

Town of Yucca Valley

Town Council Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2026

Call to Order

Mayor Abel called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

Roll Call

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

Absent:

Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance led by six-year-old Gavin, a local resident whose artwork is displayed at the Hi-Desert Nature Museum.

Invocation

Invocation led by Anne Fernandez from the Yucca Valley Center of Spiritual Living.

Presentations, Introductions, Recognitions

1. Introduction of New Employees

Public Works Director Alex Qishta introduced Brenda Northup. Ms. Northup thanked the Town Council and staff and expressed her enthusiasm for serving in her role and contributing to the team.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle introduced new animal shelter staff members Sierra Crippen, Daren Bradstock, and Wesley McDavis. Each provided brief remarks thanking the Town Council and staff for the opportunity to serve.

Approval of Agenda

2. Agenda Approval

Motion:

Approve the agenda as amended to move the Youth Commission item before Public Hearings and to hold the Public Hearing for the Walmart Fuel Station item No. 24 at or after 6:00 p.m., as publicly noticed.

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

Mover: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

Second: Council Member Robert Lombardo

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.

3. Minutes

Motion:

Approve the meeting minutes of Tuesday, May 5, 2026 as presented.

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

4. Approve Second Amendment for Vector Control Services Contract

Motion:

Approve the Town Manager to sign the Second Amendment to the Contract with the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health for the purposes of providing vector control services within the Town of Yucca Valley and make any non-substantial changes.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Second: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

Ayes: None

5. First Amendment to the Contract for Southwest Networks, Inc.

Motion:

1. Approve the First Amendment to the contract with Southwest Networks, Inc. for IT managed services, extending the contract term through June 30, 2028;
2. Increase the not-to-exceed amount to \$180,500 for FY 26/27 and \$190,500 for FY 27/28;
3. Add a second option to renew for another 24-month period at the end of the new contract term;
4. Authorize the Town Manager to sign all related documents in a form approved by the Town Attorney and make any non-substantive changes.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Seconders: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

Ayes: None

6. Audit Contract Amendment No. 4 and Award

Motion:

1. Amend the Agreement with Rogers, Anderson, Malody & Scott, LLP, extending the agreement for an additional three year period commencing with fiscal year 2026-27 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$176,575 as indicated in Exhibit
2. Authorize the Town Manager and Town Attorney to sign all necessary contract documents.
3. Authorize the Town Manager, Deputy Town Manager, and/or Finance Manager to sign the engagement letters annually for the term of the contract.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Seconders: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

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 April 2026.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Seconders: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

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

8. Ratification of Warrant Registers

Motion:

Ratify the Payroll Registers totaling \$334,197.69 dated April 10, 2026, and \$305,831.27 dated April 24, 2026. Ratify the Warrant Registers totaling \$3,404,664.94 for the period of April 1, 2026, through April 30, 2026.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Seconders: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Schooler

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

9. Town/County Waste Disposal Agreement (WDA) Amendment #9

Motion:

Approve the Ninth Amendment to the Waste Disposal Agreement between the Town of Yucca Valley and the County of San Bernardino dated May 5, 1998.

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

10. Spending Limitation for Fiscal Year 2026-27

Motion:

Adopt Resolution No. 26-18 establishing the spending limitation for fiscal year 2026-27.

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

11. Authorization to Purchase a Fleet Vehicle

Motion:

1. Waive the competitive bidding requirements (found in section 3.12.050 of the Town Code) because adherence to the procedures would be inefficient, impractical, and unnecessary (as stated in section 3.12.060, (G)) and authorize the Town Manager or designee to execute a purchase agreement for a new 2026 Ford Truck in an amount not to exceed \$60,000
2. Approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$150,000 from Capital Project Reserve Fund 800 to assign funds for the vehicle fleet reserves from unassigned capital project reserve funds as identified in Exhibit A.
3. Approve the purchase of the vehicle from Tim Moran Ford, or Ken Grody Ford, or Diamond Ford, based upon availability and as outlined in the staff report; or
4. If those vehicles are unavailable, authorize the purchase from any dealer who can provide the vehicle to meet the Town's timing needs, and direct staff to return to the Town Council with a final action report following the purchase.

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

12. Resolution No. 26-XX - Authorization of the Levy of A Special Service Tax Upon Real Property Within Community Facilities District (CFD) No. 11-1; Improvement Areas # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

Motion:

Adopt Resolution 26-12 authorizing the annual levy of special taxes for Community Facility District No. 11-1, Improvement Areas #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7 and #8 for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

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

13. Town Project No. 8061 – Senior Center Roof Replacement Project – Notice of Completion

Motion:

Accept the Senior Center Roof Replacement Project as substantially complete, authorize staff to file the Notice of Completion, authorize the reduction of the Faithful Performance Bond to 10%, directs staff to retain the Labor and Material Bond for six (6) months for Project No. 8061.

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

14. Amendment 1 to Agreement with Valley Pipeline Inc., for Emergency Street Debris Cleanup/Removal July 20, 2023

Motion:

Approve Amendment 1 to the 2023 agreement with Valley Pipeline Inc., for a three (3) year extension (from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2029) of emergency street debris cleanup and/or removal services for the additional amount of \$90,000.00 and authorize the Town Manager to sign the amendment.

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

15. On-Call Concrete Repair and Maintenance Services - Authorization to release a Request For Proposal

Motion:

Authorize the release of an RFP for On-Call Concrete Repair and Maintenance services.

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

16. Hi-Desert Nature Museum Re-Plumbing Project – Town Project No. 8067

Motion:

1. Amend the FY 25/26 Budget to allocate \$60,000.00 from the Special Revenue Fund Measure Y Fund 801 for the Hi-Desert Nature Museum Re-Plumbing Project, Town Project No. 8067.
2. Waive formal bidding procedures pursuant to Town purchasing policies and approve the informal bid specification for the Hi-Desert Nature Museum Re-Plumbing Project, Town Project No. 8067.

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

17. Adoption of Resolution Updating the Town Master Fee Schedule and Implementing Phase II Fee Adjustments Effective July 1, 2026

Motion:

1. Adopt the attached Resolution No. 26-13 updating the Town's Master Fee Schedule;
2. Approve implementation of Phase II of the previously adopted Master Fee Schedule effective July 1, 2026; and
3. Authorize a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment of 5.5% to applicable fees to maintain cost recovery and account for inflationary impacts on service delivery.

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

18. FY 2026-27 Public Safety Contract Amendment

Motion:

Approve an amendment for fiscal year 2026-27 to the contract with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in the amount of \$7,435,821 and authorize the Town Manager or Mayor to sign on behalf of the Town.

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

19. FY 2026-28 General Fund Community Contracts

Motion:

1. Approve the proposed agreement and scope of services for the Town's Chamber of Commerce contract services for FY 2026-28 and authorize the Town Manager or Mayor to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town, including funding in an amount not to exceed \$60,000 for the two-year term.
2. Approve Amendment No. 7 to the Agreement between the Town and Desert Regional Tourism Agency (DRTA) for tourism marketing services, including a funding allocation totaling \$400,000 for the two-year term, and authorize the Mayor or Town Manager to execute the amendment.

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

20. Budget Report for the Quarter Ending March 31, 2026

Motion:

Receive and file the Budget Report for the third quarter ended March 31, 2026

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

21. Calling of November 2026 General Election

Motion:

Adopt Resolution No. 26-14 calling and giving notice of a General Municipal Election on November 3, 2026, for the election of certain officers for District 1, District 3, and District 5.

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

Public Hearings

22. Annual Street & Drainage and Landscape & Lighting Assessment Districts, Ordering the Levy and Collection of Assessments for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

Mayor Abel opened the Public Hearing for the Annual Street & Drainage and Landscape & Lighting Assessment Districts, Ordering the Levy and Collection of Assessments for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

Public Works Director Qishta introduced a representative from Webb Municipal Finance, who provided a presentation to the Town Council.

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

Motion:

Adopt Resolution 26-15 and 26-16, approving and confirming the assessment diagrams and confirming the assessments as set forth in the Engineer's reports for Landscaping & Lighting Maintenance Districts and Street & Drainage Maintenance Districts within the existing Districts for the 2026-2027 tax year and authorizes the levy of assessments upon real property as identified in the Engineer's Reports.

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

23. Public Hearing In Connection With The Placement Of Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Solid Waste Handling Service Charges On The Property Tax Roll

Mayor Abel opened Public Hearing in Connection With The Placement Of Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Solid Waste Handling Service Charges On The Property Tax Roll.

Senior Management Analyst Rice provided a presentation to the Council.

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

Motion:

1. Hold a public hearing,
2. Review the report prepared by the Town Manager, and
3. Adopt a Resolution 26-17 authorizing the placement of fiscal year 2026-2027 solid waste handling service charges on the property tax roll.

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

- 24. Environmental Assessment, EA 02-25; Specific Plan 01-04 Amendment #2, Conditional Use Permit, CUP 01-25, Resolution No. 26-XX, Ordinance No. XX, Walmart Fuel Station. A request to amend the existing Specific Plan to allow for the construction and operation of a fuel station with six (6) fueling pumps, twelve (12) fuel dispensers, a 4,950 square foot fuel station canopy, and a 1,556 square foot convenience store. The project site is located at 58501 Twentynine Palms Highway and is also identified as APN: 0601-201-54.**

Mayor Abel opened the public hearing at 6:09 p.m.

Senior Planner Jerome presented the staff report.

Deputy Town Manager Stueckle noted that the item had been previously reviewed by the Planning Commission and that staff's recommendations would be considered separately by the Town Council.

Mayor Abel opened public comment.

The following individuals addressed the Town Council regarding the project:

- Dean Arvidson, Yucca Valley, regarding lighting.
- Deb Douglas, Joshua Tree, regarding dark sky preservation, lighting standards, and shielding requirements.

- Susan Walls, Yucca Valley, regarding environmental review, lighting impacts, and the use of the prior Environmental Impact Report.

Town Clerk Dudra reported that written correspondence had been received from Donald Nordine prior to the meeting and distributed to the Town Council. A copy was made available at the Clerk's table.

In response to Council questions and public comments, staff provided information regarding lighting and shielding requirements, environmental review compliance, project permitting requirements, traffic circulation, site topography, and potential impacts to migratory birds.

Council discussion included lighting standards, dark sky preservation, traffic impacts, project visibility, construction duration, and wildlife considerations.

Mayor Abel closed the public hearing.

Motion:

Environmental Assessment 02-25:

Approve of EA 02-25, and adopts the resolution, for Addendum #1 to the previously adopted Environmental Impact Report.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Second: Council Member Robert Lombardo

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

Motion:

Conditional Use Permit 01-25:

That the Town Council approves CUP 01-25, a request to construct and operate a six (6) pump gasoline station, twelve (12) fuel dispensers, 4,950 square foot fuel station canopy, and a 1,556 square foot convenience store.

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

Mover: Council Member Jim Schooler

Second: Council Member Rick Denison

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

Motion:

Ordinance No. 334, Specific Plan 01-04, Amendment #2:

That the Town Council introduces Ordinance No. 334, Specific Plan 01-04 Amendment #2 to the Yucca Valley Retail Specific Plan, a request to amend the adopted Specific

Plan by Ordinance, to allow a gasoline station as an approved land use and to allow for additional signage for the gasoline station and convenience store.

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

Department Reports

25. 2025-26 Youth Commission End-of-Term Report

Youth Commission Chair Acasia Smith and Vice Chair George Wingerter presented the Youth Commission End-of-Term Report.

Chair Smith thanked the Town Council for its support during the commission's term.

Mayor Abel opened public comment. There being no requests to speak, public comment was closed.

The Town Council presented certificates of recognition to the Youth Commissioners.

No action was taken by the Town Council.

26. Town of Yucca Valley Summer Music Festival & Independence Day Celebration

Recreation Supervisor Rardon provided the Town Council with an update on the Summer Music Festival and Independence Day Celebration.

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

Council Members expressed appreciation for staff's planning efforts and the event presentation. Comments included appreciation for the partnership with the school district, recognition of participating musical acts, support for maintaining the event venue, and thanks to staff for their work in organizing the events.

No action was taken by the Town Council.

27. Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 8 Call-For-Projects

Public Works Director Qishta presented the staff report regarding the Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 8 Call-for-Projects.

Mayor Abel opened public comments.

Eric Linnert, representing Basin Bike Path, spoke in support of the proposed project and highlighted community bicycling activity along Sunnyslope Drive, noting existing roadway width and potential suitability for bicycle facilities.

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

Council discussion followed regarding bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including clarification of the ATP grant program, its relationship to Safe Routes to School, and potential funding opportunities such as Measure Y. Council Members expressed support for expanding pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and improving safety along local roadways, including Sunnyslope Drive and areas near schools.

Motion:

Authorize the submittal of the California Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 8 grant applications for the design and construction of curb, gutter, sidewalk, and ADA curb ramp improvements near Yucca Elementary School, Yucca Valley High School, Onaga Elementary School, La Contenta Middle School and along Barron Drive.

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

28.

FY2026-28 Proposed Budget Adoption Resolution No. 26-XX and Personnel Resolution No. 26-XX

Finance Manager Gumbish presented the FY 2026–2028 Proposed Budget Adoption and Personnel item.

Mayor Abel opened public comment.

Pauline Pisano expressed concern that the public had not had adequate time to review the budget and referenced a petition requesting the discontinuation of the

Flock program.

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

Town Manager Yakimow noted the budget had been presented through multiple opportunities for public review and input.

Council discussion followed regarding the proposed budget, including questions on surplus availability, future revenue projections, use of reserve funds, long-term financial forecasting, and potential revenue enhancements related to upcoming facilities. Finance staff provided clarification regarding conservative revenue assumptions, expenditure controls, reserve fund balances, and the five-year forecast.

Council Members expressed appreciation for the budget presentation and staff's work. Additional comments included support for increased funding to the animal shelter and the addition of new personnel.

Motion:

1. Adopt Resolution No. 26-20 approving the fiscal years 2026-28 proposed budget and designating those officials authorized to make requisitions for encumbrances against appropriations.
2. Adopt Resolution No. 26-21 approving the fiscal year 2026-28 salary grid, authorized position list and related appropriations for fiscal years 2026-28.

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

Mover: Council Member Rick Denison

Second: Mayor Merl Abel

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

29. Adoption of Policy for Disruption of Telephonic or Internet Service During Public Meetings (SB 707 Compliance)

Town Clerk Dudra provided a presentation regarding the Adoption of a Policy for Disruption of Telephonic or Internet Service During Public Meetings, in compliance with SB 707.

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

Mayor Abel commented on the importance of maintaining public participation and

noted the Town's continued use of online participation tools for public meetings.

Motion:

Adopt Resolution No. 26-22 approving the Town of Yucca Valley Policy for Disruption of Telephonic or Internet Service During Public Meetings in compliance with Senate Bill 707 and Government Code section 54953.4.

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

Future Agenda Items

Mayor Pro Tem Schooler requested that a full report from shelter staff be brought to a future Town Council meeting, noting that the Shelter Committee had met and that this would serve as a one-year update, including review of prior recommended actions. The next committee meeting is scheduled for June.

Council Member Schooler reported on the May 21st committee meeting and participation in the monthly shelter update, noting positive staff performance, effective use of local media, and strong April shelter statistics.

It was also noted that the Night Sky item will proceed to the Planning Commission for review.

Public Comments

Mayor Abel opened public comment.

Town Clerk Dudra reported that written correspondence was received from Margaret Stachan prior to the meeting, which was distributed to the Town Council and made available at the Clerk's table.

Bonnie Hawthorn expressed concerns regarding the adequacy of environmental review and traffic analysis, and potential traffic and lighting impacts associated with the proposed project.

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

Staff Reports and Comments

Captain Scovel provided remarks in remembrance of Sergeant Vaca in recognition of the five-

year memorial.

Community Services Manager Earnest provided an update on June activities and programs from the Museum, Aquatics & Recreation, and Senior Center.

Town Manager Yakimow noted the busy seasonal workload, including contract renewals, and commented on recent facility improvements, including the Desert Willow Center renovation, pickleball courts, and the Aquatics Center.

Mayor and Council Member Reports and Comments

Council Members Denison, Drozd, Lombardo, and Schooler expressed appreciation to staff and welcomed new employees. Council Members also recognized the Youth Commission, noting its continued growth and value to the community, and thanked the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians for their community support.

Mayor Abel extended birthday wishes to Council Members Denison and Schooler and commented on ongoing recreation priorities, including expansion of pickleball, hiking, biking, and night sky preservation, emphasizing the importance of the Town's natural environment and community connectivity.

Announcements

Mayor Abel noted that public safety remains a top priority. The meeting was closed at 7:27 p.m., with Mayor Abel taking a moment to speak in remembrance and honor of Sergeant Vaca.

Department Reports

Public Hearings

Department Reports

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke Dudra
Town Clerk