

**Town of Yucca Valley**  
**Town Council Meeting Minutes**  
**February 17, 2026**

**Closed Session**

The Town Council met in closed session pursuant to the provisions of Government Code Section 54956.9 (d)(1) to confer with legal counsel with regard to the following matters of pending litigation:

- o Asa Huber v. Town of Yucca Valley et al; case number CIVSB2530342
- o Gonzalez v. Town of Yucca Valley, et al; case number CIVSB2433072

**Report Out of Closed Session**

Assistant Town Attorney Vazquez reported on closed session action:

- o Asa Huber v. Town of Yucca Valley et al; case number CIVSB2530342 - The Town Council voted unanimously to defend the case.
- o Gonzalez v. Town of Yucca Valley, et al; case number CIVSB2433072 - No reportable action on this item.

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call**

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

Absent:

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Led by Town Manager Yakimow

**Presentations, Introductions, Recognitions**

**1. Spirit of Yucca Valley Award- Marjorie Smith**

Mayor Abel presented the Spirit of Yucca Valley award to Marjorie Smith for her untiring disaster preparedness work in Yucca Valley and the Morongo Basin.

**Approval of Agenda**

**2. Agenda Approval**

Motion: Approve the meeting agenda as prepared.

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

Absent:

## Consent Agenda

### 3. Approval of Minutes- December 2, 2025

Town Clerk Copeland requested to approve an edit to the December 2, 2025 minutes to correct the report out of closed session for the following:

- o Gonzalez v. Town of Yucca Valley, et al; case number CIVSB2433072 - The Town Council voted unanimously to defend the case.

**Motion:**

Approve the meeting minutes of Tuesday, December 2, 2025 as amended.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

### 4. Approval of Minutes- January 20, 2026

**Motion:**

Approve the meeting minutes of Tuesday, January 20, 2026 as presented.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

### 5. Approval of Minutes- February 3, 2026

**Motion:**

Approve the meeting minutes of Tuesday, February 3, 2026 as presented.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

### 6. Agreement for Environmental Consulting Services, EA 02-24, CUP 01-24: Tumbleweed Sanctuary, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Review - E|P|D Solutions, Inc.

**Motion:**

Approve the Professional Services Agreement with E|P|D Solutions, Inc., for preparation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis and documentation for Environmental Assessment (EA) 02-24 and Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 01-24 Tumbleweed Sanctuary, with a maximum contract value of \$38,685, including the preparation of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), and authorizes the Mayor, Town Manager and Town Attorney to sign all documents necessary to implement the Agreement.

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

**7. Professional Services Agreement Amendment #1 between the Town of Yucca Valley and Petra Resource Management, California Environmental Quality Act Review, Community Center Athletic Facility Master Plan**

**Motion:**

Approve amendment #1 to Professional Services Agreement between the Town of Yucca Valley and Petra Resources Management (S-Corporation) to increase the contract from \$31,500 to \$51,700, and authorize the Town Manager to execute the amended agreement #1 for Archaeological Monitoring Services for the Community Center Athletic Facility Master Plan, an agreement modification of \$31,500, to \$51,700.

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

**8. Approval of the amended 2025/26 Authorized Position list, Salary Schedule and Job Description.**

**Motion:**

Adopt Resolution No. 26-02 authorizing positions for fiscal years 2025-26 and the approval of one revised job description.

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

**9. CS Planned Programs Approval Spring/Summer 2026**

**Motion:**

Accept the recommendation of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Commission and approve the Spring/Summer 2026 programs and events organized and conducted by the Community Services Department.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

**10. Budget Report for the Six Months Ending December 31, 2025**

**Motion:**

1. Receive and file the Mid-Year Budget Report for FY2025-26
2. Adopt Resolution No. 26-03 amending the FY2025-26 General Fund and Special Revenue Fund Budgets as identified in Exhibits A and B

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

**11. AB1234 Reporting Requirements**

**Motion:**

Receive and file the AB1234 Reporting Requirement Schedule for the month of January 2026.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Second:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

**12. Ratification of Warrant Registers**

**Motion:**

Ratify the Payroll Registers totaling \$289,795.91 dated January 02, 2026, \$300,686.47 dated January 16, 2026, and \$249,184.28 dated January 30, 2026.

Ratify the Warrant Registers totaling \$5,262,375.28 for the period January 1, 2026, to January 31, 2026.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

**Seconder:** Council Member Rick Denison

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

## **Department Reports**

### **13. YV ARC Quarterly Project Update**

Public Works Director Qishta read the recommendation and introduced Jen Manckia-Wagner from Dahlin to present the quarterly update report for the Yucca Valley Aquatics and Recreation Center.

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

### **14. Animal Care, Control and Committee Update**

Animal Care and Control Manager May provided an informational update on the Animal Shelter Operations.

Mayor Abel opened public comments. The following spoke about the Animal Shelter Operations.

James Porter, Yucca Valley  
Cheryl Contopulous, Yucca Valley  
Susan Herring, Yucca Valley

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

Council Member Drozd thanked Animal Care and Control Manager May for her work in implementing the changes and thanked the public for their input.

Council Member Lombardo complemented the public for stepping up and supporting the animal shelter.

Council Member Denison thanked May for the report and looks forward to the implementation of the new software.

Mayor Abel thanked May for the report and inquired on staffing levels at the shelter. Abel asked about plans for engaging volunteers at the shelter and scheduling additional spay and neuter clinics. Abel expressed it is great to hear May is responsive to the public's inquiries and the Animal Shelter Committee Members for their work for the past eight months. Abel requested to have regular animal shelter updates before the Council in the future. Received without objection from the remainder of

the Council.

**15. Public Art - Town West Entrance Monument Signage**

Deputy Town Manager Luckino presented the staff report, seeking approval for the placement of the Town's new entrance sign at the southwest corner of Hwy 62 and Camino Del Cielo as previously discussed. Costs to modify the sign at the existing site is cost prohibitive due to western Joshua trees on site and owner contact for long-term commitment was unsuccessful.

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

Council Member Lombardo spoke of concern about the scale of the sign and would like to ensure the sign is visible at a distance.

Council Member Denison spoke kindly of the sign design.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler spoke favorably of the location at the corner of Camino Del Cielo and Highway 62.

Council Member Drozd likes the location at the corner.

Council Member Lombardo inquired about the outlook for the old sign.

Mayor Abel spoke of concern about the quality of materials and appropriateness of outdoor signage. Abel inquired how this project aligns with the intersection improvements.

**Motion:**

Approve the location of the west entrance sign at SR62/Camino Del Cielo (SW Corner) and direct staff to move the project into Phase II (engineering design, fabrication, and installation).

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

**Mover:** Council Member Drozd

**Second:** Council Member Denison

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

**16. Ordinance to Amend Chapter 6.04 (Abatement of Public Nuisances) and Chapter 11.100 (Sidewalk Maintenance and Repairs) of the Town Municipal Code Regarding Removal of Weeds, Trash, Debris, and Obstructions from Public Sidewalks**

Public Works Director Qishta presented the staff report introducing an ordinance to update the Town's Municipal Code relating to sidewalk maintenance.

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Sondra Hamlin, Yucca Valley spoke on the debris that collects on the highway sidewalks during storms.

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

Assistant Town Attorney Vazquez provided comments on the proposed changes.

Council Member Lombardo requested clarification on the property owner's responsibility.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler reported damaged concrete in front of an old town business and inquired about the maintenance responsibility.

**Motion:**

Introduce Ordinance 333, amending Chapter 6.04 (Abatement of Public Nuisances) and Chapter 11.100 (Sidewalk Maintenance and Repairs), of the Yucca Valley Municipal Code (YVMC) to update and expand enumerated public nuisance conditions affecting sidewalks, parkways, and the public right-of-way, and clarifying the definition of sidewalks.

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

**Mover:** Mayor Merl Abel

**Second:** Council Member Robert Lombardo

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

**Public Comments**

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Norman Shertzman, Yucca Valley spoke on the trash and weedy condition of his neighbor's property.

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

**Staff Reports and Comments**

Captail Scovel reported on increased use of unlicensed OHVs.

Finance Manager Gumbish announced the upcoming Measure Y funding opportunities to local non-profits.

Public Works Director Qishta reported on the upcoming project at Yucca Mesa Road and Buena Vista Drive Intersection. Public communication is being planned updating the public on road conditions during the project.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle reported on an upcoming policy discussion on the minimum square footage for a single-family residence.

### **Mayor and Council Member Reports and Comments**

Council Member Denison thanked the public for attending and providing comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler thanked council members, staff and the public for their condolences.

Mayor Abel reported on recent ribbon cuttings for Famous Footwear and the west entrance of JTNP. Abel announced MBTA ridership options.

### **Announcements**

With no further business, Mayor Abel adjourned at 6:36 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lesley Copeland, CMC  
Town Clerk

**Town of Yucca Valley**  
**Council Member AB1234 Meeting Schedule**  
**January 2026**

<b>Date of Travel</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Mayor Merl Abel</b>			
01/21/26-01/23/26	League of California Cities	2026 Mayors and Council Members Academy	Sacramento, CA
<b>Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler</b>			
	No reportable meetings		
<b>Council Member Rick Denison</b>			
01/07/26	SBCTA	Board of Directors Meeting	San Bernardino, CA
<b>Council Member Jeff Drozd</b>			
	No reportable meetings		
<b>Council Member Robert Lombardo</b>			
	No reportable meetings		