

**Minutes of the Blythe City Council Meeting
March 8, 2022**

The March 8, 2022 meeting of the Blythe City Council was called to order at 6:00pm in the Council Chambers by Mayor Reynolds. Also in attendance were Vice Mayor DeConinck and Council Members Rodriguez, Halby and Burton. Staff in attendance included: Interim City Manager and City Clerk Crecelius, Finance Director and City Treasurer Elms, City Attorney Roberto, Chief Building Official Brown, Fire Chief Hasler and Police Chief Dale.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Reynolds.

The Invocation was offered by Councilman Burton.

Mayor Reynolds asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Troy Love.

PRESENTATION:

Colorado River Fair Ambassadors. Debra Keenan and Sandra Berger Anderson are chaperoning the 2022 Fair Ambassadors and asked them to introduce themselves. Logan Mullion is a Senior at Palo Verde Highschool and President of the FFA Chapter. Logan plans to attend Baylor University to pursue a bachelor's degree in Business Marketing with plans to start an interior design business. Margaret Port is a Senior at Palo Verde High School with plans to attend Beauty School. Her goal is to get an esthetician license and open her own business. Kenna Elliot is a Senior at Palo Verde High School. Kenna plans to attend the University of Arizona and major in kinesiology. She plans to be a trainer. Brock Peterson is a Senior at Palo Verde High School. Brock plans to study sports medicine in Utah and become a physical therapist. Maddison Salcedo plans to join US Air Force. At the same time, she will be enrolled in UC Berkely Law School. She would like to take her law degree to enter JAG. She will then transfer to Texas to practice law. She is currently dual enrollment at PVC where she will graduate with an associate degree at the same time she graduates High School. They presented the 2022 Fair Schedule.

Mayor Reynolds stated kids with goals touches me. Once you reach your goals, come back and tell us about it.

Vice Mayor DeConinck stated we have one of the best 4-H programs in the United States. These kids have done one heck of a job. This is a great thing for the kids. Everyone in this town steps up to make this happen.

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.*

2. Posting of the Agenda.

The summary of agenda items were 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 on Friday, March 4, 2022.

3. Approval of the Warrant Register.

Recommendation: Approve **3/8/2022**, warrants numbered 74664 through 74741 in the amount of \$525,094.87; **3/8/2022**, Utility Billing Refund warrants numbered 74742 through 74757 in the

amount of \$1,595.01 and **3/8/2022**, warrants numbered 74759 through 74802 in the amount of \$280,984.24.

4. Approval of the Payroll Register.

Recommendation: Approve **3/8/2022**, warrants numbered 52754 through 52771 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 52404 through 52461 in the amount of \$242,932.36; **3/8/2022**, warrants numbered 52773 through 52790 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 52462 through 52519 in the amount of \$244,272.35 and **3/8/2022**, warrants numbered 52791 through 52796 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 52250 through 52626 in the amount of \$72,086.074.

5. Minutes of the February 8, 2022 City Council Meeting.

Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the February 8, 2022 Meeting.

6. Minutes of the February 23, 2022 Special City Council Meeting.

Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the February 23, 2022 Special Meeting.

7. City of Blythe Permits issued for the Month of February 2022.

Recommendation: Receive and file this monthly report.

8. City of Blythe Fire Department Monthly Activity Report for February 2022.

Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.

9. City of Blythe Police Department Monthly Activity Reports for February 2022.

Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly reports.

No public comment. Mayor Reynolds asked to pull Item No. 9, specifically the quality-of-life statistics.

Councilman Rodriguez moved approval of Consent Calendar items 1-8. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

City of Blythe Police Department Monthly Activity Reports for February 2022.

Mayor Reynolds asked the Chief to bring this program to the forefront. You have produced some outstanding numbers and would like you to elaborate on that.

Chief Dale stated the Quality-of-Life Pilot Program started at the end of January. We had been planning it for quite a while. We don't have a lot of manpower, so we had to move some personnel around. When I speak to the community and City Council, the concern has been homeless and traffic. This program would address that in a limited way until June. We will review the stats and can continue it if it's a worthwhile program. It started out well. We are still getting the bugs out and the best way to approach the homeless. The County has been very helpful with behavioral health staff working with the officers in this program. We are making contact with people every day. We are trying to provide resources and services along with the law enforcement side. The other piece is traffic enforcement. People speak of speeding by schools and blowing stop signs. We have been putting an emphasis on residential neighborhoods and schools. In the first month we issued 56 citations. We are using a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety to fund the overtime for this program. We are not doing it just to write tickets, but to fix the problem.

No public comment. The item was received and filed.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Categorical Exemption- LG Harvest, LLC Commercial Cannabis Development Project. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated LG Harvest, LLC proposes to develop a

commercial cannabis cultivation facility on a 0.62-acre parcel located at 416 W. Donlon Street. The site is zoned General Industrial which allows for cannabis development. Development would include clearing a dilapidated building on the site and construction of two single story buildings of 6,000 square-feet each for a total indoor grow space of 12,000 square feet. Surrounding land uses include Interstate 10 to the north, hotels to the west and various commercial and industrial uses to the south and east. Based upon information contained in the administrative record and review of CEQA Guidelines, the City has determined that the LG Harvest Commercial Cannabis Development project is eligible for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption. The project meets each of the five criteria set forth in section 15332 In-Fill Development Projects of the CEQA Guidelines. Therefore, subsequent to the public hearing it is recommended Council adopt a Notice of Exemption for the project and direct staff to file the Notice of Exemption with the County Clerk.

No public comment. Councilman Burton moved to adopt the Notice of Exemption. The motion was seconded by Councilman Rodriguez with a unanimous aye vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

Issuance of Commercial Cannabis Business Permits to T.O.R.O. LLC. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated Malissa Attebery and Henrik and Harmik Torossian, principles of T.O.R.O, LLC submitted applications for Commercial Cannabis business permits for a Cultivation and Distribution operation to be located on vacant land in the 1400 block of E. Hobsonway. The site is zoned General Commercial which allows for the development of commercial cannabis structures on lots of at least 5,000 square feet. T.O.R.O. LLC completed the PRC process for the development of the property which includes the construction of one 15,300 sq ft. single story building. The principles of T.O.R.O. completed the owner background investigation with nothing found to preclude them from being issued a Commercial cannabis Permit. On March 3, 2022, staff met with all principles of T.O.R.O. LLC for the Phase III interview required of the application process. After the interview, staff recommends the award of commercial cannabis business permits to T.O.R.O. for Cultivation and Distribution at a Cannabis facility to be constructed in the 1400 Block of E. Hobsonway.

Councilman Rodriguez asked where the project was located.

Travis Pollock, representing T.O.R.O stated the project site is a vacant piece of land on the southside of the street next to the boat shop. They selected east Blythe to stay within the intent of the Ordinance to revitalize that area. The clients are dedicated to Blythe and will be relocating here. Melissa Attebery has been a teacher for 11years. They are looking for ways to support the school district and be a big part of the community.

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

Rejection of Bids- PV College Bolted Steel Water Reservoir Project. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated in January, staff released a notice inviting bids for the Palo Verde College Water Reservoir project. The project consists of the installation of a 500,000-gallon water reservoir to replace the current reservoir servicing the College and surrounding area. The

current tank is over 20 years old, leaking and in need of replacement. Last year staff applied for \$500,000 in funding for this project through the Community Project Program. The project was supported by Congressman Ruiz and approved for funding, but the funding has yet to be appropriated. However, today staff received word that the House will vote on an appropriations package which includes this project and believes it will be on the floor as of tomorrow. By the end of this week, we should know if we received funding for this project. At the same time, staff has also been working with the State Water Quality Board for emergency funding to complete the project. Two bids for the project were received on February 17, 2022 from RSH Construction in the amount of 1,185,500 and Superior Tank in the amount of \$1,202,000. The bids are double the anticipated project budget and 30% above the engineer's estimate prepared by The Holt Group. The bids submitted were from tank manufacturers, using sub-contractors for the site prep, connection, and installation of the tank. After review of the bids received, staff believes it would be more cost advantageous to procure the tank and bid its installation separately. This may result in more competitive bids for the City and could also allow local contractors an opportunity to participate in the bid. Pursuant to the Public Contract Code and the Blythe Municipal Code, it is within Council's discretion to reject any and all bids received and provide direction to staff on future action, which may include re-advertising for bids. Staff is recommending that Council reject all bids and direct staff to re-advertise the project. Once Council has rejected the bids, staff will prepare new bid documents, which will be distributed in accordance with the requirements of the Public Contract Code and Blythe Municipal Code. After funding for the project has been secured and new bids are received and reviewed, staff will report to Council and ask for direction/award of the contract for this project.

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

Emergency Sewer Repairs at Hobsonway and Lovekin Blvd. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated since February, Public Works has been working to repair the collapsed sewer line at Hobsonway and Lovekin Blvd. On February 23rd at the Special Meeting, Council deemed the repair an emergency in an effort to expedite the repair work. As the repairs to the collapsed sewer line are ongoing, staff recommends Council review the emergency action in place for the collapsed sewer line at Hobsonway and Lovekin Blvd. It is further recommended Council, by a 4/5 vote, determine there is a need to continue the emergency repairs.

Councilman Halby asked how long the repairs would take. It was estimated at 30-45 days depending on damage and availability of building materials.

Mayor Reynolds asked if the road could be re-opened. It was reported we know we have a sink hole on the southside. Once we get in there, we will see the extent of the damage and repair as needed.

No public comment. Councilman Rodriguez moved approval of the emergency repairs. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

ORAL REPORTS:

Interim City Manager Crecelius reported last week I informed you of the Clean California Local Grant; but want to make an announcement for the public. A press release is forthcoming. The City, in partnership with Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency, with the help of RCTC and Climate Resolve applied for \$2.9 million for improvements at Public Works, Miller Park, the PVVTA Park n Ride and ADA bus stop improvements and amenities. Last week we received word we were awarded the grant. That's \$2.9 million in State funding coming to the City. We have until 2024 to use the funding. Part of the grant includes beautifying the city so we will have several community clean up days, ribbon cuttings and hope to encourage public participation in the grant. The Outlook Conference is back after a two-year hiatus and scheduled for April 7, 2022. This week, with the help of Chief Dale we submitted a letter of support to the California Assembly supporting AB1 599 which opposes Prop 47. The intent is to repeal a lot of Prop 47 which was implemented to change felony sentencing laws in California. It reclassified certain thefts and drug possession charges from felonies to misdemeanors. It authorized resentencing for defendants serving sentences for felonies now classified as misdemeanors and authorized defendants who had completed their sentences to have their convictions reclassified. Locally, it tied our officers' hands. Now, any theft under \$950 is basically a slap on the wrist. Law Enforcement throughout California has supported the repeal of Proposition 47.

Chief Dale said after fourteen years of stellar service, Sgt. Iniguez has moved on. This opened a sergeant's position which was an opportunity for promotion. The promotions were made last week. Corporal Burt was promoted to Sergeant and will remain in the Patrol division. Officer Gandara was promoted to Corporal and will be transferred to the Detective Bureau. Officer Moreno was promoted to Corporal and will remain in the Detective Bureau. We will backfill by hiring one new officer. Milton Acevedo will be sworn in on March 21st. We will also hold a promotional ceremony at the same time. We hired Rebecca Smith in the limited term receptionist position.

MEMBER COMMENT:

Councilman Burton stated a few years ago the School District invested in the barn project to encourage more students to participate in the FFA program. It affords students who don't have property a place to keep their animals.

Vice Mayor DeConinck stated the taxpayers paid for that though property taxes.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kristi Kirk, a Senior Deputy District Attorney in Riverside County stated her whole career has been based in the eastern division. My ultimate dream was to be a judge. I am a prosecutor, and you don't often get appointed right now. A spot has opened up in the eastern region due to the retirement of Judge Wells. I have his full endorsement. I have put in for his seat and am here to introduce myself in person and seek your endorsement. I am endorsed by DA Mike Hestrin. I am endorsed by almost all of the peace officer associations including PORAC. For the June 7th election there are 4 open judicial seats. The DA's office has a rare opportunity to run for all four seats and show what the DA's office can present in judges.

Angela Colangeli stated she is sharing her son Steven's story as he took his life on October 27, 2021. During our grieving time we started a program to get resources to Blythe. We are holding a

mental health and suicide awareness program. It will be a march and rally on March 26th. We have resources coming from Riverside County and resources from Blythe. My son was diagnosed with schizophrenia five years ago. I have been his advocate. During his illness there were a lot of things I didn't know. Now that he has passed, I've had time to research and found a lot of resources for Blythe. Blythe is part of Riverside County, and they forget us so I started advocating for everyone. We have an HIV van coming to do testing, COVID-19 testing, suicide awareness, therapists, etc. I learned we have two companies with therapists from Loma Linda doing zoom therapy in Blythe. This has been happening for two years and I had no idea. SAC Health will have therapists by the end of the year for the Blythe area. I am here to let you know what we have going on in our community and hope you can attend. We don't have our 501c3, so we are co-sponsored by KERU until we get it. Any money collected will be for our community. It could be used for travel and help the caretakers with self-care. This is a call for action to share my son's legacy. We are working on identification bracelets. We hope to carry it on and bring more resources. This is for my son, and I am not going to stop.

ADJOURN: The City Council meeting was adjourned at 7:03pm.

Dale Reynolds, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mallory Crecelius, City Clerk