CITY OF AVENAL

Pistachio Capital of the World®"

REGULAR CITY COUNCIL/SUCCESSOR AGENCY/PF

A MEETING MARCH 12, 2026; 5:15 P.M.

AVENAL THEATER & EVENT CENTER, 233 E. KINGS ST., AVENAL, CA

Study Session: 4:30pm - Meet & Greet with Jacob McAfee, Fire Chief Candidate

Study session began at 4:48 P.M. and ended at 5:17 P.M.

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Preciado 5:37 P.M.

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF: Arellano, Lara, Reyes, Velasco, Curiel, Ortiz, Bermudez, López.

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.

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: ***Andrea López – Owner of La Carreta for 20+ years of service to Avenal***

League of Mexican American Women, presenting to: ***Mayor Alvaro Preciado for participating in a Bi-National Conference on Youth, Sports, and Fentanyl Prevention.***

Angie Ortiz, City Clerk, presented a Certificate of Recognition to Andrea Lopez, owner of the local restaurant La Carreta. Antony V. Lopez, City Manager, also thanked Andrea and her family for their contributions.

John Wilson, Kings County Fire Marshal, formally introduced himself and stated he looks forward to working with the City and the community. He also gave a brief report on the two recent fires in the City. Both fires are still under investigation. He ended his comments with a safety message on fire prevention.

Antony V. López, City Manager, requested City Council to consider an emergency item.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado motioned add Emergency THREAT TO PUBLIC SERVICES OR FACILITIES (Government Code § 54957(a)). - Consultation with Police Chief, Director of Public Safety and/or City Attorney to Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez and motion carried.

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

Public comment was closed at 5:48 P.M. by Mayor Preciado.

Public comment was re-opened at 6:30 P.M. by Mayor Preciado.

Martha Elizabeth, representing the Mexican American Ladies Society, presented a recognition to Mayor Preciado for his active contributions to organizations such as la Secretaria de Educación and others. Various certificates were also presented from the Cámara de Diputados, Mexico. Mayor Preciado spoke about the importance of international collaboration, noting that many people in our community are from other countries, including himself as a Mexican American.
Public comment was closed at 6:46 P.M. by Mayor Preciado.

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 February 12, 2026 Regular Meeting.
B. Consider Ratifying Continued Temporary Construction Easement to Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) at City Corporal Yard for Gas Pipeline Replacement Project.
C. Consider Re-appointment of Planning Commissioners *Sergio Ramirez* (Mayor Preciado) and *Amado Cervantez* (Councilman Hernandez).
D. Ratify acceptance of the construction of the Solar Photovoltaic Project at the WWTF and authorizing the City Manager to file a Notice of Completion with the Kings County Recorder's Office.
E. Ratify Resolution 2026-09 Expressing Support for The Dignidad (Dignity) Act, H.R. 4393.

Councilmember Verdugo suggested to revise February 12, 2026, minutes to reflect the full public statement made by City Manager Antony V. López during the previous meeting regarding him.
He also inquired on why Dignity Act Resolution needs ratification. Antony V. López clarified the procedure.
Staff reviewed and amended minutes during New Business.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Verdugo motioned approve Item B, C, D, & E agenda. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez and motion carried.

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

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

A. Consider Approving Employee Agreement, with Jacob S. McAfee for position of Fire Chief (Discussion/Action).

City Manager, Antony V. López, gave an overview of the hiring process for Fire Chief. Councilmember Verdugo commented that he does not support the approval of this agreement since he was not interviewed by a panel with

people who have qualified fire service experience. He stated he does not believe the hiring process was properly done. City Manager, Antony V. López, commented on the Police Department's hiring of a chief when it first began as a department. He stated that Jacobs' resume is lengthy, shows his level of experience, and that he is qualified. Mayor Preciado stated he also reviewed Jacobs' resume and feels comfortable with this decision. He also stated that City staff should not be micromanaged, as they are making decisions in the best interest of the community. Councilmember Verdugo stated that the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and no one else on the panel has professional fire service experience, and therefore the interview panel lacked fire service qualifications. Mayor Pro Tem Gamez added that Councilmember Verdugo cannot say the candidates have not been properly vetted, as staff has been diligent about hiring and establishing the Fire Department since last year.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado motioned approve Resolution 2026-14. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez and motion carried.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-14: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AVENAL ENTERING INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH JACOB S. MCAFEE FOR THE POSITION OF "FIRE CHIEF" FOR THE CITY OF AVENAL.

ACTIVITY REPORTS/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS & COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Activity Reports:

1. Public Works/Code Enforcement/Animal Control Departments Activity Report: Scott Davis, Public Works Director.

Scott Davis, presented report as submitted. Councilmember Verdugo stated there has been work on Corcoran. Scott responded that there was an issue during a leak on Kern St. Mayor Preciado acknowledged the Animal Shelter doing a good job and having them reach out to organizations for help. He also inquired on vehicle abatement program reimbursement. Scott explained the lengthy process of vehicle abatement and the department with more assistance, will be able to do more vehicle abatements. Councilmember Verdugo asked about a grant for animal control transportation vehicle. Scott explained the department did acquire a van and are working on getting it ready for use.

a. City Engineer's Activity Report: Javier Andrade –A&M Consulting Engineers

Diego, A&M Senior Engineer, presented the report as submitted. Councilmember Verdugo asked about the $300,000 grant. Diego explained the grant is for beautification in the community. Mayor Preciado inquired if the $4 million for the water tank is sufficient or if additional funding will be needed. Mayor Preciado also congratulated A&M for their grant work. City Manager, Antony V. López, shared information about an outreach event to be hosted by A&M Engineering at the Community Center on Friday, March 28th, from 4–6 PM.

2. IT Department Activity Report: Humberto Bermudez, IT Director.

Humberto Bermudez presented report as submitted. Mayor Preciado asked if there is a possibility for a kiosk in the lobby of city hall during lunch hour. Humberto stated he already began on that project.

3. PARCS Department Activity Report: Anna Lara, PARCS Director, Anna Lara.

Anna Lara presented report as submitted. Mayor Preciado acknowledged Anna's commitment to the community and stated City will continue with collaboration with agencies that bring additional resources to residents.

4. Police Department Activity Report: Cecilio Velasco, Chief of Police.

Chief Velasco presented report as submitted. Mayor Preciado congratulated Detective Ramos on becoming Corporal. Chief Velasco says he has great qualities and does a good job. Councilmember Hernandez inquired on

influx of electric scooters. Chief Velasco stated they have pushed information out to the community on electric scooter safety.

5. Community Development Activity Report: Joshua McDonnell, Contract City Planner, 4Creeks.

Teslla Ramirez, 4Creeks Representative, presented report as submitted.

6. Economic Development & Grant Writing Report: Emily Engelsgaard, Grants Manager, the CrisCom Company.

John Basmajian, The CrisCom Company representative, presented the report as submitted. Mayor Preciado spoke about his trip to Sacramento and meeting with officials to discuss public transportation solutions in rural communities.

PUBLIC HEARING(s):

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

A. None

OLD BUSINESS:

A. None.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Consider Approval of Police Officer Trainee Sponsorship for Alexi Reyes and Budget Allocation (Discussion/Action).

Chief Velasco presented the staff report as submitted. City Manager, Antony V. López, spoke about the previously sponsored cadet and stated Alexi Reyes is someone who will be committed to the community. Chief Velasco spoke on Alexi's character and how he will be an asset to the department. Assistant City Manager / Deputy City Clerk, Karla Curiel, also shared a few words regarding Alexi's promising commitment to the community. Community member Ginger Wallis stated she has seen Alexi interacting with the community and supports this sponsorship. Councilmember Verdugo stated he would like to see the agreement extended to five years for retention purposes. Chief Velasco and City Manager Antony V. López expressed that five years may be excessive. After approval, Alexi Reyes expressed his appreciation and commitment to the community.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez motioned approve Resolution 2026-15 and Resolution 2026-16. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Hernandez and motion carried.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-15:A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AVENAL REGARDING THE APPROVAL OF A POLICE OFFICER TRAINEE AGREEMENT FOR ALEXI REYES.

RESOLUTION 2026-16: APPROVAL OF POLICE OFFICER TRAINEE SPONSORSHIP FOR ALEXI REYES AND RELATED AGREEMENTS.

B. Consider adopting the latest revision to the City of Avenal Investment Policy (Discussion/Action).

Brian Arellano, Finance Manager, presented staff report as submitted. City Manager, Antony V. Lopez, expanded on the need to update the policy and who is authorized to make decisions.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Preciado motioned approve Resolution 2026-17. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Reynosa and motion carried.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-17: ADOPTING THE LATEST REVISION TO THE CITY OF AVENAL INVESTMENT POLICY

C. Introduction and First Reading of Multiple Ordinances Amending the Avenal Municipal Code (Discussion/Action).

City Manager Antony V. López, presented staff report as submitted. Mayor Pro Tem Gamez inquired on Ordinance 2026-01, if only City Manager is a signatory. López clarified that there is also a designee that can sign. Mayor Preciado added that it will be beneficial saving staff time by having ordinances updated. Councilmember Verdugo suggested more time to read through all ordinances.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez motioned approve Resolution 2026-18. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Hernandez and motion carried.

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

RESOLUTION 2026-18: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AVENAL WAIVING THE FULL READING OF CERTAIN ORDINANCES INTRODUCED AT THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 12, 2026.

D. Consider City of Avenal/Successor Agency's Approval of Minutes for February 12, 2026 Regular Meeting.

Staff was able to review the audio recording from the February 12th, 2026 Council Meeting and amend minutes as requested by Councilmember Verdugo. Assistant City Manager/Deputy City Clerk, Karla Curiel, clarified that minutes are not verbatim but rather summary minutes then read off the amended minutes.

Council Member/Successor Agency Member Gamez motioned approve amended minutes. The motion was seconded by Council Member/Successor Agency Member Verdugo and motion carried.

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

- Upcoming/Future Agenda Items to Consider.
- Correspondence/Announcements/Information/Closing Comments.

Assistant City Manager/Deputy City Clerk, Karla Curiel, shared information about the survey training next Thursday, March 19, 2026. City Manager, Antony V. López, shared information about multiple events on Friday the 13th. He also stated he will be attending an informational booth regarding recall efforts on Saturday. Mayor Preciado shared information about meetings with the California League of Cities. He also attended Judge Orndoff's memorial and the Valley Voices immigration workshop. He attended County meetings regarding efforts to make transportation safer, including Highway 269. He also shared information about his two-day trip to Sacramento and the resources available to assist rural communities.

City Council went into closed session at 9:34 P.M.

CLOSED SESSION: (City/Successor Agency):

A. 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.

B. 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**)

C. INITIATE LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9(d)(4)).
Conference with legal counsel - ANTICIPATED LITIGATION (Government Code § 54956.9(d)(4)).
Initiation of Litigation (Paragraph (4) of subdivision (d) of Gov. Code § 54956.9)).
Number of potential cases is: __1__.

ADJOURNMENT:

City Council came out of Closed Session at 10:54 P.M. with nothing to report and meeting was adjourned.

/s/ Karla Curiel
Karla Curiel, Deputy City Clerk