



Blue Lake City Council Minutes

Tuesday, July 22, 2025 ~ 6:30 p.m. ~Regular 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 6:30 p.m.

ESTABLISH A QUORUM OF THE COUNCIL: [0:21 Part 1]

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor John Sawatzky, Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani, Council Member Kat Napier, Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso, Council Member Terri Bayles

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Acting City Manager Dani Burkhart, City Attorneys Ryan Plotz, Gary Rees, City Planner, Deputy Clerk Laura McClenagan and Videographer Justin Goad

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

AGENDA APPROVAL: [0:54 Part 1]

Motion [3:07 part 1]: to approve the agenda

Motion by: Council Member Kat Napier

Second by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Motion Summary: Consensus (4/0)

CONSIDER APPLICANTS FOR CITY COUNCIL VACANCY AND POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT: [3:20 part 1]

Mayor John Sawatzky established the following procedures for the meeting. Public comments will be limited to two to three minutes per speaker. Each candidate will be allotted five to seven minutes, followed by a one-to-two-minute period for public questions. Candidates will have a final opportunity for rebuttal lasting two to three minutes. All attendees, including candidates, public speakers, staff, and audience members, are expected to maintain civility and respect at all times toward the city council, staff, and fellow participants. Disruptive conduct such as shouting, yelling, booing, personal attacks, or any action that interferes with the orderly progression of the meeting will not be permitted. Personal attacks or slanderous remarks directed at any individual or candidate are strictly prohibited.

PUBLIC COMMENT / QUESTIONS: [10:10 part 1]

Mayor John Sawatzky opened the meeting for public comment:

Applicant Adelene Jones went first, introduced herself and explained why she should be considered for the vacant city council seat. She responded to questions from both the public and the council and heard comments regarding her interest in the seat.

Applicant Terri Bayles went second, introduced herself and explained why she should be considered for the vacant city council seat. She responded to questions from both the



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public and the council and heard comments regarding her interest in the seat.

Motion: move that the council appoint Terri Bayles to the vacant city council seat. [1:22:45 part 1]

Motion by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Second by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Motion Summary: Consensus (4/0)

RECEIVE OATH OF OFFICE FOR PERSON APPOINTED TO FILL VACANCY: [1:23:23 part 1]

Acting City Manager Dani Burkhart swore Terri Bayles into office, provided the city council's protocol manual, and supplied the Pledge of Civility for her review and signature, then invited her to join the council at the table.

ADOPT PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: [1:26:42 part 1]

Corrections were relayed to Deputy Clerk Laura McClenagan regarding the March 11, 2025, March 27, 2025, June 23, 2025, minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED: [1:31:18 part 1]

Motion: to approve and adopt the previous council meeting minutes March 11th, June 23rd, June 24th, and June 27th with the stated corrections. [1:37:00]

Motion by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Motion Summary: Consensus (5/0)

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS: [1:37:26] (Comments are summarized)

Dave Ponti reminded the council of a previous proposal to honor Scotty Hornen, a dedicated public works employee, by naming a bridge after him and suggested placing a commemorative plaque, noting that recognition has yet to happen despite the idea being raised several years ago.

Karina announced the formation of a volunteer group called Friends of Powers Creek. In collaboration with local watershed organizations, the group aims to restore the creek's ecological health and reduce flooding through educational events and hands-on activities like invasive species removal and native plant restoration. She invited community members to get involved and stay updated on the project's progress.

Adelene Jones informed community members about upcoming local events, including a public forum on battery energy storage hosted by the Redwood Coast Energy Authority and several



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activities in Blue Lake: the Humboldt Folk Life festival, a free event on July 26th, a city yard waste day also on July 26th, and the 56th annual Annie and Mary Day on August 3rd, featuring a parade, craft booths, live music, train rides, and the museum will be open with refreshments.

Kent Sawatzky engaged in several discussions with Sheriff Billy Hansel, who expressed satisfaction with the current level of law enforcement presence around Blue Lake. Recent initiatives have included clearing a local encampment and executing a significant operation on a drug house just outside Blue Lake. Additional activities are ongoing, generating positive attention that stands to benefit our city. Additionally, there was a homicide in Glendale, which falls within our jurisdiction. Notably, the resolution of this case was facilitated by the use of flock cameras and exemplary investigative efforts. While some areas have reservations about installing these cameras, their demonstrated effectiveness in swiftly resolving criminal cases is evident. Deputy Mullen raised concerns regarding homeless encampments, particularly the issue of curbside items from yard sales being abandoned and subsequently moved to these sites. In response, I recommend that the safety commission devise a strategy for citywide sales events to ensure all items placed at curbs are properly removed post-event—whether stored, donated, or disposed of—rather than left unattended. This suggestion comes at the request of the sheriff's department in hopes of reducing abandoned materials in public spaces. The development of a policy on this matter would be preferable, ideally encouraging voluntary compliance and negating the need for a formal ordinance.

Rebecca Collins, we want to acknowledge the maker space for the beautiful mural. The chamber is doing an excellent job supporting the community. I'm glad to see positive developments and look forward to Annie and Mary Day.

Jennifer announced that during this Thursday's food pantry distribution at Sprint of Skinner Store, I'll be offering free blood pressure screenings and providing stroke awareness education to the community. Data shows Humboldt County has stroke death rates twice the state average. Screening will be available from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.—all are welcome.

CONSENT AGENDA - WARRANTS AND DISBURSEMENTS: [1:47:23 part 1]

Motion: to pull Item 7a – Warrants and Disbursements from the consent agenda.

Motion by: Council Member Kat Napier

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Motion Summary: Consensus (5/0)

Motion: to accept the warrants and disbursements.

Motion by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani



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Second by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Public Comment: None received

Motion Summary: Consensus (4/0)

Council Member Kat Napier voted NAY as there is not an MOU in place with regards to collection and disbursement of donations to the bike park.

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF THE 6TH CYCLE HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE AND RESOLUTION NO.

1235: [1:52:59 Part 1]

Acting City Manager Dani Burkhart stated that in meetings with HCD, which were attended by Council Member Kat Napier and Mayor John Sawatzky as part of an ad hoc committee, HCD requested that the timeline be expedited as much as possible. Even if the measure is approved tonight, the rezoning process will still be close to the 12/15 deadline previously established for completing the action. In order to stay ahead of this deadline, the housing element is being presented now.

City Planner Gary Rees reported that the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has requested a meeting to establish a more detailed timeline with specific milestones. HCD is also pursuing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formally record these arrangements, preferring this approach over a stipulated judgment. Gary Rees also addressed public comments received.

Mayor John Sawatzky formally opened the public hearing and asked for public comments.

Public Comment Received. [2:23:50 part 1]

Motion: to adopt resolution 1235, adopting the six-cycle housing element update. [2:36:25 part 1]

Motion by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Second by: Council Member Kat Napier

Motion Summary: Council Member Kat Napier - AYE, Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso – AYE, Mayor John Sawatzky – AYE, Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani – AYE, Council Member Terri Bayles – AYE: Motion carried 5/0

SECOND READING BY TITLE ONLY AND CONSIDER ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 547-2025 –

SAFETY GEAR FOR WHEELED RECREATIONAL DEVICES: [0:01 part 2]

The document explains that enforcement of the rules will be overseen by the parks director or their designated representative, though this does not mean they will always be present. The area will only be open when a staff member is onsite, and enforcement will mainly rely on



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complaints from the public or observations by park staff during their regular rounds. Because there are not enough staff members to provide constant coverage, and budget limits prevent continuous staffing, it is not possible to have personnel available at all times. Still, the plan will move forward, and staff will be given the authority to issue fines and administrative citations as needed.

Public Comment Received [1:33 part 2]

Motion: to adopt ordinance number 547-2025 entitled An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Blue Lake Adopting Helmet Protective Gear Use at the Blue Lake Bike and Skate Park and wave the full reading of the ordinance with a reading by title. [6:34 part 2]

Motion by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Second by: Council Member Terri Bayles

Motion Summary: Council Member Kat Napier – AYE, Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso – AYE, Mayor John Sawatzky – AYE, Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani – AYE, Council Member Terri Bayles – AYE. Motion carried 5/0

CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. 1238 APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND: Blue Lake Bike and Skate Park project: [9:20 part 2]
The council discussed applying for a grant to fund the Blue Lake Bike and Skate Park, covering a portion of the cost with matching funds from donations or partner contributions. They clarified that previous expenses could count as matching funds, and that funding commitments were only required when signing the grant agreement. The group also debated who should serve as the authorized representative, agreeing the city manager could fill this role. Ultimately, they proceeded with the application, ensuring flexibility in project scope and funding sources.

Public Comment Received [18:28 part 2]

Motion: to adopt resolution number 1238, approving the application for land and water conservation fund assistance for the Blue Lake Bike and Skate Park project, and authorizing the city manager to execute and submit all required documentation.

Motion by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Second by: Council Member Kat Napier

Motion Summary: Council Member Kat Napier – AYE, Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso – AYE, Mayor John Sawatzky – AYE, Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani – AYE, Council Member Terri Bayles – AYE. Motion carried 5/0.



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DRAFT A LETTER TO THE BLUE LAKE RANCHERIA TRIBAL COUNCIL: [28:14 part 2]

Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani read the draft letter into the record.

Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso acknowledges the past is beneficial she would prefer it say that “we believe by working together we can establish a foundation for a more cooperative future.”, instead of “move beyond past difficulties”, as it keeps a positive flavor to the letter and the intention.

Public Comment Received. [31:39 part 2]

Motion: to direct staff to draft a letter to Blue Lake Rancheria Tribal Council as written with the amendment stated. [34:17 part 2]

Motion by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Motion Summary: Consensus (5/0)

CONSIDER CHANGES TO COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE: [34:42 part 2]

To facilitate more regular meetings, it is necessary to draft and adopt an ordinance. This would enable us to schedule meetings in advance on the calendar and cancel them if they are deemed unnecessary. Implementing this process would enhance our ability to plan effectively, increase flexibility, streamline meetings for greater efficiency, and eliminate the constraints associated with special meetings.

Public Comment Received: [36:20 part 2]

DIRECTION: The Council directed Acting City Manager Dani Burkhart to draft an ordinance in support of two regular meetings (the second and fourth Tuesday) a month.

CONSIDER CHANGES TO THE AGENDA SETTING AD HOC: [39:18 part 2]

Council members discussed the process for setting meeting agendas, referencing relevant municipal code provisions. There was debate about the current ad hoc committee's role in agenda setting versus following the code, which places responsibility on the city clerk, city manager, and potentially a designated council member. Concerns were raised about possible Brown Act violations if the ad hoc committee included more than two council members. The group considered whether to maintain the rotational member process or move to a more formal system or revert to the process outlined in the municipal code. Discussion included how



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council members could submit agenda items and the timeline for submission, public by Wednesday noon and council by Thursday noon, as well as the discretion the city manager and mayor should have in prioritizing and assembling the agenda.

Public Comment Received. [51:44 part 2]

DIRECTION: The council reached consensus to disband the agenda setting ad hoc committee and revert to the process described in the municipal code. Agenda preparation by the city clerk and city manager, with input from the mayor or mayor pro tem. Council members can submit agenda items individually to the city manager, with a copy to the mayor, though there is no guarantee that submitted items will appear on the next agenda. This process will be tested for a couple of months and may be refined further, if necessary, with any future changes to be added as agenda items for council discussion.

REPORTS OF COUNCIL AND STAFF: [56:27 part 2]

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS: [56:34 part 2]

Council Member Kat Napier learned from attending Humboldt County Association of Government (HCAOG) that the housing allocation numbers for the region are expected to increase dramatically in the upcoming cycle, potentially doubling previous targets. Cities like Eureka and Arcata have already reached their resource limits. Future allocations will likely consider not just population but also the efforts and resources cities have already committed. Council Member Kat Napier stresses the need for strategic planning to address these significant changes.

Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso reported that she was unable to attend the HWMA meeting but is looking forward to the next meeting.

Mayor John Sawatzky reports he attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting, and they spoke about Annie and Mary Day.

Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani reports she attended a Public Safety Commission meeting where we discussed a number of topics. The one that probably received the most attention was the potential traffic measures on I Street. A survey is being developed to gather input from residents on I, H, J, and the surrounding side-streets aiming to identify those most impacted by the street's conditions. That process is currently underway.

Additionally, Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) is making a loan to a company that is installing a demonstration wind turbine in Southern California off the coast. The company had been working on this project for years, but all their funding was recently withdrawn due to changes in the political climate. To help the project move forward, RCEA is providing some



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capital to bridge the funding gap until more permanent funding becomes available. It's quite interesting and exciting to see this initiative continuing.

CITY MANAGER REPORT: [1:00:27 part 2]

Acting City Manager Dani Burkhardt reported that, due to the high number of uncashed checks needing to be voided and reissued at the end of the fiscal year, and the associated \$30 bank fee for each voided check, council stipends will now be issued quarterly instead of monthly. This change is intended to save staff time and reduce unnecessary fees. Council members are reminded to cash their stipend checks promptly to avoid these issues.

COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEES: [1:02:03 PART 2]

The city manager recruitment ad hoc committee reported receiving more than five candidate names since the process began. Tripepi Smith is currently developing a city manager profile and a recruitment brochure, gathering input from council members through questionnaires and interviews, with staff interviews scheduled next. This information will help shape the materials used for the recruitment process, which is expected to be launched in about two weeks. The committee clarified that their focus is specifically on the recruitment with Tripepi Smith, not the broader interim or permanent city manager roles. If unsolicited resumes or candidate names are received, these should be forwarded to the city attorney. Council members confirmed that any such materials are already being sent to the appropriate parties.

Public Comment Received. [1:05:53 part 2]

COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE: [1:06:41 part 2] Received.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: [1:06:47 part 2]

Council Member Kat Napier suggested that, with our new council member, it may be appropriate to reevaluate and determine redistribution of liaison duties.

Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani suggests a memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding the bike park, and committee reassignments be on the future agenda items list.

Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso suggested placing the City of Blue Lake City Council roles and responsibilities protocol manual last revised September 10, 2013, on an agenda, and I would like to bring that up as a discussion item, possibly an ad hoc committee formation where I could work with one other individual on drafting a revision update.

Council Member Terri Bayles asked when the budget will be placed on an agenda, as the resolution was for 60 days from the 27th: so, August 27, 2025, to finalize the budget.



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Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso would also like to put the International City Management Association (ICMA) code of ethics, with guidelines, on the agenda for discussion and possible adoption, because I didn't see anything in our municipal code about any code of ethics.

Public Comment Received: [1:11:27 part 2]

Comment by (Julie Christi): I would like to place on the agenda any entities that have a MOU or could potentially have a MOU with our city. I would like some reflection on which ones actually constitute us getting a MOU, like the Powers Creek Restoration, and the Bike Park RCMBA. There are a few so just keep that in mind when looking at how we can construct them moving forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS: [1:12:03 part 2] None received.

Motion: to move into closed session.

Motion by: Mayor Pro Tem Elise Scafani

Second by: Council Member Michelle Lewis-Lusso

Motion Summary: Consensus (5/0)

REPORT OUT OF CLOSED SESSION:

A) CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS:

B) PUBLIC EMPLOYEE APPOINTMENT:

C) PUBLIC EMPLOYEE EVALUATION:

D) CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL—ANTICIPATED LITIGATION:

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: to adjourn the July 22, 2025, special meeting at 2:22 a.m.

Motion by:

Second by:

Motion Summary: Consensus (5/0)

Laura McClenagan

Deputy Clerk, City of Blue Lake