



# Blue Lake City Council Minutes

Tuesday, June 23, 2025 ~ 5:30 p.m. ~ Special Council Meeting  
Skinner Store Building ~ 111 Greenwood Rd., Blue Lake ~ Behind City Hall

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor John Sawatzky called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

**ESTABLISH A QUORUM OF THE COUNCIL** [0:26 Part 1]

**COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor John Sawatzky, Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso, Council Member Kat Napier with Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani arriving at 5:37

**COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT:**

**STAFF PRESENT:** Acting City Manager Dani Burkhart, City Attorney Russ Gains and Videographer Justin Goad

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**AGENDA APPROVAL:** [0:42 Part 1]

**Motion:** to approve the agenda

**Motion by:** Council Member Kat Napier

**Second by:** Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

**Public Comment:** None Received

**Motion Summary:** Consensus (3/0)

## PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS: [1:20 Part 1]

Comment by (Adelene Jones): I had an issue with this meeting being scheduled at 5:30, and often people are not informed about the new time. However, I cannot comment on your first closed session as I am unaware of the details. Regarding the second closed session, I support the battery storage proposal. I know of at least two individuals in Blue Lake who have these systems on their properties, and Steve Coleman, former Blue Lake council member, has informed me that there are many more in the area. My primary concern is the demolition of the old power plant, which poses a significant safety risk. I have mentioned this before; it has already led to one unfortunate incident. As summer progresses, more people will visit the river and use the Powers Creek District trail. It is essential to remove this dangerous structure as soon as possible.

Comment by (Elissa Rosado): It is my understanding that public comment is allowed on any topic, so I would like to address this matter. We just pledged allegiance to the flag, and the First Amendment guarantees free speech. Today, it seems there was an attempt to restrict free speech, which I wish to clarify. A special permit is not required to stand on the plaza and gather signatures. I can lawfully stand at the courthouse and protest as much as I want, whether I have a clipboard or a tent. Please consult your lawyer regarding this issue. We will be on the plaza every day from 2 to 6, gathering signatures. Our right to free speech cannot



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be suppressed, and we will inform others about today's events. We will continue our activities on the plaza, as no special event permit is required for us to do so.

Comment by (Rebecca Collins): I'm not opposed to the battery storage project, but I disagree with the comparison to small household systems. This project is significantly larger—125 megawatts at least, originally proposed at 300 megawatts. It's unlike any existing battery storage in Humboldt County. Our levee hasn't been certified since 2019, is full of trees, has burrows, and needs upgrading. Placing a large battery storage facility next to an uncertified levee is dangerous for nearby residents and comparing it to small household systems is misleading.

Comment by (Alex): I didn't intend to speak tonight, but an incident has compelled me to do so now. The city attorney declined to address the First Amendment issue raised by the previous speaker. My understanding is that he plans to discuss it in a closed session rather than publicly. I request that this matter be included in the agenda if that is the case. Furthermore, I am astonished that any attorney would suggest that a First Amendment issue should be deliberated in a closed session.

Comment by (Ingrid Kasic): I wanted to know if there will be council representation at this meeting tonight with power transitions.

Mayor John Sawatzky confirmed there will be council representation.

Comment by (Julie Christie): I advise our council to seek legal assistance during this challenging time. Regarding power transitions, such as the bike park and restoration projects, we need additional conditions and studies. Take your time with negotiations; we have until September. Gather all necessary information and ensure a thorough proposal that includes connectivity and clean-up conditions. The public will appreciate a comprehensive plan. Additionally, consider holding a town hall meeting before discussing and taking action on the proposal.

Comment by (Lori Ponte): Asked if closed session number 4-1 related to tomorrow's closed session item 5?

Mayor John Sawatzky confirmed the items were two completely different sessions.

Comment by (Dennis Whitcomb): thinks we should have another town hall meeting.

Comment by (Linda Cooley): I would like to support Julie's suggestion to obtain an additional external legal opinion on these matters. Given the changes in council members and city managers, it may be beneficial to seek a different perspective from a new legal counsel. It appears that there are multiple issues where we either lack complete information or have received incorrect information.

**CLOSED SESSION ITEMS:** [11:59 Part 1]

**Motion:** to move into closed session.



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**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

**Second by:** Council Member Kat Napier

**Motion Summary:** Consensus (4/0)

## **REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION:** [0:01 Part 2] (7:15 p.m.)

Mayor John Sawatzky

Reports out of closed session;

Item 4-1 No reportable action taken.

Item 4-2 A motion was made by Council Member Kat Napier and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani that due to Power Transitions LLC not being shortlisted by RCEA the council voted 4 to 0 to terminate the city's exclusive negotiating agreement with Power Transitions LLC and directed staff to take the necessary actions to complete the termination.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion:** to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

**Second by:** Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

**Motion Summary:** Consensus (4/0)

Laura McClenagan

Deputy Clerk, City of Blue Lake