

Town of Yucca Valley
Town Council Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2026

Closed Session

1. The Town Council met in closed session pursuant to the provisions of Government Code Section 54957(b) regarding a public employee performance evaluation. Job Title: Town Attorney

2. The Town Council met in closed session pursuant to the provisions of Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(2) and (3) to confer with legal counsel with regard to one matter of potential exposure to litigation.

Report Out of Closed Session

Mayor Abel reported closed session adjourned at 4:51 p.m. with no reportable action.

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

Absent:

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mayor Abel

Presentations, Introductions, Recognitions

1. Introduction: San Bernardino County Sheriff's Captain Steve Scovel

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Captain Steve Scovel introduced himself as the new captain assigned to the Morongo Basin Station.

2. Presentation: Southern California Edison Update- Government Affairs Manager Shane Massoud

Southern California Edison Governmental Affairs Shane Massoud updated the Town Council on current programs and service area updates and wildfire safety measures.

Mayor Abel opened public comments. With no members of the public wishing to speak, public comments were closed.

Mayor Drozd thanked Massoud for being available and providing the information.

Mayor Abel spoke favorably on the large number of improvement projects being

completed.

Approval of Agenda

3. Agenda Approval

Motion:

Approve the meeting agenda as prepared.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Second: Council Member Jim Schooler

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

Consent Agenda

4. Rejection of Claim

Motion:

Reject one Claim filed against the Town of Yucca Valley submitted on November 24, 2025, by Shannan Reed.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

5. Rejection of Claim

Motion:

Reject one Claim filed against the Town of Yucca Valley submitted on December 19, 2025, by Virginia De Jesus Rivera-Guzman obo Carmen Yolanda Leon-Rivera.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

6. Authorization to Purchase Replacement Fleet Vehicle #4 with 2026 GMC Sierra K2500 SL Crew Cab

Motion:

Waive the competitive bidding requirements because adherence to the procedures would be inefficient, impractical, and unnecessary (as stated in section 3.12.060, (G) of the Town Code) and authorize the Town Manager or designee to execute a purchase agreement with Borjon Auto Center of Paso Robles, CA, for a new 2026 GMC Sierra K2500 Crew Cab for the Parks Maintenance Division for an amount not to exceed \$62,776.19.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

7. Mural License and Installation and Maintenance Agreement - Wall Mural Permit (M) 02-25

Motion:

Approve and authorize the Town Manager to sign the Mural License and Installation and Maintenance Agreement – Wall Mural Permit (M) 02-25.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

8. Mural License and Installation and Maintenance Agreement - Wall Mural Permit (M) 03-25

Motion:

Approve and authorize the Town Manager to sign the Mural License and Installation and Maintenance Agreement- Wall Mural Permit (M) 03-25.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

9. On-Call Berm Repair and Replacement Maintenance Services authorization to release a Request For Proposal

Motion:

Authorize the release of an RFP for On-Call Berm Repair and Replacement maintenance services.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

10. Town Project No.8061 – : Senior Center Roof Replacement Project - Change Order #1 and #2

Motion:

- 1- Adopt Resolution 26-01, amending the budget to allocate \$70,000.00 from CDBG Funding for the Town Project No.8061.
- 2- Approve Change Order #1 to the contract with Letner Roofing Co. for installing PVC roof décor profile, increasing the contract by \$44,506.48, bringing the original contract amount of \$178,100.00 to \$231,506.48.
- 3- Approve Change Order #2 to the contract with Letner Roofing Co. install flashing at stucco, new ridget and counterflashing, and stucco repair and paint to match existing, increasing the contract by \$21,809.41, bringing the contract amount of \$231,506.48 to \$253,315.89.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)
Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

11. Treasurer's Report for the Quarter Ending December 31, 2025

Motion:

Receive and file the Treasurer's Report for the second quarter of FY2025-26.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)
Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

12. AB1234 Reporting Requirements

Motion:

Receive and file the AB1234 Reporting Requirement Schedule for the month of December 2025.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)
Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

13. AB1234 Reporting Requirements

Motion:

Receive and file the AB1234 Reporting Requirement Schedule for the month of November 2025.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

14. Ratification of Warrant Registers

Motion:

Ratify the Payroll Registers totaling \$340,806.43 dated December 05, 2025, and \$308,432.90 dated December 19, 2025.

Ratify the Warrant Registers totaling \$926,630.44 dated December 05, 2025, \$58,455.64 dated December 15, 2025, and \$1,821,154.37 dated December 19, 2025.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

15. Ratification of Warrant Registers

Motion:

Ratify the Payroll Registers totaling \$292,759.58 dated November 07, 2025, and \$297,605.37 dated November 21, 2025.

Ratify the Warrant Registers totaling \$1,975,924.35 dated November 07, 2025, and \$4,317,690.42 dated November 21, 2025.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

Public Hearings

16. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Prioritization Hearing

Finance Manager Gumbish presented the staff report for the CDBG prioritization hearing.

Mayor Abel opened public comment for the public hearing. With no members of the public wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

Motion:

1. Allocate the entire final Town's FY2026-27 CDBG allocation to the eligible Town Project Allocate the entire final Town's FY2026-27 CDBG allocation to eligible Town Project Brehm II Turf and Irrigation Project, in accordance with Town's historical project funding allocations.

2. Direct staff to invite non-funded organizations to apply for General Fund or Measure Y Fund Partnership consideration as part of the FY2026-27 budget process.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)

Mover: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

Second: Council Member Jeff Drozd

Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

Department Reports

17. 2026 Yucca Valley Animal Shelter Microchip Program

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle presented the staff report, explaining the proposed the reduced cost on a microchip program for 2026.

Mayor Drozd opened public comments.

Cheryl Contopulous, Yucca Valley complemented shelter staff for their recent attention to a particular case relating to a missing dog and looks forward to the next Animal Shelter Committee Meeting.

Susan Herring, Pioneertown complemented shelter staff for their attention to a recent missing dog in the Essig Park area.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler inquired on the schedule for the next spay and neuter event.

Council Member Denison spoke kindly of the proposed program assisting animal owners to stay connected to their pets.

Mayor Abel thanked the public comments for outreach suggestions and offered to support additional chip readers at Town office locations.

Motion:

Approve the 2026 Yucca Valley Animal Shelter microchip program, establishing no fee microchipping for Town residents and \$5.00 microchipping fees for Morongo Basin

County residents for calendar year 2026.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)
Mover: Mayor Merl Abel
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

18. Town-wide Landscape Beautification Program

Public Works Director Qishta presented the staff report for the contract amendment #1 on the design contract with Hermann Design Group for the four beautification areas along Hwy 62.

Mayor Abel opened public comments. With no members of the public wishing to speak, public comments were closed.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler inquired on landscape irrigation at the sites. Qishta explained water meters and irrigation lines will be installed.

Council Member Denison spoke of the drought-tolerant landscaping being planned.

Mayor Abel expressed he would like to see options to improve the landscape without the need for irrigation for cost savings.

Town Manager Yakimow explained staff will bring back options for Council's review.

Motion:

Approve Amendment #1 to Hermann Design Group, Inc. to prepare plans, specifications, and cost estimate for the design of the SR62 Beautification Project in the amount of \$85,880.00, extending the Hermann Design Group on-call contract to December 2027 and authorize the Town Manager or designee to sign all related documents.

Result: Passed (Yes 5, No 0, Abstained 0)
Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo
Seconders: Council Member Rick Denison
Ayes: Merl Abel, Jeff Drozd, Rick Denison, Jim Schooler, Robert Lombardo

19. Temporary Short-Term Term Vacation Rental - Ordinance Review and GIS Map

Presentation

Senior Planner Jerome presented an update on the Town's short-term vacation rental program. Jerome provided a demo of the online GIS map identifying the locations and contact information of the STVR properties in the Town of Yucca Valley.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle provided additional insight on challenges staff experiences with the current STVR program and noted potential changes needed to provide additional structure for enforcement.

Finance Manager Gumbish provided financial information the STVR revenue generates.

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Tim Humphreville, Yucca Valley commented on the number of STVRs in his neighborhood and impacts they are creating with traffic, noise and other issues.

Eric Menendez, Twentynine Palms commented on a community group located in Twentynine Palms for the STVR use in the community.

Council Member Lombardo requested to increase the tools for enforcement to support our local residents.

Council Member Drozd spoke favorably of having the GIS map online.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler complemented the past reviews of the STVR ordinance and spoke of the challenges of the properties that have multiple investors operating the STVR property. Schooler suggested to have only one priority contact for property issues. If owners are not available or responsive, the Town should have enforcement ability. Limiting cars onsite might need to be lowered to assist with parking and traffic concerns. Schooler inquired on the administrative hearing process. Management companies should be held accountable to assist in reducing issues.

Mayor Abel commented in favor of fellow Council Member suggestions.

No Motion Made.

20. FY 2026-28 Draft Strategic Plan Review

Town Manager Yakimow presented the staff report for the draft 2026-28 strategic plan review and requested input and comments to prepare the final draft.

Mayor Abel opened public comments. With no members of the public wishing to speak, public comments were closed.

Council Member Lombardo would like to have trail enhancements completed at North Park for a better defined trail including benches. Lombardo inquired if an art district designation in Old Town would come under Old Town Specific Plan.

Council Member Drozd expressed he would like a dirt road maintenance plan discussed.

No Motion Made

Public Comments

Cheryl Contopulous, Yucca Valley commented on the recently cancelled Animal Shelter Committee Meeting and expressed additional chip scanners at Town facilities would be very nice. Contopulous commented on the apparently out of balance statistics on shelter animals and spoke favorably on some of the changes already happening.

Norman Shertzman, Yucca Valley spoke of the tumbleweeds in the neighborhood and the lack of clean up by a nearby property owner.

Eric Menendez, Twentynine Palms spoke of concern on the lack of available services for the local unhoused community.

With no other members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Abel closed public comments.

Staff Reports and Comments

Town Manager Yakimow reported on a recent meeting with the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Senator Ochoa Bogh and announced support by Congressment Obernolte for a sidewalk project on Palm Ave.

Mayor and Council Member Reports and Comments

Mayor Abel commented on new businesses getting established in town and reported on the recent military award luncheon with the Armed Services YMCA.

Announcements

Mayor Abel closed the meeting at 6:36 p.m. in remembrance of Michale Ramos Jr. who recently passed by act of violence in our community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lesley Copeland, CMC
Town Clerk

