrant numbered 65201 in the amount of $2,236.77; **5/12/2026,** warrant numbered 55760 and

Direct Deposit warrant numbered 65202 in the amount of $121.88; **5/12/26,** warrants numbered 55761 through 55771 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 65203 through 65296 in the amount of $99,890.96.

7. **Minutes of the April 14, 2026 City Council Meeting.**
   Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the April 14, 2026 Meeting.
8. **City of Blythe Permits Issued in the Month of April 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive file the monthly report.
9. **City of Blythe Fire Department Monthly Activity Report for April 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive the monthly report.
10. **Quality of Life Program Activity Report for April 2026.**
    Recommendation: Receive the monthly report.
11. **Biennial Review of Conflict-of-Interest Code.**
    Recommendation: Direct staff to review the City's Conflict of Interest Code and report to Council no later than October 1, 2026, regarding any required amendments.
12. **Annual Rate Adjustment Under Solid Waste Franchise Agreement.**
    Recommendation: Approve the annual rate adjustment pursuant to Section 22.7 of the Solid Waste Franchise Agreement between the City and CR&R Incorporated.
13. **Request for Aerial Fireworks Display.**
    Recommendation: Approve the Aerial Fireworks Display application submitted by the Blythe Volunteer Fire Department.
14. **Barnard/Lovekin Storm Lift Rehabilitation Project.**
    Recommendation: Award an agreement to AZCA in an amount to exceed $196,750; authorize the Interim City Manager to execute the agreement once reviewed and approved by the City Attorney; authorize $35,000 for contingencies; establish a project budget not to exceed $231,450 and authorize the City Manager to approve and execute change orders within the established project budget.
15. **Annual Assessment for Lighting Districts Nos.1 and 2 for Fiscal Year 2026/27.**
    Recommendation: Adopt the following Resolutions:

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-005. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, ORDERING THE PREPARATION AND FILING OF A REPORT REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 ASSESSMENT TO BE LEVIED WITHING THE CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO. 1.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-006. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, PRELIMINARILY APPROVING THE ENGINEER'S REPORT FOR CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO.1, DECLARING ITS INTENTION TO LEVY AND COLLECT ASSESSMENTS WITHIN SAID DISTRICT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 AND SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING SUCH ASSESSMENTS.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-007. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, ORDERING THE PREPARATION AND FILING OF A REPORT REGARDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 ASSESSMENT TO BE LEVIED WITHING THE CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO. 2.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-008. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, PRELIMINARILY APPROVING THE ENGINEER'S REPORT FOR CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO.2, DECLARING ITS INTENTION TO LEVY AND COLLECT ASSESSMENTS WITHIN SAID DISTRICT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 AND SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING SUCH ASSESSMENTS.

Interim City Manager stated one of the pages of the report for the Annual Rate Adjustment Under the Solid Waste Franchise Agreement was left out of the Agenda. That has been corrected and revised copies provided to Council and made available to the Public. The Resolutions setting the public hearing for the Lighting District Assessments were also corrected to reference a Hearing Date of June 16, 2026.

Council Member Spraggins asked to pull Item No. 10.

Council Member Halby asked to pull Item No. 12.

No public comment. Council Member Halby moved approval of Consent Calendar Items 1-9, 11 and 13-15. The motion was seconded by Council Member Burton with unanimous aye vote.

Quality of Life Activity Report for May. Acting Chief Walnoha presented the report.

Council Member Spraggins questioned the number of people transported in the month of April. She asked the Interim City Manager to verify the numbers. 85 is a lot of people. She asked if anyone was assigned to the position and if this was being handled by patrol assigned to overtime.

Councilman Halby said if you look at the report, that is about the average.

No public comment. The Item was received.

Annual Rate Adjustment Under Solid Waste Franchise Agreement. Finance Director Elms stated the City's contract with CR&R provides for annual rate adjustment for the services. The rate adjustments must be reviewed and approved by staff and Council prior to commencing on July 1 of each year.

Council Member Halby stated they are not upholding their contract and I want us to take a look at it. They need to abide by it. They have not kept our alleys clean. It's unacceptable. I pulled this item to air my displeasure with CR&R. We have to raise the rates, but we need more bang for our buck and they need to abide by their contract, every single line.

No public comment. Vice Mayor DeConinck moved approval of staff's recommendation including direction to staff to address the CR&R contract issues. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Annual Report on Staff Vacancies, Recruitment, and Retention Efforts. Finance Director Elms stated the item is a presentation to address new requirements under AB 2561 as it relates to the status of vacancies and the efforts of recruitment and retention. The bill went into effect in 2025 to ensure public agencies are appropriately staffed and vacancies do not hinder operations. Under the law, the City is required to hold one public hearing annually prior to budget adoption to present an annual report on job vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts.

Council Member Spraggins stated public works staffing is at a critical level. I am told people apply but nothing happens. We have to be proactive in filling these vacancies. We are losing Officers faster than we can hire. Any that can get hired elsewhere are applying out. Some are considering retiring early. This is a morale issue caused by a lack of leadership. Officers say they no longer feel supported by administration and fear retaliation.

Interim City Manager Crecelius stated there was testing today to fill the open Street position at Public Works. There was testing yesterday to fill the open clerical position at Public Works. We are making progress on filing those vacancies.

The Public Hearing was opened.

John Bush with the Non-Sworn unit stated the City needs to be competitive with other employers. The City has lost qualified workers to other workplaces. Applicants have declined offers due to low pay. Applications are sparce for all departments in the City. The list includes the vacancies but not the unfunded positions. Non-Sworn and other departments have lost valuable employees, and we have all taken on more responsibilities. It plays a part in wearing on everyone. I worked at Public Works and then transferred to the Police Department. The concern the City should have over the next few years is how to keep experienced workers as well as get qualified personnel to work for the City and make it a lifelong career.

Francis Camou of 975 E. Avenue A stated I worked at the Rec Center as the Coordinator and I resigned due to not feeling support from leadership. I loved my job there and made a lot of good changes but there was internal stuff going on and I needed more support. With lack of leadership and the pay, I did resign. I left for the summer. But have been back since January and I am still looking for a job.

Shelly Soto, a Police Department employee, stated I don't necessarily agree with some comments made. I think some of the problems is low pay. It is not low support. We are being treated better now than we have been in the past and I think some interviews need to be done or someone questioned but I don't think blind comments saying poor leadership are fair to be made.

Angela Colangeli of Peace from Chaos asked which 7 positions were vacant. She said there are no job openings on the website. She asked if there was a job opening for a City Manager. We need a City Manager Council.

The Public Hearing was closed. The item was received.

CONTINUED BUSINESS:

Palo Verde Hospital Ad Hoc Committee Update. Interim City Manager Crecelius reported at the last Board meeting the Healthcare District Board approved an agreement with new Board-Certified Physicians. I understand the physicians are on site and it has resulted in improved wait times and improvements in service.

Councilman Halby stated they made some improvements to the building as well.

No public comment The item was received.

Blythe Police Department Monthly Incident and Activity Reports. Acting Police Chief Walnoha stated at the last meeting, Council Member Spraggins expressed concerns that the Incident and Activity Report was incomplete. During the discussion Vice Mayor Rodriguez requested additional statistics related to residential burglaries and attempted homicides. Council Member Spraggins asked for statistics on drive by shootings. Staff reviewed Agendas dating

back to 2003 to determine the history of this report. Staff found that this report has remained substantially in its current form since May 2015 when it began routinely appearing on Council Agendas. At Council's request, staff updated the March and April 2026 reports to include occupied and unoccupied residential burglaries, homicides, attempted homicides, shootings at inhabited vehicles or dwellings and firearm discharge related incidents. Aside from Blythe, only Banning reports monthly statists to Council. Most Riverside County agencies instead post the statistics directly to their websites. Posting statistics to the website would be the most transparent and centralized and access for both Council and the public moving forward. Staff requested direction.

Council Member Spraggins stated I didn't think I needed to break it down like this, but I must. I want the report to include all shots fired at people, houses and vehicles. Also, any violent crimes reported I would like the outcome by arrest and follow up. Please include number of arrests made each month, broken down by felony and misdemeanor. I have asked for the last several weeks for arrest stats, but no information has been sent. We used to get press releases, but we have only received one over the last six months. I don't believe these reports are accurate as I have been told by people in the community that there are shootings all the time. I would like to see stat on the website as well as in the Agenda. Please document my statements in the Minutes.

Council Member Halby stated I would like to see some year-to-date columns for comparison. I think the form has been fine the whole 9 years I have been on Council. A few improvements and we should be good.

Acting Chief Walnoha stated every shooting that occurred during the months of March and April is listed in this report.

Mayor DeConinck stated we are doing a better job than all the other agencies beside Banning.

Council Member Burton stated I commend what you are doing Chief. I am going to agree with Council Member Spraggins. Due to the concerns of Community members, I understand there are certain things you can't give detail on; but people come to us and we don't have the correct answer all the time. It's good to say come to the meeting and it can be addressed. Until we can do that, I would like more detail in the report about incidents such as the shootings. I've had people who have been shot at express concerns. That's not too much to ask. We need a more detailed report.

Acting Chief Walnoha stated as it comes to shootings, those are on there. The stats provided cover the shootings.

Pam Bush stated I am the one that does these stats. So, for you, Summer, to say that they are not accurate, you are calling me a liar publicly. These stats have taken a lot of my time away from some important projects and deadlines, including a grant to replace 9-1-1 equipment. The stats you requested related to felony and misdemeanors are not done because they require some overtime. I hope to have them done by the end of this week. You asked for shootings and more detail. This is the detail. I don't know how much more detailed I can get. This is the total number of things that have happened in that time frame. There were no shootings in the month of March.

I know that Council Member Spraggins insisted that there was. The one she was referring to was on social media and it was on April 5th. When you look at the April stats, those shootings are spelled out there. There was one attempt homicide, two at an inhabited dwelling where someone was inside and we had two where there was evidence of discharging a firearm by locating casings at a scene. She asked for drive by shootings and there was none. Just because someone shoots a gun does not mean it came from a vehicle. You have to have some evidence. The officers used the code sections based on the crime. As far as occupied vs occupied residential burglaries, we added those stats as well. What you are asking for is going to take a lot of extra time each month. Banning's stats are the way that the DOJ and FBI require the stats. So, if I printed out a list of what we call an arrest report, it would give you codes that mean nothing to you. I could do that but you won't understand the FBI codes. We can do some of the detail but it's really a waste of staff's time. If you want to waste our time, we will do it but we have given us the information you have asked for. I would be happy to sit down and see what else you want. I am happy to oblige.

Council Member Spraggins stated I want it broken down by violent crimes and violent arrests.

Pam Bush stated that is on there. If you want to sit down with me, I can show you what I have and we can break it out that way. That may be the best way.

Council Member Spraggins stated I want to make sure they are accurate.

Pam Bush stated they are very accurate. I am the one that did this, this is my job.

Council Member Spraggins stated it's the Chief's job.

Pam Bush stated no, it's my job. I am the custodian of records. I am the one that is responsible for that so you are publicly calling me a liar by telling me this information is incorrect.

Council Member Spraggins stated I want to ensure they are accurate. You can come back to council and make sure they are accurate.

Pam Bush stated they are 100% accurate but I am happy to sit with you to see if we can oblige you a little better but this information is accurate.

Council Member Burton said I am not saying this to impugn your honor, but when people come up I don't feel like I am qualified to say this is what's going on because they say. I direct them to you because that is your job. I don't want to take it upon myself on Facebook live to say this is what is going on in Blythe so I try to keep if as professional as I can by directing them to you. I am not asking you to say it's a waste of time when a citizen has a concern. I know you didn't mean it that way but when someone's child has been shot at in a car and you say these extra details is a waste of time what are you telling that citizen? That is where I am coming from.

Pam Bush stated she asked for numbers of stats and we provided it. What details? What more do you want?

Council Member Burton said maybe we can have a study session. I don't want to take it upon myself to say I am looking out for you. I understand how it works. When people come up to us we are trying to be a buffer, and I am trying to be professional. Don't use me as the source. I think if we can sit down and study it, I would be more confident explaining it to people. I am not trying to impugn anyone's honor. I am saying something because I have a deep concern and I want it to be communicated. When people come to me, I want it to be clarified. I don't want to sound like I know because I am on Council. Go to the people in the profession. I want to do it the right way. I want my statements in the record.

Mayor DeConinck asked how many shootings occurred in the County.

Acting Chief Walnoha stated there was one last month on the Mesa. It rolled into the City so that gave us another one. That's the only one I am aware of.

Council Member Burton stated I want it on record that I am not trying to condescend or impugn your honor. I commend all of you. I just want clarification.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez stated these lists started from conversations like this due to concerns and wanting to know what the Police Department is doing. Public Safey is over 50% of our budget so when they need extra people, this is part of our justification. If we don't have an up-to-date report on what's going on, how do we raise taxes or reallocate to public safety without addressing the need with the community? That is why these stats are needed. It's a thankless job. Having it on the website would be helpful.

Council Member Halby stated I think you guys are doing a fabulous job and I don't know why these issues haven't been raised over the last 9 years I have been on Council. There have been plenty of Chiefs that you could have brought these issues too so it's odd to me this conversation is occurring now. Blythe PD is doing amazing and it's the best job I have seen in the last 9 years.

Public comment.

James Schleuter said the back and forth was ridiculous. Nothing specific was asked by Council Member Burton. The Police Department is doing a great job. I appreciate them. You expressed needing to hire more people, and we are asking them do a lot more work and I think more important projects are being put on the back burner and I don't think that's a good thing at all.

Michelle VanDyke stated you know that I have the utmost respect for all of you, but I wanted to remind you that when people ask a question, you are not going to have the answer because you don't work at the Police Department or at any of the other departments. All you can do is talk to the citizens. Get as much information as possible and let them know you will get back to them. Then get the information you need from the City Manager. I understand you want to be as informed as possible. But if you don't work for that department you won't know. You have to accept that, get the information and then get back to that person. At the police department there is confidential information that cannot be discussed without compromising the case.

John Bush stated the case with the shooting and there was a child in the car was not picked up by the DA. Some of the filed cases are not picked up by the DA. It doesn't mean that agency is not doing their job. Once it moves on its kind of out of our hands if there is nothing more to investigate, what do you send them?

Angela Colangeli stated the shooting we are talking about was my 4-year-old nice. There were two cars on the road. My Nice's car and the car that shot at her. A bullet was left above my four-year-old niece's head. The DA did not pick it up. I spoke to the Chief and there is nothing he can do but there is something we can do. They are willing to testify. We did not see the gun and who shot but there were only two cars on the road. My sister went around asking for neighborhood camera footage. Nobody did anything, but my sister did the leg work to get 10 videos at 10 different houses after the shooting. It started from EZ mart to Burce Court. Something needs to be done. You can sit here and bicker and fight, but someone needs to take responsibility for this case and do something about it. I am peace form chaos, and I am going to bring the chaos if this thing is not settled and those guys are not in jail. I am going to start advocating because something needs to be done. Summer and the Chief, you can fight back and forth all you want but you need to come together to figure out how to solve these shootings. This shooting was in February. There have been shootings every month but maybe people are not reporting them. We know from the streets it's happening.

Mayor DeConinck said we are going to the best job we can.

Direction was provided to staff to schedule a Study Session.

NEW BUSINESS: None

ORAL REPORTS:
Interim City Manager Crecelius stated our friends from Brown University are in town this week and here with us this evening. This Saturday is the Mother Son Dance at the Rec Center.

Finance Director Elms stated in February 2024, staff asked for authorization to submit a funding application to the Department of Water Resources Control Board for water treatment improvements at the Hidden Beaches water system. Staff have been working on that application for over two years now. Staff is happy to announce the Division of Financial Assistance intends to fund $4.6 million in improvements to that water system. The contact for funding is in our possession. Once fully executed, we can start expending those funds which include a reservoir, well and new treatment facilities.

MEMBER COMMENT:
Council Member Halby gave an update on the closure of Comingled Plume 6 which will open up some properties on Hobsonway for development. The Pink Trash Bags had a great clean up on May 2nd. We had a great group of 25 people. I want to give a shout out to the Chief, his wife and son for coming out.

Council Member reported on the Run for the Wall.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
James Schleuter asked Council to consider a long-term idea for Blythe's future. He asked for a feasibility study. Blythe is struggling. We are a town people pass through. Not a town people come to. I am asking for a feasibility study for a controlled water basin for recreation at Quechan Park. River recreation is inconsistent. River levels change. If people don't see us as a destination, they won't stop. Imagine a stabilized lake area with a boardwalk and waterfront park with restrooms, playground, fishing and public access to the water which can be expanded over time with private investment. Yes, this would cost a lot of money. We do not start by improving construction, but by studying it. This could take 15-20 years. Generational projects don't start overnight but need to start somewhere. I ask you to direct staff to explore the idea to find out if this is possible.

Mike McAndrew stated you sunk my dock on the Colorado River and I have $200,000 worth of damage. Please call me.

John Paul Wherli stated improvements have been made since last month. Infrastructure is required for community development. The parks department still needs to call dig alert. Public Works is doing well with it. You should have a report from public works for internal planning. You do not have a locating program. A training program would be a wonderful thing. They have been asking me how to do their job better. They need guidance, leadership and training.

ADJOURN: The City Council meeting was adjourned at 7:26pm.

_____
Joseph DeConinck, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Mallory Crecelius, City Clerk