

**Town of Yucca Valley
Town Council Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2026**

Closed Session

No public comment was received regarding closed session items

1. **CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS: The Town Council will meet in closed session to hold a conference with its labor negotiator regarding unrepresented employees pursuant to Government Code section 54957.6.**

Town designated representative: Town Manager Curtis Yakimow

Unrepresented employees: All unrepresented employees

Town Attorney Jex stated there was no reportable action.

2. **The Town Council will meet 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**

Town Attorney Jex stated there was no reportable action.

Call to Order

Mayor Merl Abel called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Roll Call

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

Absent:

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Council member Denison.

Presentations, Introductions, Recognitions

3. **California Welcome Center Update presented by Linda Poindexter**

Linda Poindexter presented the California Welcome Center update, noting the organization's 25th anniversary celebration.

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

Council member Lombardo commended the Welcome Center for its work and for providing space for local artists.

4. Public Works Proclamation

Mayor Abel presented a proclamation to Public Works Director Qishta declaring May 17–23, 2026 as National Public Works Week.

Public Works Director Qishta thanked staff and spoke regarding the recognition of the Public Works team.

Approval of Agenda

5. Agenda Approval

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

Motion:

Approve meeting agenda as prepared.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Second: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

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

Consent Agenda

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

6. Minutes

Motion:

Approve the meeting minutes of Tuesday, April 7, 2026 as presented.

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. AB1234 Reporting Requirements

Motion:

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

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. Ratification of Warrant Registers

Motion:

Ratify the Payroll Registers totaling \$299,181.36 dated March 13, 2026, and \$338,056.97 dated March 27, 2026. Ratify the Warrant Registers totaling \$3,343,358.96 for the period of March 1, 2026, through March 31, 2026.

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. Rejection of Claim

Motion:

Reject one Claim filed against the Town of Yucca Valley submitted on March 10, 2026, by John R. Ewing III.

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

10. Town Project No. 5005: Yucca Valley Senior Center (Desert Willow Center For Seniors) Modernization Phase 2 — Notice of Completion

Motion:

Accept the project as substantially complete, authorize staff to file the Notice of Completion, authorize the reduction of the Faithful Performance Bond to 10%, and direct staff to retain the Labor and Material Bond for six (6) months for Project No. 5005.

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

Mover: Council Member Robert Lombardo

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

11. Annual Street & Drainage and Landscape & Lighting Assessment Districts, Approval of Engineer's Reports, and Setting a Public Hearing for June 2, 2026

Motion:

Approve the Engineer's Reports for the existing Assessment Districts and directing the filing of such reports with the Town Clerk. Adopt Resolution 26-10 and 26-11, declaring the intention to levy and collect the assessments and setting a public hearing at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, in the Yucca Valley Community Center, 57090 29 Palms Highway, Yucca Valley, CA 92284 pursuant to California Streets and Highways Code Sections 22552 and 22553 and Government Code Section 53753.5 to consider the levy of annual assessments upon real property.

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

12. Approval of New Postage Machine Leases

Motion:

Award a contract for leasing two new postage machines in the amount of \$632.39, plus tax, per month for 60 months beginning September 2026 to September 2031; and authorize the Town Manager to sign all related documents and make any non-substantive changes.

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

13. Town Project No. 7073: Yucca Mesa & Buena Vista Intersection Improvement Project – Notice of Completion

Motion:

Accept the project as substantially complete, authorize staff to file the Notice of Completion, authorize the reduction of the Faithful Performance Bond to 10%, and direct staff to retain the Labor and Material Bond for six (6) months for Project No. 7073.

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

14. Treasurer's Report for the Quarter Ending March 31, 2026

Motion:

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

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

15. Assembly Bill 2561 - Public Hearing on Town Vacancies and Recruitment

Mayor Abel opened the public hearing regarding Town Vacancies and Recruitment pursuant to Assembly Bill 2561.

Human Resources Manager Breidenbach-Sterling presented a report to the Council concerning current vacancies and recruitment efforts.

Mayor Abel opened the hearing for public comment.

Morongo Basin resident, Susan Walls inquired about the veterinarian position and stated she did not see it listed as a full-time position.

Mayor Abel asked staff whether the veterinarian position was full-time. Human Resources Manager Breidenbach-Sterling responded that the position is a contract position.

With no additional members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Abel closed the public hearing.

Council received and filed the report. No motion was made.

Department Reports

16. YV ARC Quarterly Project Update

Public Works Director Qishta introduced Jen Wagner of Dahlin, project manager, who provided a quarterly update on the Yucca Valley Aquatic and Recreation Center project.

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

Council Member Lombardo expressed excitement for the project.

Council Member Denison thanked staff for the update and commented that the project was looking great.

Mayor Abel expressed excitement for the project and thanked staff for the presentation.

Council received and filed the report. No motion was made.

17. Western Joshua Tree Legislative Update

Town Manager Yakimow presented a legislative update regarding Western Joshua Tree issues.

Lobbyist Chad Mayes provided an update on current legislative efforts and discussions with state officials.

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Donald Burton, Yucca Valley resident, commented on the high cost of undergrounding utilities on private property.

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

Mayor Abel commented on concerns regarding development impacts and financial hardships on residents, particularly those on fixed incomes. Mayor Abel stated the Town supports bipartisan legislative efforts and asked questions regarding the Governor's potential action on the legislation and the addition of coauthors.

Mr. Mayes responded that the Governor has the authority to veto legislation and stated that active discussions are ongoing with legislative staff and the administration. Mr. Mayes also stated that coauthors may be added at any time during the legislative process.

Council Member Drozd asked about the timeline for the legislative process and noted that a new Governor would be elected in the future.

Mr. Mayes responded that active legislation would need to be signed within the current legislative cycle.

Council Member Denison expressed concerns regarding wildfire safety and the importance of defensible space and thanked Mr. Mayes for the update.

Council Member Lombardo encouraged continued legislative efforts.

Mayor Abel thanked the presenters for the update.

Town Manager Yakimow thanked community members for their involvement.

Council received and filed the report. No motion was made.

18. FY2026-28 Measure Y Partnership Funding Allocations

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler recused himself and exited the Council Chambers due to a conflict of interest, noting he serves on the board of one of the applicant organizations.

Finance Manager Gumbish presented a report regarding proposed Measure Y partnership funding allocations for local nonprofit organizations.

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Jamie, representing the Yucca Valley Airport District, thanked the Town for its support and stated the funding would assist with airport success, fire safety, and tourism efforts.

Ed Keisling, Vice President of High Desert Artists, thanked the Town for prior grant funding, which assisted the organization during the previous year and supported programs for adults with disabilities.

Krista Wargo, representing High Desert Artists Gallery, discussed programs supporting local artists and art classes and expressed appreciation for prior Measure Y funding support.

Garrent Kenri thanked the Town and staff for assistance with the application process and stated the funding would support programs for youth.

Amber Legowski, founder of a Morongo Basin adult dementia support initiative, discussed the need for adult daycare and dementia-related services within the community.

Lisa Baldwin, Executive Director of the Hi-Desert Pregnancy Clinic, thanked the Town and community supporters and stated grant funding would assist with facility renovations and continued services.

Janemarie Ofahulu, representing Basin Wide Foundation, thanked the Town Council and staff for supporting youth sports programs.

Shannon Lamoreaux, owner of Starstruck, thanked the Town for funding support for youth dance programs and opportunities for children and families within the Morongo Basin.

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

Council Member Lombardo discussed the need for adult daycare services within the

community and asked questions regarding the operational status and funding structure of the proposed dementia care program.

Council Member Denison commented on the number of funding requests received and encouraged organizations to continue their community service efforts.

Mayor Abel thanked nonprofit organizations for their work serving the community and noted the impact of nonprofit partnerships in extending services to residents.

Council Member Drozd commented positively on the number of community members seeking to assist local residents and organizations.

Motion:

Approve the allocation of the Town’s FY2026-28 Measure Y Partnership of \$298,300 to the recommended applicants attached in Exhibit A: FY2026-28 Measure Y Partnership Scorecards.

Result: Passed (Yes 4, No 0, Abstained 1)

Mover: Mayor Merl Abel

Second: Council Member Robert Lombardo

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

Recused: Mayor Pro Tem Schooler

19. FY2026-28 Special Revenue Fund Budget Review

Finance Manager Gumbish presented the FY2026-28 Special Revenue Fund Budget Review.

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

Council Members had no questions or comments regarding the presentation.

Council received and filed the report. No motion was made.

Future Agenda Items

None discussed.

Public Comments

Mayor Abel opened the public comment period.

Norman Shertzman expressed concerns regarding tumbleweeds, code compliance, and fire hazards within residential neighborhoods. He encouraged proactive neighborhood inspections rather than relying solely on complaints.

Christian Garcia, owner of a medical cannabis business, requested updates to the Town's cannabis regulations to allow adult-use sales in addition to medical-only operations. He stated that updated regulations would support existing local businesses, maintain compliance, and reduce deliveries originating from outside Yucca Valley. He clarified that he was not requesting storefront expansion, but reasonable regulatory updates.

Donald Burton, Yucca Valley resident, commented regarding tumbleweeds and overgrown vegetation near Aurora Avenue and expressed concerns about potential fire hazards and impacts near the airfield.

Alexandria Brener addressed concerns regarding lighting at Machris Park. She stated that the Town had acknowledged the issue but had not provided a clear timeline for corrective action. Ms. Brener expressed concerns regarding lighting visibility across the valley, compliance with Town ordinances, and delays in implementing shielding or lighting adjustments.

Katie Naratiz invited the community to attend upcoming events on May 16 and June 14, including a charity auction benefiting local organizations. She also thanked the Town for replacing a sign on Geronimo Trail.

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

Staff Reports and Comments

Captain Scovel provided an update regarding anticipated enforcement efforts related to off-highway vehicle (OHV) activity and addressing areas impacted by unauthorized encampments.

Mayor and Council Member Reports and Comments

Council Member Drozd thanked the Mayor and community members and expressed appreciation for continued collaboration and participation.

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler reported on the AS Committee meeting held on April 16, noting strong attendance and ongoing staffing challenges. He stated that progress continues under new management. He also reported that the spay/neuter clinic reached capacity, servicing 17 cats and 14 dogs. He noted increased use of local media, the launch of a microchip program, and participation in volunteer efforts. He announced the next meeting scheduled for May 21.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle reported a 90% release rate.

Council Member Denison expressed appreciation for the community and highlighted the importance of Measure Y and Measure Z in supporting public safety, quality of life, and infrastructure

improvements. He thanked residents for their continued support of Yucca Valley.

Council Member Lombardo congratulated the Welcome Center on its 25th anniversary and shared appreciation for the opportunity to serve as an umpire for the Miracle League, describing it as a meaningful community experience.

Mayor Abel reported on participation in the National Day of Prayer event at Brehm Park. He also noted involvement in upcoming community activities, including the Miracle League, convention-related events, ICS training, and memorial observances.

Announcements

Mayor Abel adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m. in loving memory of Marjorie Smith.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke Dudra
Town Clerk