

CITY OF LOS BANOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2026

***ACTION MINUTES** – These minutes are prepared to depict action taken for agenda items presented to the City Council. For a detailed account of this meeting, refer to the video recording available on YouTube, which serves as a permanent record.*

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Amabile called the City Council Meeting to order at the hour of 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Police Chief Reyna led the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL – MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL PRESENT: Council Members Mitzy Perez – District 1, Refugio LLamas – District 2, Marcus Chavez – District 3, Deborah Lewis – District 4, Mayor Michael Amabile

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: City Manager Than, City Attorney Lerner, Assistant City Clerk Lin, City Treasurer Lawrence, Community & Economic Development Director Souza Elms, Police Chief Reyna, Public Works Director Via, Interim Fire Chief Dorenbush, Finance Director Moreno, Parks & Recreation Director Heim, Human Resources Director Carlos

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion by Lewis, seconded by Chavez to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion carried by the affirmative action of all Council Members present.

PUBLIC FORUM: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS ON ANY ITEM OF PUBLIC INTEREST THAT IS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE CITY; INCLUDES AGENDA AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS. NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS. SPEAKERS ARE LIMITED TO A FIVE (5) MINUTE PRESENTATION. DETAILED GUIDELINES ARE POSTED ON THE COUNCIL CHAMBER INFORMATIONAL TABLE. Mayor Amabile opened the public forum. JAMES MOORE announced that volunteers are needed for the Integrated Waste Management Local Task Force. Four community citizen volunteers are being sought to help provide recommendations as part of the required 2026 Cal Recycle plan update. Interested residents may apply online or through the City Clerk's office. CHRIS a member of downtown spoke about the impact of drug addiction on homelessness, stating that substance abuse is a major cause of homelessness and related issues in the community. He urged the City to focus on helping individuals overcome addiction and called for more effective solutions to support homeless residents and improve outcomes. No one else came forward to speak and the public forum was closed.

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA. Motion by LLamas, seconded by Perez to approve the consent agenda items as follows: Check Register for #258002 – #258189 in the Amount of \$2,199,228.12; City Council Meeting Minutes for April 15, 2026; City Council Special Meeting Minutes for May 5, 2026; City Council Special Meeting Minutes for May 8, 2026; City Council Meeting Minutes for May 20, 2026; Measure H Citizens' Oversight Committee Financial Report; Measure P Oversight Committee Financial Report; City Council Resolution No. 7096 – Approving a Reimbursement Agreement with Anderson Homes for the Fire Station 4 Frontage Improvements, Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Agreement, and Amending the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget by Increasing Appropriations in the Emergency Operations Center, Capital Project Fund in the Amount of \$242,208.51; City Council Resolution No. 7097 – Approving the Acceptance of a Walmart Community Program Grant, Number 92339192, in the Amount of \$2,500 and Amending the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year Budget by Increasing the Appropriation Amount for Expenditures and Revenues in the Amount of \$2,500; City Council Resolution No. 7098 – Approving the Software Service Agreement with GovInvest, Inc. dba TrueComp and Authorize the City Manager to Execute the Agreement for Labor Costing and Pension Software in the Amount of \$62,250 for 36 Months; City Council Resolution No. 7099 – Awarding Contract for

Publication of Legal Notices/Legal Advertisements for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2027 and Authorizing and Directing the City Manager to Execute Agreement; City Council Resolution No. 7100 – Approving Amendment No. 2 to the Landscape Maintenance Services Agreement with Ronny's Inc to Assist with Emergency Weed Abatement; City Council Resolution No. 7101 – Calling and Giving Notice of the Holding of a General Municipal Election to be Held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026 for the Election of Certain Officers: Mayor "At-Large" for a Full Term of Two (2) Years, Council Member for District 2 for a Full Term of Four (4) Years, Council Member for District 3 for a Full Term of Four (4) Years, City Clerk "At-Large" for a Full Term of Four (4) Years, and City Treasurer "At-Large" for a Full Term of Four (4) Years as Required by the Provisions of the Laws of the State of California; City Council Resolution No. 7102 – Requesting that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Merced Consolidate a General Municipal Election to be Held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026 with the California Statewide General Election to be held on the Date Pursuant to Section 10403 of the Election Code; Ordinance No. 1216 – Amending and Restating Article 30 Chapter 3 of Title 9 of the Los Banos Municipal Code Relating to Accessory Dwelling Units to Implement New State Law Requirements Relating to Accessory Dwelling Units. The motion carried by the affirmative action of all Council Members present.

PUBLIC HEARING – TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION OF THE LEVY OF THE PROPOSED ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR 2026-2027 FISCAL YEAR FOR LANDSCAPING AND LIGHTING DISTRICTS NOS. 1-7 AND 9-19.

City Engineer Cozad presented the staff report, which included a PowerPoint presentation, explaining that the assessments are collected through property taxes and fund the maintenance of landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, parks, and other public improvements within each district. Proposed assessment increases of 5% or 10% are intended to help districts cover maintenance costs and become financially self-sufficient, including addressing a deficit in the Meadowlands district.

Mayor Amabile opened the public hearing. KATHY BALLARD a resident of District 4 Asked why District 4 is receiving a 10% assessment increase and requested an explanation for the higher rate. She also raised concerns about overgrown landscaping and vegetation along sidewalks and streets, asking whether those areas are covered by the Landscaping and Lighting District and if the proposed assessment increases would result in better maintenance of those areas. ANN McCAULEY College Greens resident, expressed concerns about dim street lighting in her neighborhood and asked whether the City evaluates lighting levels. She also raised concerns about overgrown grass and poorly maintained landscaping in some areas, questioning who is responsible for upkeep. She encouraged stronger code enforcement and improved maintenance to help preserve neighborhood appearance. No one else came forward to speak and the public hearing was closed.

Director Heim responded to questions about landscape ground area and noted volatile expenses within the districts. Director Via addressed street light lumens, explaining there is no recent assessment in some areas and that lighting must balance safety without being overly bright. He also reiterated that Landscaping and Lighting Districts (LLDs) are intended to be fully self-sustaining. City Manager Than provided additional context regarding District 4 (College Greens), and City Engineer Cozad contributed to the discussion on maintenance and district operations. Council Member LLamas asked about how a currently unfunded district could be created and was told by Director Via that it would require a ballot measure with 51% voter approval. When asked what fund would cover those costs in the meantime, Mr. Via explained it would come from the general fund. Mr. LLamas also questioned the 10% annual increase, suggesting it appeared to be "catching up." Director Via explained that each district is based on a budget system dating back to 1988 and that increases are capped at 10%, meaning adjustments occur gradually and primarily reflect cost-of-living and operational changes rather than direct catch-up. Mayor Amabile noted that the increase would amount to approximately \$20–\$40 per year and emphasized the importance of funding these services through the district rather than relying on the general fund.

Motion by Lewis, seconded by Chavez to adopt City Council Resolution No. 7103 – Confirming Diagram, Assessment, and Levying Assessments for Landscaping and

Lighting Districts Numbers 1-7 and Numbers 9-19 for the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year. The motion carried by the affirmative action of all Council Members present.

PUBLIC HEARING – TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT FOR THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 CITY BUDGET AND THE 2026-2027 APPROPRIATION LIMITATION.

Finance Director Moreno presented the staff report, which included a PowerPoint presentation, describing it as a financial plan that reflects council priorities, required revenues, and planned expenditures, and noting it is a “living document” that can change as conditions evolve. The general fund totals about \$29.5 million in revenue and \$27.7 million in operating expenditures, with major funding going to police (\$13.3 million) and fire (\$2.85 million). Revenue sources include property tax, sales tax, permits, and service charges. The general fund remains structurally balanced. The city’s capital budget is one of its largest, with about \$71 million in projects across all funds, including street rehabilitation, infrastructure upgrades, fire station and emergency operations center projects, parks, and water/sewer improvements. The budget includes 27 new positions across multiple departments to support service delivery. Enterprise funds (water, wastewater, airport, solid waste) and internal service funds (fleet, facilities, IT) support infrastructure and operations. Fund reserves remain strong, including an estimated \$15 million–\$15.4 million in unallocated general fund balance and additional reserve accounts for stability, homelessness, parks, and pension obligations. Measure H and Measure P continue to provide funding for public safety and essential services, totaling millions in personnel, equipment, and capital needs. Citywide revenues are projected at \$122 million with expenditures of \$165 million, and the city remains well below its state appropriation limit of \$144 million, ensuring compliance. The council will hold a public hearing, with final budget adoption scheduled for June 17.

Mayor Amabile opened the public hearing. Kathy Ballard asked questions about several capital budget items. She asked whether the design service center referred to the police annex and whether Measure H funds were being used for that project, noting what appeared to be remaining Measure H balances. She also asked for clarification on a line item for sign relocation. She questioned the pickleball court lighting project, stating she believed it had already been approved in a prior budget and asked whether it had been removed or carried over. Finally, she asked about the Colorado Ballpark funding, noting a discrepancy between a previously discussed \$15 million project and the current \$800,000 allocation, and asked whether the city was funding it in phases and what the \$550,000 referenced in the budget covered. ANNA McCAULEY asked about the city’s street maintenance program, noting that in previous years streets were regularly maintained through scraping and slurry sealing every few years, which kept roads in better condition. She expressed concern that this routine maintenance approach appears to have declined, leading to worsening street conditions, and asked what the current plan is for restoring or continuing that type of preventative pavement maintenance program. No one else came forward to speak and the public hearing was closed.

Director Heim explained that the pickleball court lighting project was not completed in the current fiscal year and will roll over into 2026–27, and he also referenced updates related to Colorado Ballpark. Director Souza Elms clarified that the Development Services Center (DSC) is not funded by Measure H, noting that \$8 million has been assigned and appropriated. She also stated the digital sign will be relocated further east near Holt to meet Caltrans standards. Director Via addressed street maintenance practices, explaining that fog sealing was previously done on a regular cycle but was discontinued following concerns about cost-effectiveness. The city now plans to use slurry sealing instead, which includes sand and provides better rehabilitation benefits. Mayor Amabile emphasized that the meeting was a public forum and not a budget adoption, noting it was his 41st budget. He highlighted strong fiscal management and reserves. Council Member LLamas acknowledged the large budget and emphasized the need for staffing and infrastructure to ensure residents receive the services they are taxed for. Council Member Lewis stressed the importance of maintaining infrastructure and service delivery capacity, noting improvements are coming and encouraging the public not to be discouraged. Council Member Chavez thanked staff for their work on the budget. Council Member Perez thanked staff and praised Director Moreno’s explanations, also expressing support for increased staffing as the city grows. Mayor Amabile also clarified that Colorado Ballpark is still moving forward, with the splash pad being replaced by a planned aquatic center, and future funding and design updates will continue. Director Moreno

thanked staff and emphasized the city's focus on providing services and delivering results to residents.

No formal action was taken as this item will be considered for approval at the June 17, 2026 meeting.

CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO. 7104 – APPROVING THE NEW AGENDA FORMAT. City Manager Than presented the staff report on proposed changes to the city's agenda format in response to new state requirements and efforts to improve meeting efficiency and public accessibility. He explained that the city is working toward returning to the council chambers on July 1, and the updated agenda format includes several key changes required for compliance with SB 707. These changes include implementing two-way audio and video capabilities through a Zoom platform so members of the public can attend meetings remotely, participate in public comment, and engage with council discussions when appropriate. Mr. Than also noted that the revised agenda structure will include additional legal notices and disclosures, such as Levine Act campaign contribution statements and updated government code references, to ensure full compliance and transparency prior to each meeting. He highlighted that one structural change removes a previously included agenda approval step, clarifying that this item is not required by law and had historically been added through staff or council preference rather than mandate. Another major adjustment is the reduction of public comment time from five minutes to three minutes per speaker, aligning the city with standard practice used by other jurisdictions in Merced County. Mr. Than explained that this change is intended to improve meeting efficiency while still ensuring that all members of the public have a fair opportunity to speak. He added that council retains the ability to adjust time limits or manage large turnout items during meetings if needed. Overall, City Manager Than emphasized that the new format is designed to modernize meetings, comply with state law, improve accessibility for remote participants, and streamline the agenda process while maintaining transparency and public participation.

Council Member Lewis suggested adding the word "surrender" to the public forum language in item 7 for clarity. Council Member Chavez asked about the change from five-minute to three-minute public comment limits. City Attorney Lerner and Mayor Amabile clarified that the three-minute standard aligns with county practice and can still be adjusted by council for specific agenda items when needed. Council Member Llamas also asked questions about the new three-minute rule and how it would be applied during meetings.

Mayor Amabile invited the public to come forward and speak. Scott Silveira, a Los Banos resident, noted that three-minute limits are standard in other jurisdictions and that time limits are occasionally necessary for large turnout items. Anna McCauley expressed support for the Zoom option but asked how staff would handle disruptions or inappropriate images during virtual participation. City Attorney Lerner explained procedures for addressing "Zoom bombing" while maintaining First Amendment protections. No one else came forward to speak.

Council Member Lewis asked whether online participants would be required to show their face, referencing other agencies that use audio-only participation. Discussion followed about whether video requirements should be standardized. Council Member Lewis supported a consistent policy approach, while Mayor Amabile noted that in some agencies he participates in, video is required for board members, though policies vary by organization. Council Member Perez supported allowing audio-only participation, noting it could increase public participation, and asked about Spanish translation requirements for agendas. City Attorney Lerner confirmed that translation support is now a legal requirement under new law.

Motion by Lewis, seconded by Llamas to adopt City Council Resolution No. 7104 – Approving the New Agenda Format. The motion carried by the affirmative action of all Council Members present.

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING WHETHER THE QUESTION OF AN APPOINTED CITY TREASURER POSITION SHOULD BE PLACED ON THE

NOVEMBER 3, 2026 GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT. City Attorney Lerner presented the staff report.

City Attorney Lerner presented the staff report on the proposal to place a measure on the November 2026 ballot regarding whether the City Treasurer position should remain elected or become appointed. She explained that the item was brought back at the direction of Council and is separate from any previous ballot measure decisions. Ms. Lerner confirmed the proposal applies only to the City Treasurer position and not the City Clerk. She also outlined procedural requirements, noting that if Council wished to move forward, direction would be needed immediately due to strict election deadlines, with formal ballot language returning for adoption at a future meeting. She added that the estimated cost of placing the measure on the ballot is approximately \$7,500 and would be part of an already scheduled election cycle.

Council Member Lewis spoke in support of moving the item forward, emphasizing that the intent is to improve efficiency in city operations and align the structure of the City Treasurer role with the modern complexity of municipal finance. He stated that the proposal is not intended to overturn the will of the voters but to allow the public to reconsider the issue based on current conditions and operational needs. Council Member Chavez requested clarification that the measure applies only to the City Treasurer and not the City Clerk, which Ms. Lerner confirmed. Council Member LLamas expressed opposition and raised concerns about revisiting an issue that voters previously rejected, questioning both the necessity and the cost of the proposal. Ms. Lerner confirmed the cost estimate and explained the procedural process for placing the measure on the ballot. Council discussion continued with Council Member LLamas asking about the duties and accountability structure of the City Treasurer. Ms. Lerner and staff explained that the City Treasurer role is defined by California Government Code and city policy and is largely ministerial, with many responsibilities carried out in coordination with the Finance Department. City Manager Than added that the position was originally created to meet minimum statutory requirements, but as cities have grown, financial operations have become more complex and specialized. He noted that many California cities have transitioned from elected to appointed treasurer positions to reflect this shift and improve operational efficiency.

Mayor Amabile invited the public to come forward and speak. ANNA MCCAULEY questioned the relatively low stipend of approximately \$100 per month, raising concerns about whether it is appropriate given the responsibilities involved in overseeing public finances. KATHY BALLARD asked what would occur if no candidate ran for the position, and City Attorney Lerner confirmed that in such a case, the City Council would have the authority to appoint someone to fill the vacancy. Additional discussion followed regarding whether compensation is sufficient to attract qualified individuals and whether the role should carry greater defined responsibilities. CITY TREASURER LUCY LAWRENCE also addressed the Council, stating that while she has extensive private-sector financial experience, municipal finance operates differently and requires specific governmental knowledge. She explained that she supports the concept of the Treasurer functioning more closely within the Finance Department structure, noting that she does not sign off on financial matters unless she fully understands and reviews them. She emphasized that most technical financial responsibilities are already handled by the Finance Department.

Council Member Lewis further referenced that former Treasurer Kim Tomas previously served in the role as a city employee working within the Finance Department, highlighting that this structure has historical precedent. Council members and staff also discussed how the Treasurer role has evolved over time as city budgets and financial systems have grown in complexity, reinforcing the broader discussion of efficiency, accountability, and modernization of city operations.

Council provided consensus direction for staff to return with a resolution and ballot language to place the City Treasurer elected vs. appointed question on the November 2026 ballot.

CITY DEPARTMENT REPORTS.

Community & Economic Development. Director Souza Elms stated that a public hearing at the Planning Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10th at 6:00 p.m. in the Police Department training room (1111 G Street) regarding Antojitos Toxicos, a cottage food operation at 1608 Thistle Lane involving pre-packaged non-perishable foods. The item will be reviewed as part of the permitting process.

Finance. No report.

Fire. Interim Fire Chief Dorenbush reported that a new fire truck is expected to arrive in California within the next few weeks, with the department anticipating taking ownership shortly thereafter. This update was presented as positive news for the Fire Department.

Human Resources. No report

Parks & Recreation. Director Heim reported a busy schedule of upcoming community events, including Crossroads High School graduation, sober grad night, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament on June 13, and a movie night in the park. Staff highlighted that the basketball tournament will cost \$20 per three-person team and is intended to encourage youth participation. Parks and Rec also announced the addition of a “Map Me” feature on the city website, which allows the public to view completed and upcoming park projects as a communication and transparency tool. An update was provided on the upcoming onboarding of the Tyler recreation registration system in July, which will align with the city’s new finance system for improved online registration and payment processing. Staff also noted that youth soccer registration is underway, with some divisions already filled. The update also referenced broader modernization efforts, including improvements to payment systems and bringing recreation services up to current technological standards.

Police. Chief Reyna reported that on June 25th, three additional police officers will graduate from the Fresno Police Academy, which will help reduce current staffing vacancies to about three positions, with several promising candidates currently in the hiring process. He also announced that a Community Services Officer will begin work the following day. Additionally, he provided an update on the upcoming Sober Grad Night event scheduled for June 5th at the community center beginning at 10:00 p.m., noting that registration is available through the Los Banos Police Department Facebook page via QR code.

Public Works. Director Via reported that staff crews have completed asphalt overlays at the intersections of 7th and I Street and 6th and H Street, along with additional alley overlay work currently underway and continuing into the following day. The department noted that downtown alley overlay projects are in the final design phase and expected to move forward this summer. A pre-construction meeting has also been scheduled for next week for the 2026 Phase 1 overlay project, which will begin construction soon after. Additionally, the new traffic signal at Ortigalita and Pioneer has been energized, with final programming and coordination expected within the next two to three weeks before it becomes fully operational.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT. City Attorney Lerner reported that the City Attorney’s Office has officially relocated to the Miller & Lux building. She described the new office space as an improvement and acknowledged that the move required coordination across multiple city departments and staff. She expressed appreciation to the City Council, City Manager, colleagues, and especially the project lead, Patrick Arambel, for their work in successfully completing the relocation.

CITY MANAGER REPORT. City Manager Than reported that he, along with Council Members LLamas and Chavez, attended a recent public meeting at Pacheco High School, where they engaged in productive discussions with community members and heard concerns related to local issues. He noted that the discussion is ongoing and additional meetings are scheduled for the following week to explore potential solutions related to the school and surrounding concerns. He also highlighted the current budget cycle, stating that the city is working with a record \$160 million budget, including approximately \$70 million in capital projects. He emphasized that this represents the largest budget in the city’s history and that staff is prepared to move forward with

implementation. He noted that these investments will result in visible improvements across the community, particularly in areas such as roads, water infrastructure, and other public services, as well as increased service capacity overall. He concluded by thanking the Council for their consideration and support.

CITY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

DEBORAH LEWIS – DISTRICT 4: Reported attending several recent events, including the Los Banos Unified School District Early Education Center ribbon cutting on May 21st, where she noted the facility was well designed and made effective use of its space. She also attended Memorial Day services at both the National Cemetery and the local cemetery alongside the Mayor, honoring service members who gave their lives for the country. Additionally, she attended the Mid-Valley Disposal Recycle Center ribbon cutting in Fresno on May 28th, where she highlighted a \$12 million facility upgrade partially funded by a \$4 million state grant. She described advanced recycling technology used at the facility, including AI-assisted sorting systems and robotic components that separate non-paper materials from paper streams, as well as magnetic systems used to extract metal materials. She noted that these innovations are part of ongoing state-driven recycling requirements and reflect significant modernization efforts in waste processing operations.

MITZY PEREZ – DISTRICT 1: Reported no items but expressed appreciation to staff for their continued work and efforts.

REFUGIO LLAMAS – DISTRICT 2: Noted that Parks & Recreation provides a guide highlighting local activities, park locations, and amenities, and encouraged residents to use it to see available activities in Los Banos. He also thanked department heads for their work on the budget and recognized the Police Department for addressing community concerns such as speeding.

MARCUS CHAVEZ – DISTRICT 3: Reported attending a meeting at Pacheco High School regarding the Ward and B Street intersection, noting productive discussions and thanking the school and district representatives for hosting. He expressed anticipation for follow-up meetings to develop solutions. He also commented positively on ongoing roadwork in the city and noted that additional projects are planned.

MICHAEL S. AMABILE – MAYOR: Reported visiting Charleston School to present certificates to students who memorized the 50 states, U.S. presidents, and parts of the Constitution, noting appreciation for school engagement. He also discussed participation in budget meetings, including the Peninsula Clean Energy board, and shared that the organization will be renamed West Light Energy. He praised the city's current budget process and staff performance, calling it the strongest he has seen in his experience. The Mayor also noted ongoing coordination with the school district on future school sites to ensure proper infrastructure planning as the city grows. He concluded by announcing the next council meeting will be held at the new chambers in July and adjourned the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT. The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

APPROVED:

/s/ Michael S. Amabile
Michael S. Amabile, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Vionna Lin
Vionna Lin, Assistant City Clerk