Minutes of the Blythe City Council Meeting
July 14, 2026

The July 14, 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, 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.

Councilman Burton asked for a moment of silence for City employee Jando Navarro who passed away recently.

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.*

1. **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, July 10, 2026.
2. **Approval of the Warrant Register.**
   Recommendation: Approve **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 11567 through 11572 and 81127 through 81170 in the amount of $317,407.36; **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 11573 through 11585 in the amount of $94,724.52; **7/14/26,** Utility Billing Refund warrants numbered 81171 through 81175 in the amount of $5,318.93 and **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 81176 through 81227 in the amount of $216,882.34.
3. **Approval of the Payroll Register.**
   Recommendation: Approve **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 55815 through 55830 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 65542 through 65618 in the amount of $303,818.30; **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 55831 through 55844 and direct deposit warrants numbered 65619 through 65695 in the amount of $300,115.55; **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 55845 through 55847 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 65696 through 65732 in the amount of $122,487.53; **7/14/2026,** warrant numbered 55848 and Direct Deposit warrant numbered 65733 in the amount of $4,330.94; **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 55849 through 55853 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 65734 through 65779 in the amount of $120,016.65; **7/14/26,** warrants numbered 55854 through 55865 and direct deposit warrants numbered 65780 through 65871 in the amount of $91,820.02 and 7/14/26, warrant numbered 55866 and direct deposit warrant 65872 in the amount of $43,585.71.
4. **Minutes of the June 16, 2026 Special City Council Meeting.**
   Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the June 16, 2026 Special Meeting.
5. **City of Blythe Permits Issued in the Month of June 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive the monthly report.
6. **City of Blythe Fire Department Monthly Activity Report for June 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive the monthly report.
7. **City of Blythe Police Department Monthly Incident and Activity Report for June 2026.**
   Recommendation: Receive the monthly report.

8. **Investment Report for Fourth Quarter Fiscal Year 2025-2026.**
   Recommendation: Accept the Quarterly Investment Report.

9. **Acceptance of Community Enhancement Collaborative Grant Award for a Marine Enforcement Vessel.**
   Recommendation: Authorize the Interim City Manager to execute any and all grant related documents, including any agreements between the City and MWD/PVID for the acceptance of a grant in an amount not to exceed $185,000 and authorize the Interim City Manager to accept the grant funds and approve the purchase of a new marine enforcement vessel in an amount not to exceed $185,000, including executing any agreements required in connection with such purchase.

10. **Annual Management Fee for BNB Golf Management, Inc.'s Management and Operation of the Blythe Municipal Golf Course.**
    Recommendation: Authorize staff to issue payment to BNB in the amount of $60,000 for the annual Management Fee for the period of September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2027 in accordance with the Lease Agreement.

11. **Amendment No. 1 to the Third Amendment and Restatement of the Joint Powers Agreement of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG).**
    Recommendation: Approve Amendment No. 1 to the Third Amendment and Restatement of the CVAG Joint Powers Authority and direct the Mayor to execute the Amendment.

12. **First Amendment to License Agreement for Riverside County Office on Aging's Use of the Doris Morgan Blythe Community Center for its Senior Nutrition Program.**
    Recommendation: Authorize the Mayor to execute the First Amendment to the License Agreement for use of a City Building located at 445 N. Broadway.

13. **Levy of Special Taxes Within Community Facilities District No. 2004-1.**
    Recommendation: Council, in their capacity as acting legislative body for Community Facilities District 2004-1 (Hidden Beaches), adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-021. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL ACTING AS THE LEGISLATIVE BODY OF THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES DISTRICT NO. 2004-1 (HIDDEN BEACHES) OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE AUTHORING THE LEVY OF SPECIAL TAXES WITHIN COMMUNITY FACILITIES DISTRICT NO. 2004-1 (HIDDEN BEACHES) FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027.

14. **Special Assessment for Prior Year Delinquent Utility Charges.**
    Recommendation: Council adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-024. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE ADOPTING THE REPORT OF THE DELINQUENT UTILITY ACCOUNTS AND DIRECTING THE CITY MANAGER TO FILE SAID REPORT WITH THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE AUDITOR AND REQUEST THE AUDITOR PLACE THE DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS ON THE TAX ROLE.

15. **Cooperation Agreement with the County of Riverside for the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership Program and Emergency Solutions Grant for Federal Fiscal Years 2027, 2028, and 2029 (October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2029).**
    Recommendation: Adopt Resolution No. 2026-025 confirming participation in the County of Riverside's Urban County Programs and authorize the Interim City Manager to execute the Cooperation Agreement and any future amendments to the Cooperation Agreement once approved by the City Attorney.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-025. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE'S URBAN COUNTY PROGRAM FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2027, 2028, AND 2029 AND AUTHORIZING THE INTERIM CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTY AND ANY FUTURE AMENDMENTS TO THE COOPERATION AGREEMENT

No public comment.

City Clerk Crecelius stated per the webinar instructions for those wishing to participate in the meeting virtually via the zoom webinar platform, were asked to email public comments to the City Clerk prior to the meeting. I received no requests to make Public Comment.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez moved approval of the Consent Calendar. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Annual Assessments for Lighting District's No. 1 and 2. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated City of Blythe Lighting and Landscape District's No. 1 and 2 were established pursuant to the Landscaping and Lighting Act of 1972. To fund the maintenance and servicing of the District's, the City annually levy's an assessment against real property. The City conducts proceedings to levy these assessments within the Districts. On May 12th the City Council directed Willdan, by Resolution, to prepare and file the 2026-2027 Engineer's Annual Levy Reports. After filing the reports, Council Adopted Resolutions declaring its intent to levy and collect assessments within the Districts and set a public hearing regarding the assessments for today, July 14, 2026, as the date and time to take public testimony on whether or not the assessments should be approved. At today's hearing Council must hear and consider all oral and written statements, protests, objections or other communications made or filed with respect to the levy and collection of the annual assessments for FY 2026/27. After the public hearing us closed, it is recommended Council adopt Resolution NO. 2026-022 and 2026-023, approving the Engineer's report and confirming the assessments for Lighting Districts No.1 and No. 2. We are asking you to adopt the Resolutions. The reports are attached to the Agenda however they are not part of the Resolutions.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-022. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING THE ENGINEER'S REPORT AND CONFIRMING THE DIAGRAM AND ASSESSMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 FOR THE CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO. 1.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-023. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING THE ENGINEER'S REPORT AND CONFIRMING THE DIAGRAM AND ASSESSMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 FOR THE CITY OF BLYTHE LIGHTING DISTRICT NO. 2.

CONTINUED BUSINESS:

Palo Verde Hospital Ad Hoc Committee Update. Interim City Manager Crecelius reported on the 180-day Scoop event being hosted by PVH on July 30th. The City will have a booth at the event. About one month is left on the initial 180-day MSA between the Healthcare District and County of Riverside.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez reported that the Committee has a meeting with County representatives scheduled for later this week.

No public comment The item was received.

NEW BUSINESS:

Issuance of a Commercial Cannabis Business Cultivation Permit to Edelweiss Expansion, LLC at 1455 W. Hobsonway. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated on September 12, 2023, Edelweiss Enterprises, LLC was awarded a Commercial Cannabis Business Permit for 1455 W. Hobsonway. On March 24, 2025, Edelweiss was issued a business license for a cultivation operation at that site. Earlier this year, representatives of Edelweiss contacted the City about expanding their operation at their current location. They are currently operating under a State License which allows for a cultivation site with up to 22,000 square feet of canopy. Edelweiss wished to add an additional 13,000 square feet of canopy to their existing operation. To expand, the State is requiring Edelweiss to establish a separate "premises" at their location and apply for an additional cannabis license. Edelweiss provided information necessary to complete the Commercial Cannabis Cultivation Application process and staff recommends Council approve the issuance of an additional commercial cannabis cultivation permit to Edelweiss for the expansion of their operation at 1455 W. Hobsonway.

No Public comment.

Councilman Halby appreciates them moving forward and sorry you had to go through another licensing process due to State requirements.

Introduction of Ordinance No. 946-26 Prohibiting the Sale and Distribution of Kratom Products in the City of Blythe. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated Kratom is a tropical tree native to Southeast Asia with opioid effects due to active compounds of mitrahynine and 7-OH. Kratom is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration; but is often found in found in energy drinks and pills at gas stations, smoke shops and other retail venues. Several counties and cities in California have adopted ordinances to regulate or ban kratom products, recognizing the need to protect public health and safety, especially among vulnerable populations. Earlier this year, Council directed staff to prepare an ordinance regulating the sale of kratom products modeled after the Riverside County Ordinance. The attached proposed Ordinance largely mirrors the Riverside County Ordinance related to the prohibition on the sale and distribution of kratom and 7-OH products. The main substantive difference between the proposed City Ordinance and the Riverside County Ordinance is that the County Ordinance prohibits the sale of products with a level of 7-OH greater than 2%. After further discussion with the Blythe Police Department, staff believes enforcement of a 2% 7-OH level in kratom products would not be practical, in that vendors would intentionally misrepresent the true concentration of 7-OH in their products and laboratory testing of suspect products would be time consuming and expensive. Other local law enforcement agencies in the County of Riverside, including the City of Riverside, have taken a similar position. Instead, the City's Ordinance, as presented, limits the sale of kratom and 7-OH products to those 21 years of age or older. Therefore, it is recommended that the City Council introduce Ordinance No. 946-26.

No public comment.

Council Member Halby stated we are not banning anything; you just have to be 21 to purchase. The synthetic stuff which is the ire of all of this will still be sold.

Interim City Manager Crecelius stated yes, the Riverside County Ordinance allows products with 2% or less of 7-OH products to be sold. But because that is difficult to enforce, we restricted sales to those 21 years of age or older like alcohol, cannabis, etc. There are also provisions related to marketing of these products to keep them out of the hands of minors.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez moved to introduce the Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Council Member Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 946-26. AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 9.96 PROHIBITION ON SALE AND DISTRIBUTION OF KRATOM PRODUCTS) TO ARTICLE IX (MISCELLANEOUS) OF TITLE 9 (PUBLIC PEACE, MORALS AND WELFARE) OF THE BLYTHE MUNICIPAL CODE AND FINDING THE ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15061(b)(3) (COMMON SENSE EXEMPTION)

ORAL REPORTS: None

MEMBER COMMENT:
Councilmember Spraggins made a motion to direct the Interim City Manager to schedule a Closed Session as soon as possible but no later than 7 days from today. The Agenda item for this Closed Session will be Public Employee Contract Performance Evaluation City Attorney and RFP request for bids for legal services for the City.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Council Member Spraggins stated recently I asked for a Closed Session and ran into a problem. There is no clear path for a City Council person to schedule a meeting or have an agenda item added unless we wait for the regular Council Meeting. I suggest we fix this issue. The policy should explicitly outline three pathways for regular agenda placement, administrative initiative by the City Manager and a written request by two Council Members or a seconded floor motion of a future agenda item in an open session. To ensure legislative efficiency and strict Brown Act compliance the policy will explicitly direct the City Clerk to schedule a Closed Session or Special meeting under Government Code Section 54956 eliminating the requirement of a prior majority vote in open session just to schedule a meeting. This is just common-sense Mayor.

Mayor DeConinck asked the City Attorney for the policy. City Attorney Roberto reported its consistent with the prior motion that was made. You would need a majority. Similar to the last request that Council Member Spraggins made she is requesting staff to bring back a policy. She is making that motion. You will need a second; and if a majority votes in favor of the motion staff can bring a policy back to Council for Council's consideration. It's my understanding the City's policy and historical practice has been to require three Council members to agendize something. It varies city to city, so staff could, at Council's direction bring back an item to present along with what other cities do.

Interim City Manager Crecelius stated it's defined by the Municipal Code under Chapter Two City Manager. In the City Manager Council form of Government, the City Manager is directed by the Council at a duly noticed Public Meeting. You would need to amend the Municipal Code

or adopt a policy if you would like to change that. In similar items when Council asks for something, I bring a staff report to the Council and ask for direction.

The motion died for lack of second.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
Shelly Soto of 251 Mariposa Trail stated I am speaking as a citizen of Blythe. At a recent meeting Council Member Spraggins stated violent crime is rising in Blythe. She asked for crime statistics to support that statement. Councilman Spraggins asked others to provide statistics and factual information, and the public deserves the same standard from its elected officials. Statements should be made on facts as that is what shapes how residents view our community. If the statement was based on official crime statistics, I ask that it be shared with the public. On May 12th Council Member Spraggins made statements about staffing, morale, leadership and retaliation. What were those statements based upon? As an employee I have never been asked my opinion. Had I been asked, my answer would have been different. From my perspective morale has improved. Leadership is fair and employees are supported. Favoritism is no longer an issue and there is no longer a fear of retaliation for doing what is right. We are no longer asked to do things we believe are unethical. Acting Chief Walnoha has created an environment where employes are expected to act professionally, follow policy and do what is right. That is not a leadership problem. That is leadership working as it should. These statements appear to be personal attacks rather than fact-based concerns. Reports that have been accepted for years suddenly, after November 2025, were labeled as inaccurate or unacceptable. After months of criticism a Study Session was held yet the only recommendation came from Vice Mayor Rodriguez. Council Member Spraggins identified no inaccurate information, no missing data and offered no recommendation for improvement. The criticism was less about improving the reports and more about creating another personal attack against Acting Chief Walnoha. The employees who remain are not responsible for the actions of former employees. Current employees deserve to be judged on their actions, not on the actions of former employees or unsupported accusations. Public Officials should make statements based on facts. When they are not, they become personal attacks that undermine confidence in local government and damage the reputation of employees who continue to serve this community. How long are we going to let these personal attacks continue? We deserve fairness and the residents of Blythe deserve facts. The Council deserves public trust built on honesty, accountability and evidence, not on assumption and speculation.

Pam Bush of 724 Olice Lake Blvd. stated I reviewed Meeting minutes from December 2024 when Council Member Spraggins was sworn in until now. Council Member Spraggins never questioned the Police Department stats from December 2024 to February 2026 during which time there were shootings and other violent crimes. Spraggins started questioning these stats claiming they were inaccurate or incomplete despite the same data being provided. This behavior started after an individual chose to retire due to issues he created. Because this started after his retirement, I question Council Member Spraggins' motives behind her attacks during City Council meetings using a written script. Attacks she can't back up when questioned because she is unknowledgeable about what she is disputing. During the May 2026 meeting, Council Member Spraggins made a blanket statement "we are losing officers faster than we can hire. Any that get hired elsewhere are applying out. Some are considering retiring early. This is a morale

issue caused by lack of leadership. Officers say they no longer feel supported by administration due to fear of retaliation". Officers of Blythe PD are the lowest paid across the state. That is the main reason they apply out. Some officers do not live locally and apply to other agencies to be closer to home. This is not unique to Blythe. In almost every training session I have attended they discuss the lack of staffing and retention at all agencies. The Officer that did retire is of age and has been considering retiring for years. The Blythe Police department does not lack leadership. Instead, we continue to move forward in positive directions and heal from the traumatic past we were forced to endure by admin. Unless Council Member Spraggins has facts that back up these statements it's extremely inappropriate that she made a false statement such as this. It is not a true representation of all department employes. Retaliation was a big concern with the previous administration. This was a concern that was voiced to the City investigator as we were questioned. I was told we would be protected but we had to speak up when there was a problem I am speaking up. Council Woman Spraggins is actively participating in retaliation against City Employees and other individuals on behalf of her friend and former employee. She is creating a hostile work environment for me as well as many other people with her continued attacks, false statements and behind the scenes retaliation. Council Members who sit back and do nothing or are actively participate behind the scenes with her are part of the problem. Each employee plays a vital role. We all have skills, experience and knowledge that benefit our department and City. We swore an oath to the City and community. If we are not doing things with integrity or ethically correct, we are responsible for our actions. The retaliation on social media, in these City Council meetings, in the form of anonymous written complaints, actively seeking people to file complaints behind the scenes by Council Members will not be tolerated any longer.

Rick Daniels stated he most recently lived in Needles. I have lived and worked in the eastern parts of Riverside and San Bernardino Counites for 35-40 years. I was first introduced to Blythe when working on the Eagle Mountain Landfill project. I was the Executive Director of the Salton Sea Authority; I have been City Manager in Desert Hot Springs and Needles. I have watched the painful wrong done to the community with the closure of Chuckawalla prison. I was motivated to help. It's obvious the solution is to replace those jobs which were year-round and well-paid jobs. It's had a ripple effect across the community. We have seen a loss of sales tax dollars and students. You now have an existential healthcare issue. I took this to County Supervisor Manuel Perez. There are six public agencies in Blythe. There needs to be a concentrated effort on what do we do. I am not looking for a job; I am doing this as a volunteer. There is no action plan on how to address this problem. The future of Blythe needs to be proactively managed. I told the Supervisor that I would spend time in the community to possibly create a common song sheet, so you are all saying the same thing. Its urgent agenda and action oriented creating consensus among the community and its elected leadership.

Jerome Williams stated he has been in the community for over 30 years. I am president of the Food Pantry and own properties. At one of my properties I fell because the City was working on a fire hydrant. In my absent mind while picking up branches fell, because I forgot. They flew me out by helicopter. I am less than 20% of the man I used to be. I brought this to the attention of a Council person recently, and he said he knew nothing about it. Now they are building a property next to my house, and they are not requiring handicapped development, but my house next door has been required for handicapped development and I can't afford to upgrade. I want you to

know that I fell and I am hurt. There is a report. I love Blythe, I don't want to bring Shipiro and Shipiro here. I don't want that for our city. Nobody has acknowledged my injury and that I was almost crippled. Please look into this.

Chris Peters of 371 Tesoro Ln thanked Chief Walnoha for his help with an officer who was working on my mother's home invasion. After speaking with Mr. Walnoha, she has gotten calls. I see more officers roving around on duty vs. sitting at Starbucks or the Shell. I am here for the bathrooms at the parks. I understand why the Appleby restroom is shut down, but we have kids in the community going to the parks and the bathrooms close after 3pm. Back in the day, officers locked the bathrooms at 10pm. The park restrooms in Parker have an electronic lock. We need to get back to having the restrooms open.

Mayor DeConinck thanked the Blythe Volunteer Fire Department and Jason Brown for the 4th of July Fireworks Show.

ADJOURN: The City Council meeting was adjourned at 6:52pm.

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Joseph DeConinck, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Mallory Crecelius, City Clerk