CITY OF AVENAL
"Pistachio Capital of the World®"
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL/SUCCESSOR AGENCY MEETING
January 22, 2026, 5:15 P.M.
AVENAL THEATER & EVENT CENTER, 233 E. KINGS ST., AVENAL, CA

Study Session:4:30pm - Investments 101 Presentation/Discussion with Optimized Investment Partners, LLC
Due to technical difficulties, study session could not be held.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: **by Mayor Preciado at 5:25 P.M.**

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers: Ricardo Verdugo (Via Zoom), David Reynosa, Pablo Hernandez, Mayor Pro Tem, M. Leticia Gamez; Mayor, Alvaro Preciado (Via Zoom).

Mayor Preciado and Councilmember Verdugo participated remotely, from the Hyatt Regency Sacramento 1209 L Street, Sacramento, CA 95814, for representing the City at the League of California 2026 Mayors and Council Members Academy

ABSENT: None.

STAFF: Price, Curiel, Ortiz, Bermudez, Lara, López, Velasco

LEGAL COUNSEL: Moses Diaz.

CITY CLERK:
Government Code Section 54952.3: Members of the City Council/Successor Agency are entitled to receive a total of $450.00 per month due to their serving on the City Council. They receive no other compensation for serving as members of the Successor Agency.

City Manager, Antony López, respectfully asked to move Item 8, Old Business, to after Item 10, Closed Session.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez motioned to move Item 8 after Item 10. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado and motion carried.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
AYES: Gamez, Preciado, Reynosa, Hernandez.
NOES: Verdugo.
ABSENT: None.
ABSTAIN: None

PUBLIC COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS & UNSCHEDULED APPEARANCES:
This time is reserved for members of the audience to address the City Council on items of interest that are both on the Agenda or not on the Agenda, and are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council/Successor Agency. State Law prohibits any member of the Council from commenting or acting on matters not on the agenda. The Council asks that you keep your comments concise and respectful. Criticism, concerns, or support are welcome, provided they are expressed with appropriate courtesy. Each speaker will be allowed three minutes. A timer will notify you when your time is expired. Please begin your comments by stating your name and place of residence.

Special Recognitions: ***Ysaias (Chayito) Castañeda Roman –*** *Contributions to Senior Nutrition Program*
Delfina Ulloa; Benjamin Enriquez; Virginia Zarate; Bertha Montoya;
Arcelia Celis *– Volunteerism at Food Distributions*

City Manager Antony López presented certificates of appreciation to Avenal residents who volunteered with the Senior Nutrition Program and Food Distribution events.

Antony V. López, City Manager, read a statement into the record clarifying the City's recall process, as there has been confusion regarding the matter.

Frank Lopez, Avenal resident, shared information regarding a Rotary meeting for the planning of the Old Timers Day event. He discussed possible activities for the event, including a Huapango competition. He stated that the next Rotary meeting will be held on February 3 at 5:45 p.m. at the Museum and invited the community to attend. He also shared that they are seeking volunteers to assist with an arts corner for an upcoming car show event to be held at the new Community Center.

Elizabeth Perez, Avenal resident, stated that if City Council truly believes the community was misled into signing the recall petition, there should be no fear in allowing the recall process to continue. She requested that a date be set for the recall election and expressed trust in the voters of Avenal.

Arnulfo Trejo, Huron resident, along with volunteer Rosa Moreno, presented Certificates of Recognition to City Manager Antony López and Mayor Preciado for their donations toward a Christmas event.

Robert Campos, Avenal resident and business owner, shared a complaint regarding a sewer issue claim, stating he has been waiting for a response for two years. City Manager Antony López stated he would work on processing the claim.

David Reynosa, Avenal resident and City Councilmember, shared ideas on reimagining Kings Street and forming a committee for the effort. City Manager Antony López provided additional information on the concept and shared a flyer inviting community members to join the committee.

Dalilah Barajas, Avenal resident, stated she appreciated the acknowledgment in City Manager López's statement regarding the recall process. She agreed with another audience member that City Council should allow the recall election to proceed. She also stated that while the reimagining Kings Street committee is a good idea, the City should be more inclusive of community members.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

All items listed under the consent calendar are routine or for approval only and are enacted by one motion: (Action).

A. Consider City of Avenal/Successor Agency's Approval of Minutes for January 8, 2026 Regular Meeting.
B. Ratify by motion, entry into a litigation services agreement with Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC.
C. Consider Approval of Water Treatment Plant Filter Rebuild for Plants 1 & 2 (Discussion/Action).

Councilmember Verdugo inquired on why the City is hiring another law firm. Legal Counsel stated it is because they specialize in litigation which the Council has approved and will be forthcoming.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Hernandez motioned to approve Consent Calendar. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez and motion carried.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
AYES: Hernandez, Gamez, Preciado, Reynosa.
NOES: Verdugo.
ABSENT: None.
ABSTAIN: None

MAYOR & COUNCIL MEMBER/ SUCCESSOR AGENCY/ ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION:

A. Consider Appointment to the Planning Commission: Braulio Zarate (Discussion/Action).

City Manager, Antony López, shared report as submitted. Mayor Pro Tem Gamez, appointed Braulio Zarate as planning commissioner.

B. Investments 101 Presentation and Consider Possible Approval for Agreement for Investment Advisory Services with Optimized Investment Partners, LLC (Discussion/Action).

City Manager, Antony López, shared information regarding the purpose of moving LAIF funds to OIP and use of their services. He also shared there may be a possibility of reducing water rates pending revenue from OIP. Brittany Tram, OIP Marketing Director, shared report as submitted.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado motioned to approve Resolution 2026-04 with pending amendments. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Reynosa and motion carried.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
AYES: Preciado, Reynosa, Verdugo, Hernandez, Gamez.
NOES: None.
ABSENT: None.
ABSTAIN: None

ACTIVITY REPORTS/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS & COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Activity Reports:
   1. PARCS (Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services) Department Activity Report: PARCS Director, Anna Lara.

Anna Lara, PARCS Director, presented her report as submitted. Mayor Preciado suggested distributing a monthly community events flyer to the community. Councilmember Hernandez inquired about the dates the Mexican Consulate will be in town. Anna Lara responded that the dates are February 17–20 at the Avenal Theatre. Councilmember Reynosa asked whether the Kidz in the Kitchen activities are open to all ages. Anna Lara responded that the program is open to all ages and costs $2 per person.

PUBLIC HEARING(s):

Joint Hearing of the City of Avenal Successor Agency RDA Trust Obligations Fund/Public Finance Authority:

A. None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. None.

City Council went into closed session at 6:37 P.M.

CLOSED SESSION: (City/Successor Agency):

A. Conference with Real Property Negotiator(s) (Government Code § 54956.8).

It is the intent of this governing body to meet in Closed Session to confer with its real property negotiator(s) concerning the purchase, sale, exchange, or lease of real property by or for this agency as follows:

1. Property Description: **APNs: 040-320-009-000; 040-320-014-000**; **036-170-035-000; 038-260-048-000; 038-260-062-000; 038-260-061-000; 038-260-002-000** Negotiator(s): City Manager/City Attorney/City Engineer.
   Party with whom negotiating: Pearson Reality. Instructions to negotiator concerning: Terms of Payment.

B. CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR(S) (Government Code § 54957.6).

It is the intent of this governing body to meet in Closed Session to review its position and to instruct its designated representatives: Designated representatives- **City Manager**

C. PENDING LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9). It is the intention of this governing body to meet in closed-session concerning: Conference with legal counsel – ANTICIPATED LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9(d)). Significant exposure to litigation (Government Code § 54956.9(d)(2)). Number of potential cases is: 1.

Facts and circumstances clearly known to potential plaintiff (if any) that might result in litigation (Government Code § 54956.9(e)(2)):

a. *City of Avenal v. Lupe Villa, County of Kings, et al.,*
County's attempted to usurp and/or impersonate City Elections Official; Lupe Villa, County Elections Official confirmed at the 1/8/2026 Council meeting that no agreement exists for the County to provide any municipal recall election services on behalf of the City, stating he acted under prior City elections resolutions in handling municipal recall petitions.

D. PENDING LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9). It is the intention of this governing body to meet in closed-session concerning: Conference with legal counsel EXISTING LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9(d)(1)).

Parties, case/claim no: *County of Kings DA, v. City of Avenal*
(Kings County Superior Court, **Case No. 25CU0549**)

City Council came out of Closed Session at 8:29 P.M. with nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Consider Approval of City Manager Employment Agreement, Amendment #2.

Legal Counsel, Moses Diaz, provided some information under the Brown Act which requires an oral report of a recommendation for final action on salaries or salary schedule compensations. He therefore added that the proposal before the Council is to increase the City Manager's compensation to $195,000 per year which is shown in the agenda packet. He also added that that is the recommendation and is not yet final and is subject to a majority vote of the Council.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Verdugo motioned table this Item until the end of 2026. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Reynosa and motion failed due to lack of majority.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
AYES: Verdugo, Reynosa.
NOES: Hernandez, Gamez, Preciado.
ABSENT: None.
ABSTAIN: None

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado motioned to approve Resolution 2026-05. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Hernandez and motion carried.

ROLL CALL VOTE:
AYES: Preciado, Hernandez, Gamez.
NOES: Verdugo, Reynosa.
ABSENT: None.
ABSTAIN: None

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CLOSING COMMENTS:

Any Council member may request an item be placed on a future agenda, provided that a simple majority also support adding said item. Discussion or action on any item not on the current agenda is strictly prohibited. Closing comments are intended for Council members to report attendance of any special events and pertinent information back to the public.

City Manager Antony López shared that a soft opening for the Community Center will be taking place soon. Councilmember Verdugo stated that he hopes the Community Center will be completed next month. He also shared that, through his participation in meetings, he has learned that other cities are experiencing significant issues as well. Mayor Preciado shared details regarding his meetings with government officials and discussed several projects he looks forward to bringing to the City.

ADJOURNMENT:

City Council meeting was adjourned by Mayor Preciado at 8:44 P.M.

/s/ Karla Curiel
Karla Curiel, Deputy City Clerk