

**Minutes of the Blythe City Council Meeting
August 8, 2023**

The August 8, 2023, meeting of the Blythe City Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers by Vice Mayor Rodriguez. Also in attendance were Council Members Reynolds, Halby, and Burton. Mayor DeConinck was excused from the meeting. Staff in attendance included: Interim City Manager and City Clerk Crecelius, City Attorney Roberto, Finance Director and City Treasurer Elms, Chief Building Official Brown, Police Chief Dale, Public Works Director McLaughlin and Fire Chief Hasler.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Mayor Rodriguez.

The Invocation was offered by Councilman Burton.

REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION:

City Attorney Roberto stated there was no reportable action.

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 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, August 4, 2023.

2. Approval of the Warrant Register.

Recommendation: Approve **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 10288 through 10298 and 76934 through 76981 in the amount of \$3,474,326.93; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 10299 through 10305 and 76999 through 77033 in the amount of \$208,615.42; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 10306 through 10307 and 77034 and 77036 through 77055 in the amount of \$348,259.06; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 10308 through 10312 in the amount of \$513,731.84 and **8/8/2023**, Utility Billing Refund warrants numbered 76982 through 76998 in the amount of \$4,294.43.

3. Approval of the Payroll Register.

Recommendation: Approve **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 53751 through 53769 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 56351 through 56412 in the amount of \$268,158.16; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 53770 through 53780 in the amount \$8,223.00; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 53781 through 53799 and Direct Deposit warrants numbered 56413 through 56474 in the amount of \$263,941.52; **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 53800 through 53801 in the amount of \$67.61 and **8/8/2023**, warrants numbered 53802 through 53818 in the amount of \$82,048.45.

4. Minutes of the July 11, 2023 City Council Meeting.

Recommendation: Approve the Minutes of the July 11, 2023 Meeting.

5. City of Blythe Permits Issued for the Month of July 2023.

Recommendation: Receive and file this monthly report.

6. City of Blythe Fire Department Monthly Activity Report for July 2023.

Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.

7. City of Blythe Police Department Monthly Activity Report for July 2023.

Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.

8. Quality of Life Program Activity Report for July 2023.

Recommendation: Receive and file the monthly report.

9. Acceptance of Work- Police Department Roof Repairs.

Recommendation: Accept the work performed by MT Construction Team, Inc. for roof repairs at the Blythe Police Department located at 240 N. Spring Street and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute and file the Notice of Completion for the project.

10. Permission for Mayor to be Absent from the July and August Council Meetings.

Recommendation: Grant permission for Mayor DeConinck to be absent from the July and August 2023 regular City Council Meetings.

11. Amendment to Professional Service Agreement with Tripepi, Smith and Associates.

Recommendation: Authorize the Interim City Manager to execute an Amendment to the Professional Services Agreement between the City and Tripepi Smith for communication and marketing services.

12. Adoption of an MOU for the Clerical/Para-Professional/Recreation Unit.

Recommendation: Council Adopt the following Resolutions:

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-019. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA ADOPTING AN ADDENDUM TO THE CLERICAL/PARA-PROFESSIONAL/RECREATION UNIT'S MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025.

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-020. A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 SALARY SCHEDULE TO REFLECT AN INCREASE IN PAY FOR THE RECREATION CENTER AIDE POSITION.

13. Ordinance No. 922-23 Adopting Military Equipment Use Policy

Recommendation: Adopt Ordinance 922-23:

ORDINANCE NO. 922-23. AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLYTHE, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING AN AMENDED MILITARY EQUIPMENT USE POLICY GOVERNING THE USE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT PURSUANT TO ASSEMBLY BILL 481.

No public comment. Councilman Reynolds moved approval of the Consent Calendar. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Ordinance No. 923-23 Amending Chapter 17.26 (Signs) of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Blythe Municipal Code. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated all proposed changes have been made to the Sign Ordinance. As we are doing an overhaul of the Sign Ordinance, the City Attorney advised that we should review the Ordinance for consistency with the First Amendment. As such, we recommend continuing the Public Hearing for the introduction of the Sign Ordinance to the next City Council meeting to allow time for this review.

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

CONTINUED BUSINESS:

Save Chuck. Interim City Manager Crecelius gave an update on Save Chuck.

No public comment. The item was received and filed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Acceptance of the Palo Verde Valley Community Improvement Fund Grant Award. Chief Dale stated the Blythe Police Department Quality of Life Program addresses both the homeless and traffic related issues which directly affect our community. Staff has been searching for funding to continue this program at the same successful level as it was last year. An application was made to and approved by the Palo Verde Community Improvement Fund.

Funding in the amount of \$35,000 was awarded. This will continue the program at the same level as last year when we had overtime officers contacting the homeless and working traffic. This is a good opportunity and we are very thankful to the CIF Board for approving this and helping out our community.

Public Comment. George Colangeli of Peace From Chaos commended the Chief for obtaining funding for this program. We need to work as a community to see how we can continue this funding.

Councilman Halby thanked the Community Improvement fund for awarding this grant.

Councilman Reynolds moved to accept \$35,000 in grant funding from the CIF for the Quality-of-Life Program. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with unanimous aye vote.

Letter of Public Convenience and Necessity- Grocery Outlet Inc. Vice Mayor Rodriguez recused himself for a potential conflict of interest. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated Grocery Outlet, Inc. proposes to develop a supermarket at 691 W. Hobsonway, in the All-Star Cinemas Shopping Center. To support the operation of the supermarket, they have applied for a Type 20-Supermarket Alcoholic Beverage License within Census Tract No. 461.02. There are currently five active off-sale licenses with one license currently allowed in this Census Tract. The licenses are issued to a wholesale beverage distributor, a pharmacy, two convenience stores and a grocery store. Census Tract 461.02 encompasses a large geographical area that extends from Hobsonway to Chanslorway and from Defrain to N. Broadway. The population within this census tract is 2,027. The entire fixed population of Blythe and the transient population is not considered when factoring the allowed number of licenses. The issuance of this license will provide another supermarket for residents of Blythe. This store will fill a void in an area of the City in need of full-service grocery providers. This store will eliminate the need for people to travel to the west and east ends of the City for groceries. The availability of alcohol with the sale of groceries makes this store a one stop shop, where residents would otherwise be obligated to travel to other locations to purchase these items. Therefore, the establishment of off-site alcohol at this location serves a public convenience. The grocery store and sale of off-site alcohol is consistent with the City's zoning ordinances and General Plan by providing a product that serves to provide the full spectrum of commercial needs for a community retail center. Therefore, it is recommended that Council approve the draft letter supporting the issuance of an Off-Sale (Type 20 – Supermarket) Alcoholic Beverage License within Census Tract No. 461.02 to Grocery Outlet Inc. for the proposed Grocery Outlet to be located at 691 W. Hobsonway in Blythe, with the full knowledge of the undue concentration provision as outlined by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

No public comment. Councilman Reynolds moved approval of staff's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Halby with a unanimous aye vote. Vice Mayor Rodriguez rejoined the meeting.

Memorandum of Understanding between City and Palo Verde Unified School District for the 2023/24 School Year and 2024 Summer School Programs. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated the Palo Verde Unified School District is required by AB 130 to

provide an expanded learning opportunities program for children in TK through sixth grades. This summer, the City partnered with the School District to provide this expanded learning program at the Joe Wine Blythe Recreation Center. Any student enrolled in Summer school was eligible to enroll in the summer program. After summer school, the School District would bus participants to the Recreation Center where they would engage in activities until 5pm. Ninety students enrolled in the Summer Program and the Recreation Center had an average daily participation of 50 students. As the summer program was successful, the School District would like to continue this program into the 2023/24 school year. The District wishes to provide access for up to 300 students. The School district will reimburse the City \$800 per day, \$4,000 per week for this program. This will allow the Recreation Center to hire additional personnel necessary to meet the ratios required of the Extended Learning Program. The School will once again bus participants from the school sites to the Center after school. At 5pm each day, the District will provide transportation back to the school sites. It is recommended Council authorize the Interim City Manager to execute an agreement with PVUSD authorizing the City to collaborate with the District to provide expanded learning opportunities to student participants at the Joe Wine Blythe Recreation Center as part of PVUSD's 2023-2024 School Year and 2024 Summer Program. It is further recommended Council increase the number of budgeted part-time Recreation Center Aide positions in the FY 2023/24 Operating and Capital Budget from 7 to 15 to accommodate the staffing needs of this program. The School Board adopted the MOU for this program at their regular meeting on August 1, 2023.

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

Sage Lovekin Blythe, LLC Development. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated staff has been working with Sage Investco, LLC to develop a Chipotle Mexican Grill Restaurant on the SE corner of Lovekin and Hobsonway. In January, Council adopted a Categorical Exemption for the project, satisfying State CEQA requirements. On July 5, 2023 staff notified the applicant that the City had completed plan check review, and once a contractor was selected, building plans would be issued. This was an exciting step, as the developer can essentially break ground on the development. In early August, staff learned bids to construct Chipotle had returned much higher than the developer had anticipated or budgeted. They budgeted \$1.2 million for construction and bids received came in at \$1.9 million. As the project is over budget, the developer cannot obtain financing to begin construction. This project is very important to the City, and we would very much like it to be constructed. Staff has been in communication with the developer on how we can work to advance this project. As The City placed minimal conditions on this project, removing project conditions will not bridge the estimated \$700,000 funding gap. Some items that could be considered to bring costs down include removal of the condition to repave the alley along the south property frontage (EE \$25,000), remove the condition of placing a bus stop on W. Hobsonway (\$18,000) and remove the requirement to pay the Art in Public Places fee of just under \$25,000. It does not get the developer to where he needs to be, but shows a good faith effort by the city to advance this project. City Staff believes the construction bids received are inflated and have been speaking with local contractors to see if there are other options for Sage Investco to develop the site within their budget. We have also suggested that representatives of Sage Investco look for other funding sources, such as applying for funding from the Community Improvement Fund. Therefore, it is recommended Council

provide direction to staff on steps staff make take to work with Sage Investco, LLC to facilitate the development of a Chipotle Restaurant on the SE corner of Lovekin and Hobsonway.

Councilman Reynolds asked to hear from the Transit Agency related to removing the bus stop.

Public Comment. George Colangeli of the Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency stated I think we could swing it. We currently have a stop there, but it's going to be a heavy trafficked stop. The demographic will be bus riders, especially from the College. The contractors on this project are looking to cut every corner. We need to work with local contractors to see what's available to them before we start cutting things.

Councilman Reynolds moved approval of staff's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Burton with a unanimous aye vote.

Funding Agreement between City and Chamber of Commerce for Tourism Activities. Interim City Manager Crecelius stated the City council allocated \$30,000 per year for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 fiscal years from the City's American Rescue Plan Act funding to assist the Chamber with tourism related activities. To memorialize the terms relating to the use of City funding for the Chamber's tourism activities, it is recommended Council direct the Interim City Manager to negotiate and execute a funding agreement once it has been reviewed and approved by the City Attorney. Relevant terms of the agreement, based on prior discussions with the City and Chamber include funding to be used for tourism related actives only, submission of quarterly reports, future installments to be paid on a quarterly basis, once the City has received the quarterly report from the previous quarter. The agreement will end on June 30, 2025, when the APRA funding allocated for this project has been exhausted.

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

ORAL REPORTS:

Interim City Manager welcomed new Public Works Director Kenneth McLaughlin.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Angela Colangeli of Peace from Chaos invited the community to their second annual suicide awareness, prevention and candle light vigil event.

ADJOURN: The City Council meeting was adjourned at 6:37pm.

Joseph DeConinck, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mallory Crecelius, City Clerk