

**Minutes**

City of Soledad  
Joint City Council/Successor Agency/Housing Authority/Successor Housing Agency/  
Regular Meeting

February 15, 2023

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Velazquez called the Joint City Council/ Successor Agency/ Housing Authority/ Successor Housing Agency/ Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

The Following Councilmembers/Agencymembers were present when the meeting was called to order:

Mayor/Chair	Anna M. Velazquez
Mayor Pro Tem/Vice Chair	Ben Jimenez, Jr.
Councilmember/Agencymember	Alejandro Chavez
Councilmember/Agencymember	Maria Corralejo
Councilmember/Agencymember	Fernando Cabrera

**THE FOLLOWING COUNCILMEMBER WAS ABSENT**

- None

**PUBLIC COMMENT - CLOSED SESSION ITEMS**

- None

**CLOSED SESSION**

1. The City Council of the City of Soledad will recess to closed session to consider personnel matters pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(B)(1)-City Manager Recruitment
2. The City Council will recess to closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(a) to confer with its attorney regarding pending litigation which has been initiated formally and to which the City is a party: Claim of Alvarez

### **CLOSED SESSION REPORT**

1. City Attorney Mike Rodriguez reported with respect to item no. 1, the council received a briefing on the status of the City Manager recruitment. No other reportable action taken.
2. City Attorney Mike Rodriguez reported with respect to item no. 2, the council considered the claim of Alvarez and unanimously decided to reject the claim and gave direction to legal counsel. No other reportable action taken.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Councilmember Maria Corralejo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this time Mayor Velazquez took a moment of silence to honor the victims of the mass shooting that took place at Michigan State University. Society has seen this type of tragedy becoming a normalized trend. We should do our part as well in making sure this does not continue. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their family during this time of tragedy.

Mayor Velazquez also took moment of silence to honor King City Councilwoman Darlene Acosta, who lost her battle to cancer. She worked at Sun Street Centers and dedicated her life to serving others and serving youth. She helped those who were in drug addiction, and rehabilitation. The When we think about Sun Street Centers, we think about Darlene Acosta. She was there for the families, youth, and parents. Our hearts and prayers are with Darlene and her family at this time. May she rest in peace.

The council and public took a moment of silence at this time.

### **ADDITIONS/MODIFICATIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were no additions or modification to the agenda.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Resident of Soledad Monico Gonzales said he is the new Soledad Little League President, and he is hoping to get help with the financing for the insurance needed to have the games at the parks. The insurance was one million, but it has now been changed to two million. The league is in jeopardy now because they are also in need of buying needed equipment that they do not already have. When he took over the Little League, he started completely over. There was nothing left over from the last season in regard to gear. He is asking the council if there is any way they can help with the balance of the insurance fees. He had to pay past owed dues to Charter 9, the amount paid was \$1,800, and that is so Soledad can be in the league. The fees for the two-million-dollar insurance is \$2,800.

Mayor Velazquez said the City does have his contact information and the Interim City Manager will look into the matter and the City will contact him.

There were no further public comments.

### **YOUTH COUNCIL'S REPORT**

Youth Council member Angelina Flores and Youth Council member Liliana Negrette gave a brief update regarding youth council efforts.

Mayor Velazquez asked the Youth Councilmembers to provide a list of future meetings so the Community & Economic Development team will be able to join the meetings.

### **COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS**

1. A presentation of the City Council of the City of Soledad Proclaiming February 2023 as Black History Month in the City of Soledad. Monterey County NAACP 2023 President Lyndon Tarver was present to accept the proclamation on behalf of the Monterey County NAACP. Monterey County NAACP President Lyndon Tarver thanked the council for the proclamation, and he looks forward working with the City of Soledad moving forward.

### **MEETING RECESS**

Mayor Velazquez recessed the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

### **MEETING RECONVENED FROM RECESS**

Mayor Velazquez reconvened at 6:44 p.m.

Mayor Velazquez also recognized City of Soledad resident and micro business owner of Personal Touches Jeanette Nickerson. She presented a certificate of recognition on behalf of California State Senators Anna Caballero and Assemblymember Robert Rivas. Mrs. Jeanette Nickerson and her husband were both present in the meeting to accept the proclamation. She thanked the council and said it is a privilege for them to be able to receive the proclamation.

### **MEETING RECESS**

Mayor Velazquez recessed the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

### **MEETING RECONVENED FROM RECESS**

Mayor Velazquez reconvened at 6:48 p.m.

2. Public Works Director Don Wilcox presented information regarding the Award Notification for the Urban Community Drought Relief Grant Program for Soledad's Recycled Water Conveyance Project. Assistant Engineer Alex Ramos assisted in presenting a PowerPoint presentation.

Mayor Velazquez congratulated the Public Works Department for the grant. She thanked them for being consistent in their efforts in pursuing the grant.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez also thanked and congratulated Public Works Director Don Wilcox and the Public Works Department for their efforts and for their consistency in moving this forward. Mayor Velazquez said that Soledad was also the leader in bringing the first wind turbine.

Councilmember Corralejo also thanked and congratulated Public Works Director Don Wilcox. She has heard from the Public Works team of the great leadership that Don is. The whole team has the same goals in mind. She is looking forward to having a full staffed department and, hopefully soon, a full maintenance shop and equipment.

Councilmember Chavez thanked Public Works Director Don Wilcox and the team for their efforts and accomplishment of getting the grant. In 2006, that council then, began moving this forward even though everyone said not to do it. The City went into debt because of the plant, but the foresight the council had at the time, has given us the ability to have a great current outcome, including the current shopping center that is now starting to grow. Parks used to be used to facilitate water run-off, and they would get completely filled with water. Over the years, because of different projects that have happened, such as the pipes being put in on Gabilan Street and San Vicente, we are not seeing the water flooding like we used to see. Pipes for recycling were put in years ago and now those improvements will continue because of this grant. He thanked the City for the work that was done then and the work that is being done now. Not everyone understands how long some of these projects take, but many of them take a very long time for development to happen.

Councilmember Cabrera asked for further explanation of the mapping out of pipes.

Public Works Director Don Wilcox explained further.

Councilmember Chavez said he realized the City is going through the permitting process for the parks, and would like to know if the School District is a part of the permitting process.

Public Works Manager Don Wilcox said this project was discussed with the Soledad Unified School District Superintendent and they did write a support letter that went along with the grant application. They are open and excited about what can be. They do not have funding for this, so the City put in enough grant to convert the school properties as well.

Councilmember Cabrera asked if the system would also be going further north into the annexation.

Public Works Director Don Wilcox said there was always an intend to extend it out that way. He gave special thanks to staff and the grant writer Greg Jaquez and the MNS team who delivered this current grant and the Orchard Park grant.

Mayor Velazquez said when work does start on this project, please be sure to have celebration for the event.

There were no public comments.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

There were no public comments.

**Motion:** Councilmember Cabrera made motion to approve C-1, C-2, C-3. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Chavez and carried by unanimous vote:

**Action**

Ayes: Cabrera, Chavez, Corralejo, Jimenez, Velazquez  
Noes: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: None

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

C-1. a. Joint City Council/Successor Agency Special Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2023

b. Joint City Council/Successor Agency Regular Meeting Minutes of January 18, 2023

C-2. **Warrants**

050331 - 050437

C-3. Resolution No. 5918, A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Soledad Approving the Rotary Club of Soledad's Request for the Use of the Community Center for their Annual Reverse Draw Fundraiser on March 16, 2023

## **PUBLIC HEARING NO. 1**

- Receive the Staff report
- Open the Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.
- Close the Public Hearing at 8:02 p.m.
- Council Action

### PH-1. Transition to District-Based Elections for Councilmembers- Proposed District Maps- Public Hearing #3

Attorney Mike Rodriguez presented the staff report, and also introduced National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said the purpose of the presentation is for the presentation of three maps that have been drafted as first drafts. The council will be able to review the maps and National Demographics Corporation will receive feedback from the council and members of the public, as to additional maps or revisions that may be requested. She continued to explain further on the item.

Mayor Velazquez thanked National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks for the presentation. She does want to make sure the Community is able to give their input. This is going to be a change for the City of Soledad. It is important for the public to know the tool there does not allow the public to develop the map.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said on 12/14 the council had asked to see both 4 and 5 district maps, but he does not see the fifth district was included.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said her team is currently in the process of drafting the fifth map, and that map will be ready next week. They will not be able to receive feedback on that until the next hearing is scheduled. However, those maps will be made available to the public and the council, and on the website.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said this is important because this will give the public the opportunity to consider and give feedback, as well as the council.

Mayor Velazquez said she would like to clarify regarding the fifth district map being requested; she does not believe that was a consensus of the council. She knows that Mayor Pro Tem did request it, but she did not request it.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said Mayor Velazquez was not present at the Special meeting of 12/14/2022.

Mayor Velazquez said she was present at the first meeting, when the subject was brought up.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said this request happened at the second meeting on 12/14/2022 and Mayor Velazquez was not present at that meeting.

Mayor Velazquez asked if the entire council requested at that meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said there was a consensus among the council that was present that date.

Councilmember Cabrera said he does remember Mayor Pro Tem Lara requesting it at the first meeting, or asking if it was something that was possible.

Councilmember Chavez agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez and said it was requested during the second meeting which was the Special meeting of 12/14/2022.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said the minutes of Special meeting of 12/14/2022 do reflect the request of the four and five district option. His recollection is that there was agreement with that.

Mayor Velazquez thanked City Attorney Mike Rodriguez for the clarification.

Councilmember Corralejo said at the 12/14/2022 Special meeting, she asked how long these districts would be in place and the answer she was given was 10 years. She was also thinking having 4 to 5 districts since there is a lot of development coming up.

Councilmember Chavez it would make more sense for there to be census tracks on the maps, so that when the public is drawing a map, they can see the population of what they are doing. When the County did this same process, the public could play with it, and they had the ability to be able to see what the numbers were. It would be best to have a tool such as that, instead of trying to figure out how to draw it, and come up with numbers, and putting pieces together. When he was a part of a group who did this years ago, it was overly complicated. He would like to see 5 maps so there are options. He is concerned there will be one area with two councilmembers, one being the Mayor and the other being a councilmember. It would be best for the public to have options. He believes it would be good to have Front Street as two districts, so there is better representation for that main area.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said if the council would like to move forward with the public having an online mapping tool for the public to use, that can be done. That is offered to many clients and whatever the contract said the cost for that addition is, is what it is.

Mayor Velazquez said she was also in the understanding that when the council approved the contract, the online tool was an interactive map.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said she will be sure to have this addition set up by next week. The good thing about this addition is there will be two separate versions: one for four districts and one for five districts. There is also a narrated YouTube tutorial tool as well.

Councilmember Cabrera asked why the maps are drawn North to South and not East to West, or diagonal. He would like the tool to show the variation of the population. He would also like to know what elements there are to having four districts or five districts. His understanding is that

there are four councilmembers and one at-large Mayor, meaning the whole town votes for that. In the first meeting he heard someone say they wanted five maps because they wanted to rotate the position of the Mayor, he does not believe this is a good idea because this would mean elected officials would be the ones making that decision, but this position should be voted for by the City of Soledad. If there were four maps for the four districts, each district would be represented by two people, the councilmember from that district and the Mayor, and that would take the conflict away of having two councilmembers in one area. In regard to the business area, each person will be voting based on their residence, so even if one person has a business in that area, they will not be able to vote for two different candidates. He believes the council should be clear about their objectives for this, he does not see any reason to have a fifth district, but he does think it is a good idea to have more than four maps so that people have options. He would like to know how the final maps will be decided and how long does the council have to make the selection.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said the good news is, even if 50 maps are received, the consultant will group those maps into key similarities or groups, so the council will be able to see what approach works or does not work. By State law, there needs to be five public hearings spread over at least four weeks, so if the council chooses to add additional meetings, the council can do so. The council can also add a workshop for the public so they can learn how to use the tool. As for the four districts versus five districts, as the council stands today, NDC would draw the four district maps, but looking at future possible changes, a fifth map can be drawn and considered. The City Attorney would be able to address what it would take to change the structure.

Councilmember Cabrera said with that in mind, he does not think the council should plan on something that is not there. The growing will not be for another 20 years.

Mayor Velazquez said the council is mandated to use the 2020 census figures.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said National Demographics Corporation Consultant said they want the residents to know what district they are in and what councilmember they will be represented by.

Mayor Velazquez said she noticed that all the maps are drawn around where councilmember live; maps can be drawn differently as long as they continue to meet all the different data points that are apart of the map.

National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks said that is correct. It is legally permissible to consider where all the different councilmembers live, and there is other information that is being considered. If a map is adopted where there are two more councilmembers in the same district, the sequence of the election will need to be determined and the decision will need to be made on if that area will need to be one of the first ones that switches over from at-large to by-district and that might mean that one of the two councilmembers would need to decide if they want to run for reelection in the middle of their term. It creates additional decisions for the council to make.

Mayor Velazquez thanked National Demographics Corporation Consultant Kristen Parks for the clarification. Her preference is to have four districts and an elected Mayor. She would like to hear from the public and the council If the City chooses to have a five district and from an at-large Mayor to an appointed Mayor. The council, many years ago, put this on the ballot and the voters chose this because this is what they wanted. Se sees this as moving back to a governance system. As the City is going through this process, she wants to make sure everyone understands, it is not a politized process. The City needs to look at what are the benefits to the residents. What will allow the residents to move forward and vote for the members of the governance body as a council. Look at how the participation and opportunities can be increased to be sure everyone is a part of this process.

Soledad resident Fernando Ansaldo Sanchez said he agrees with Councilmember Chaves in being able to work with the maps more interactively. He printed out the maps yesterday and the process took long and was overly complicated. He understands why people might think it is good to keep neighborhoods together, but we know how Soledad is divided, especially the socially economic status. On all three maps, everyone who made over \$200,000, 15% was in one district and the second was 7% and the last two were zero, that is something that should be considered. He agrees that Front Street should be divided amongst councilmembers, he does not believe one councilmember should represent all of the businesses in Soledad. The maps should include councilmembers in those areas. He agrees with keeping the districts to four because that is more equitable, if a person wants to be Mayor, that person should run for Mayor. He would like to not have this conversation in the city council meeting setting. It should be an open conversation, and there should be a translator for Spanish and other languages. We can all say that everyone is equal in all the different areas, but can everyone vote in all the different areas. While is would be good to keep neighborhoods together, he also does not want lower social economic status folks to be grouped into one district because that causes issues.

Soledad resident Eva Banuelos said she agrees with what Mr. Sanchez shared.

Soledad resident Monica Andrade was present via Zoom and said she believes the tools for the public to engage in the maps, should be easier, not harder. She encourages the council to make the necessary investment so the public can draw maps that include numbers. She does not think Front Street should be divided up, and whatever map the City ends up using should be centered on equity. She would like to make clear on public record, regarding Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez and Councilmember Corralejo's request for a fifth district entails getting rid of the at-large Mayor position. That is reversing back to the appointed or rotating mayor position. She would like to know why the councilmembers think this is necessary. Why would the council want to remove the constituent's ability to pick their mayor.

Soledad resident Guadalupe Lupita Arroyo was present via Zoom and said this is a major transition for the Community of Soledad. She believes the elected Mayor should stay as being elected by the members of the Community. Having elected councilmembers appoint the Mayor does not sound like an equitable practice. Councilmember Chavez brought up a very interesting point, but she believes the whole Community is represented by the Mayor, so she believes each district will be represented by two people. She thanked staff for the presentation. She would like the social and economic distribution of the population within the regions, and also who can vote. She wants to make the factors are considered when filling the map.

Soledad resident Alexis Magdeleno was present via Zoom. He said he lives in the older area of Soledad and according to the maps, he gets grouped into a business area because he does live close to Front Street. There are many renters where he lives and many families living together. He wants to make sure this is brought out more to the public and have more community engagement activities, not where the council is taking up the whole space. He would like to see something like the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, used in Salinas. This gave community members a chance to have dialogue regarding what they wanted from the community. He believes community engagement is going to be critical in this stage because he does not think people have an understanding of what this entails.

President of LULAC Council 2055 Chris Barrera was present via Zoom. He agreed with the youth that have commented. LULAC recommended the creating of a Citizens Redistricting Committee when they met with Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez and Councilmember Chavez. Councilmember Jimenez had originally requested to keep the Mayor at-large. He believes community input is great and using that feedback in the decision making is crucial. They recommend having four districts, representing all parts of Soledad, and keeping the Mayor at-large. The only local city that rotates their councilmembers as Mayor is Watsonville. They believe this would be a step backwards for Soledad since this is something that used to be done. He highly encourages the council to empower residents speaking. Take their comments seriously. It is important that all residents from all parts of Soledad, have a say and opportunity to vote for their Mayor and have transparency and equity as priority number one.

Soledad resident Benito was present via Zoom. He has appreciated the intension of getting the community involved. He hopes there should be an informal meeting, together as a community, with more than three minutes, is essential. He invites the council to look at the recommendations that other cities have done, like creating an advisory board. This is not a process that should be taken lightly, as Soledad moves into this. Having councilmembers in different areas should not get in the way of dividing the city. He does not see any major differences in the maps, and he hopes the tool will be able to give everyone the opportunity to draw their own needs, not just the economic needs, but the social and cultural needs. He does not understand why the council would want to return to having the appointed Mayor instead of the Mayor at-large. What are the benefits of the community not electing their Mayor. What are the benefits of four to five people, making that choice themselves. Anyone can run for Mayor, if the person cannot win the election, it does not make sense to change the process. State governors does not rotate with their senators, and the president does not take turns rotating with their senators or representatives. He cannot understand why Soledad is trying to implement these methods. He would like to keep the four districts and the mayor at-large.

Mayor Velazquez wants to make sure the online tool is interactive. She is also looking forward to having a workshop so people can know how to use the tool. She would like the Community to understand how to create an equitable map to reflect that.

Councilmember Chavez said he does feel it is necessary for the public to have a workshop to learn how to use the online tool in creating this map. He would still like the residents to have the option of four or five districts, whatever the residents want to do it what the council will move forward with. Looking at options will be helpful to the public in order to weigh in.

Councilmember Corralejo said she is glad to hear everyone's comments. She knows the Community Engagement Department has been doing more outreach, beside the normal social media. They are reaching out to the school district, seniors, and young people. The effort of reaching out needs to be continued because of all these things going on. Part of being a councilmember is giving the public options and that is why she requested the fifth district. She wants to make sure everyone knows their options. There are many things going on and the City is growing so the more options, the better.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said the reason the City is at this place of districting is because LULAC forced this on Soledad, or they would sue the City. All councilmembers were at large, including the mayor. This was changed a while back because the people wanted these positions to be at large, however are changing now. Now the City is going to redistricting so the people need to look at this and decide what they want. All the council was at large and now it will be changed to districting. The premise behind districting is to have equal representation and equal access to the Community. Five representatives would give people more access to their representative. The Mayor's position is supposed to be for everyone, but it seems like it only comes from certain parts of town. He is willing and open to look at alternatives such as the four districts or five districts. Once input comes in from the Community, this will help the council make an educated decision. He would like to hear from a variety of people in the Community. Districting will be up to the people, not just a few people, but a majority of the people. He hopes we move diligently through the process and the mapping tools. He is looking forward to the additional fifth district.

Mayor Velazquez said moving forward with a workshop is critical and having an inclusive transparent outreach process. The council has wanted civic engagement and participation and that is why there is a community engagement department. The material is complex so having an English and Spanish step by step process would be good. Whatever maps are chosen, need to come from the residents. It is also important to give out historical perspective to the residents so everyone can understand where we were before the City had an elected Mayor, what were the issues and how did it come about. This should be done so the residents have understanding, and they can make up their own mind of how they want to move forward. She would also like to look further into the Citizens Redistricting Committee, she wants to know if this has been discussed. She wants to know if this committee can be and what the timelines are.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said the City is under a threat of litigation and is already past the time period. There is the ability to do other things, but we are already past the time to form the districts. The process should keep moving as expeditiously as we can. He can speak with LULAC and ask for more time, so there might be able to be more time to do something like the Citizen Redistricting Committee. The tolling agreement expired on January 19, 2023. The City has demonstrated the seriousness of the districting efforts.

Mayor Velazquez would want to consider asking for an extension. Community input is important and is very different for the Community. The input should be from throughout the City. The Spanish and English workshops will be important. The workshop should be for the general public and not in the council meeting setting.

Councilmember Chavez also agrees that there should be a workshop in both English and Spanish so that people can learn how to use the tool and learn about the rules behind districting.

Councilmember Cabrera asked if the City has received another letter asking us to rush things through.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said LULAC does not need to send a second letter. Once the letter is received, you have 90 days to finish the process.

Councilmember Cabrera said he is having a hard time understanding how someone would send a letter only giving 90 days to complete a process that would normally take six months.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said it is State law. LULAC did not have to enter into the tolling agreement, but they have been gracious. He will contact LULAC on 02/16/2023 and ask if there can be an extension.

Councilmember Cabrera asked if the council could just ask over the Zoom meeting since the President of LULAC was in the discussion.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said he will reach out to LULAC on 02/16/2023 because the decision will need to be memorialized. He asked if the next meeting should be a stand-alone meeting. He will ask Deputy City Clerk Darlene Noriega to poll the council for dates so those can be agreed upon and posted on the website, letting the public know when those are coming up.

## **BUSINESS**

B-1. Receive the 2022 Soledad Historical Society Annual Report from Graig Stephens, President of the Soledad Historical Society.

Community & Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson presented information regarding the item and introduced Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens.

Councilmember Chavez asked Mr. Stephens if he has any updates regarding the effort in the California Small Museum Grant Program.

Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens said the council needs to approve everything the Historical Society does. There is no joint plan yet, so the Historical Society would like to have a workshop with two councilmembers to discuss improvements needed and wanted so a plan can be agreed on.

Councilmember Chavez asked what the specifics are for the grant.

Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens said the grant can be used for buying displays or display cases or adding to the building. If the Historical Society applies for the grant, they will get a small grant. If the council applies for the grant, they can get up to \$500,000.

Councilmember Chavez asked how often museums get these grants.

Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens said this grant is designed for small communities, underrepresented communities and communities that have free or reduced lunch.

Community & Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said the 2023 period for this grant has not opened yet. The City has Townsend, who are professional grant writers, who would be able to help with this. This grant does help smaller museums. This would be a great opportunity for Soledad.

Mayor Velazquez agrees that this would be a great opportunity to be able to apply for this grant.

Councilmember Corralejo said she is excited to see all the different classes and groups being taught the history of Soledad. She thanked Mr. Stephens and all the Historical Society for doing what they do.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said he knows these grants are there, he asked if the historical society has the staff to be able to move forward with upgrades. He would like to see the facility upgraded so it can be more aesthetically pleasing, and the history of Soledad can be displayed. He realizes there are ADA issues and no restroom. He would like to work together and take seriously to try to build the facility up with investing. He appreciates the details of the report.

Mayor Velazquez believes it is important a museum and Soledad is luck to have one. The City has utilized the Historical Society's displays many times. It is important for the younger generation to have the history and early stories. The council wanted to be sure to have a reporting mechanism regarding the public facility. She agrees the museum is great and she wants it to look similar to other dignified museums. She would like to move forward through Townsend. She realizes there are many improvements needed and there needs to be a comprehensive outline of costs for what is needed and what is the priority. She would like to appoint a councilmember to the Historical Society Board and also talk about moving forward with an Ad-Hoc Committee.

**Council Action:**

Council received the information.

Direction was given to staff to agenize the appointment for a future City Council meeting.

Soledad resident Fernando Ansaldo Sanchez said having a museum is important. He thanked Mr. Stephens for the work he has done. The Indigenous history that exists here in Soledad and the history of what the missions did to those Indigenous people is not something we should forget. He is not sure if this history in taught in the K-12 level, but it is taught at the college level.

Soledad resident Eva Banuelos thanked Mr. Stephens for doing this from his heart. She said she is happy to have the Historical Society because Soledad has a lot of history. She asked if residents are able to do something in preparation for the grant.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said the City will look into have a workshop in preparation for the grant.

Soledad resident Alexis Magdeleno said he would like to honor the original people of this land; the Esselen people, Costanoan people, Salinan people and others. The subject of the museum is

difficult for him. He has never seen anyone tell the history of Soledad, the way that it should be told. Soledad has a very dark history that is neglected because of Spanish missionaries and pioneers that came over from the mid-west. Over 2,000 native people were baptized at the mission, and 90% of them were also buried there. There was a lot of ugly stuff. The braceros, internment camps, the Soledad brothers, who were incarcerated and killed in the prison. Are we trying to tell the true history of Soledad or are we trying to paint it as a beautiful City, where people worked really hard to make it into what it is today. He would also like to respond to a comment made by Councilmember Jimenez, and he had heard him say this before; we are not a special interest group. We are Community members. There are no special interests on his part. They are regular people. There is no money to be made and there is no agenda. They just want the best for the City. He does not appreciate it when Councilmember Jimenez calls him that, and he does not appreciate it when Councilmember Jimenez says things about Community members showing up. He hopes that whatever comes from out of the historical museum, he hopes the native people are worked because they are still here.

Mayor Velazquez said she believes that is comment made during the redistricting process. She wants to make sure the comment is relevant to the current discussed item. Comments regarding an item need to be made during the time of the item.

Soledad resident Alexis Magdeleno hopes the Historical Society works with the native people so that history can also be shared.

Soledad resident Bob Gwinn said he is commenting on behalf of the Soledad Historical Society and the Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens. There was a comment regarding where is the money for things listed in the report; on pages 10 and 11 everything is outlined. The one that is still needed is the building to attached, which is what grants are needed for. Costs are estimates and everything relates directly to what is listed.

Soledad resident Benito thanked Mr. Stephens for bringing forth the subject of the museum. He wants to make sure to be mindful of what it could become. Something inclusive of other stories that are real to Soledad and can make an impact. He wants to push this to be more inclusive of the history of the people's voices and the history of Soledad. He would like to highlight alumni that have left and returned, highlight regular people that work in the fields, highlight people who have gone and created other spaces. This should be a place where people can go and volunteer. This can expand into people making murals and expand outside of the space. Hopefully, it can expand into Front Street with more art and engagement. Soledad has a dynamic culture that can be more reflective in everything. He added, they are not a special interest group, they are collective.

Mayor Velazquez said for a point of order and clarification and the council does follow the Robert Rules of Order. She understands that three minutes may not be enough time, but the council meetings do have to follow the processes of the governing body, and as the Chair, she will stay true to what the protocols are by law in terms of how the meetings need to be ran.

Soledad Historical Society President Graig Stephens said the baskets he has brought in do highlight the local Salinan, Chalon and Esselen people. As far as sharing the ugly parts of Soledad's history; when the World War II display is done, that part of history is shared. The Historical Society

does tell those stories. They do not tell every story because they do not know all of the stories. The Adobe is 180 years old this year. In 2025, the City will be 150 years old in terms of becoming a township, and that is also the same year the first school was built in Soledad. Next year, in 2024, the Historical Society will be 20 years old.

Mayor Velazquez said that anyone who has stories, and photos from the past, please reach out to Mr. Stephens so that history can be shared.

B-2. Receive a Presentation from Central Coast Community Energy on the Front of the Meter Energy Storage Effort and to Direct Staff to Work with Central Coast Community Energy on Returning with a Site Control Agreement for Consideration for Assessor Parcel Number (257-081-002-000) and or Assessor Parcel Number (257-082-018-000)

Community & Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson presented the staff report. He introduced CCCE representative Warren Tomlinson.

CCCE Representative Warren Tomlinson presented a PowerPoint presentation.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said he likes the two sites and feels they are appropriate. He would like to know if the purposed site near the Water Reclamation plant, would interrupt any future plans and anything happening there currently.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said he knows there will need to be a CEQA document done by CCCE for both purposed sites in order to move forward with plans. This will need to happen before the item can move forward to public works or the council.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez asked if there is an environmental report that needs to be done.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said the Environmental report will need to be done for any site CCCE looks into. It will go through the process of the CEQA process and analysis.

Mayor Velazquez clarified, based on the CEQA review, this will determine what other level of environment report is needed.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said that information is correct.

Councilmember Corralejo is in regard to the range area with minor flooding and mud slides, has this been considered.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said if this were the site that the council decided on then CCCE would need to have the right engineering and civil plans, to better understand how the area could affect the battery if there was flooding in the area.

CCCE representative Warren Tomlinson said he did visit the area. The area they looked at was a flat area. If there are things that would not make the site a good choice, then the idea would be abandoned.

Councilmember Chavez said he continues to think about Moss Landing's batteries catching fire, and factors that could cause toxicity in the area. He feels this same way about the site being at the range. He would prefer to look in an area with very low or no population. He prefers looking into the site near the wastewater plant.

Councilmember Cabrera would like to know what the benefit will be for the residents of Soledad, he has been told there is no benefit. He is hesitant to have this in the City, but he would prefer it to be someplace where the emergency services would be able to get to it in case of emergency.

Interim City Manager Tewes said the Exclusive Development Agreement will be for the City to be able to negotiate the benefits and value to the taxpayers, and the performance of the project.

Mayor Velazquez thanked staff for the two different proposals. This land being proposed are not able to be developed. They have no intended purpose.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said that information is correct. Both areas would be a great use of land that would not be used for anything.

Mayor Velazquez said there will be an analysis for which is the better site. The project will not be placed in disadvantaged rural communities. Staff will make sure there is no environmental injustice by moving forward with this. Soledad is a part of a JPA with CCCE and this is a part of that JPA the City chose to enter into years ago. This is a smaller project than what we have seen in other locations. These types of projects are essential to California, moving forward. We should want to understand how the City will benefit on a bigger scale when there are rolling blackouts occur.

There were no public comments.

Mayor Velazquez would like the concerns of the council addressed and then she would like the item brought back for future consideration.

**Motion:** Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez made motion to approve the item to move forward. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Corralejo and carried by the following vote:

**Action**

Ayes:	Jimenez, Corralejo, Velazquez
Noes:	Chavez, Cabrera
Abstain:	None
Absent:	None

B-3. Discuss and Provide Staff Direction on the Appointment Process of the Soledad General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Composition

Assistant Planner Ariana Mora presented the staff report. She also introduced Placeworks Consultant Charlie Knox.

Placeworks Consultant Charlie Knox said the people who are appointed to the group are people who will be touching on key points of the process, looking at high level recommendations and passing that information to Planning Commission and City Council for consideration. These people will be ambassadors to the Community and there needs to be people that are in it for the two-year process. The council may want to consider the direct appointments to be complimented by members at large, either four or six.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said he likes the process and looks forward to it.

Councilmember Corralejo said she also likes the process, and she likes the inclusivity. She prefers to have 11 members.

Councilmember Chavez said he would like to move forward and does prefer the 11 perspectives.

Councilmember Cabrera said he likes the idea of being able to appoint people. He also prefers the 11 members.

Mayor Velazquez said she also appreciates the process. She wants to make sure there is transparency of how the members are selected. She would like more diversity, including age, race, gender, and LGBTQ+. She would like to make sure this is articulated so everyone can understand what that means. She would like the application tailored so more information can be known as to why the person wants to serve. She would like the application to be interactive and submitted online; maybe allow up to 250 words. We should want more specific information or criteria on the application so what is being asked is clear in its purpose. Make sure the questions being asked are formulated to get the response needed.

Councilmember Chavez said he would like there to be a cover sheet explaining what the general plan is, how long the process will be, what the purpose of it is and the time period it will be needed.

Mayor Velazquez said this is important because it will give the template of how the City will move forward. She wants to make sure everyone is clear on the time period it will be needed.

Soledad resident Fernando Ansaldo Sanchez asked what the timeline is, what the dates are and the times of the meetings. He really wants to be engaged in the Community. He works in San Jose from 9:30 to 6:30 and he does commute. Because of the lack of jobs, most people do work further out. He would like to have a hybrid committee for this so that he can be considered. He would also like to have people that do not speak English are able to be a part of these types of meetings as well.

There were no further public comments.

Mayor Velazquez said the cover sheet is a great idea and she would also like to have hybrid meetings so more people can be included, and also have translation services available so that no one is excluded.

Councilmember Corralejo asked if being a registered voter is a requirement.

Assistant Planner Ariana Mora said she does not think that needs to be a requirement.

Councilmember Corralejo asked why it is on the application.

Assistant Planner Ariana Mora said it is from a template that the City uses for other applications, but it can be removed.

Councilmember Corralejo said she would like it to be removed so the ages 16 through 20 are not excluded from being able to apply.

Mayor Velazquez asked that staff make the edits and bring it back to the council for approval.

Community and Economic Development Director Bryan Swanson said the application needs to go out to the Community soon.

Mayor Velazquez asked that staff just email the revised application to the council.

Assistant Planner Ariana Mora said staff will bring back the applicants back to the 03/15/2023 Regular City Council meeting.

### **MAYORS' REPORTS**

Mayor Velazquez had 4 items to report:

1. On 02/03 she attended the Monterey County Mayors Association.
2. On 02/13 she attended the MST meeting.
3. She is no longer on the CCCE board as part of the JPA agreement. The new representative is Mayor Rios from the City of Gonzales.
4. She was not able to attend the AMBAG meeting on 02/08 because she was attending the City of Soledad Homeless townhall.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS**

Councilmember Corralejo had no items to report.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez had 3 items to report:

1. There was no ACCAPS meeting.
2. On 02/02 he attended the SVSWA meeting and there will be a second meeting on 02/16
3. There has been no Teacher/Staff Housing Committee meeting and there has been no progress. He would like to put a timeline on this item.

Mayor Velazquez said whatever the stalling of the item has been, it has not been on the part of the council, and she would also like to move this forward.

City Attorney Mike Rodriguez said he has received the revised version of the purchase agreement and the first draft of the development agreement. These are the documents needed in order to move forward.

Interim City Manager Tewes said staff has direction from the sub committee as to the council's position during the lawyer's discussion, and if there are any issues, the sub committee will be contacted in order to get direction to solve issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said he feels whenever anything does need to be considered, the City is rushed. Wherever the fault lies, that needs to stop so things can move forward in a timely manner. This will benefit the Community.

Councilmember Chavez had 2 items to report:

1. He said he handed everyone highlights from the TAMC meeting at the 02/01 meeting.
2. He will be attending the South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority meeting on 02/16 and he will report on that next meeting.

Councilmember Cabrera had no items to report.

### **COUNCILMEMBERS' PRAISES**

Councilmember Cabrera praised the council and staff for all the effort that is put into the Community.

Councilmember Chavez praised the City staff for being the backbone of the City. He also praised the owners of Grocery Outlet, Ezekial and Crystal Reyes, they have been getting involved and helping in the Community.

Councilmember Corralejo praised Phillip Nickerson and his wife, Jeanette Nickerson. Mr. Nickerson does a lot of volunteering in the Community and has remained involved. She also praised the owners of Grocery Outlet, Ezekial and Crystal Reyes; they have been putting effort into the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, fight against cancer. She is proud of their team. She also praised Anthony Baca, owner of Stitch'Em Up Embroidery. Mr. Baca has taken advantage of everything the City has to offer and has been a great example for all entrepreneurs.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez gave praise to all the Little League Coaches, parents and youth participating. He also reminded everyone, there will be many kids running around near the ball fields.

Mayor Velazquez gave acknowledgement to the young millennials that have been a part of the council for many years. Their voices are important to the democracy and the inclusivity. They have all worked very hard to succeed and get their education and to become young professional that have a lot of potential, yet they cannot afford to live in the City because of the housing issues. She also acknowledged the Salvation Army; they have been instrumental. They have been mobile

and have still made sure to provide services to the families in Soledad. They are looking for a storage space, but have not found one. She also praised and acknowledged the former King City Councilmember Darlene Acosta. She gave so much to others and for others, and she was an amazing person. She had a lot of love for the Community. The Community has lost a great person because Darlene is no longer with us.

### **INTERIM CITY MANAGER REPORT**

Interim City Manager Tewes provided a written and oral report regarding the expressed concerns of the use of bird cannons. Although the County does not have any specific regulations, the Ag Commissioner has been helpful in providing the farmers and ranchers the Good Neighbor Policy which provides direction in how to use such devices, to avoid conflict with neighbors. Regarding the instances that have occurred over the last couple of weeks, the Ag Commissioner has reached out to those ranchers, and they have complied to the best of his knowledge.

Mayor Velazquez thanked Interim City Manager Tewes for reaching out. She appreciates that the Good Neighbor Policy is working, but the City has a noise ordinance, even though the County does not have any requirements in terms of that, the City does. She would like to look further into how that can be monitored.

Interim City Manager Tewes said there is also a Right to Farm Ordinance, which means standard farming practices will take place. This information is often included in the disclosures when someone buys their home near an agricultural facility or field.

Mayor Velazquez said she realizes the City is surrounded by agriculture, but people do have a right to not be disturbed. She would like to look into additional remedies.

Interim City Manager said regarding the storms; preliminary reports have been filed with FEMA. March will be a busy month for meetings. On 03/01 there will be a presentation from the legislative advocate. Also, please be prepared to discuss council goals in the 03/01 meeting. There is still an opportunity for community grants, and staff will be bringing some ideas to suggest to the representatives.

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Councilmember Chavez would like to look into creating a referral system for items that the council would like updates on, so not everything needs to be on the agenda. He will send Interim City Manager Tewes a template. It should include a timeline, who has been assigned the task and what the outcome is. No agency uses that, he got the idea from the County of Monterey.

Councilmember Corralejo would like an update on the Community Grants application process. She would also like an update on the SNIP Bus; they provide a service to the Community.

Interim City Manager Tewes said the Community Grants process will be established in May, but if the council would like that sooner, they can direct staff to do so.

Mayor Velazquez said the council would like an update sooner than May.

Interim City Manager Tewes said regarding the SNIP Bus; the item will be on the 03/01 meeting agenda with a contract.

Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez would like to have a goal setting workshop for the council because goals need to be established.

Mayor Velazquez said the current goals are still valid.


Mayor Pro Tem Jimenez said he feels new goals need to be established or added.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Velazquez adjourned the meeting in memory of Darlene Acosta.

Mayor Velazquez adjourned the meeting at 10:12 p.m.

Minutes Approved: March 01, 2023

  
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ANNA M. VELAZQUEZ, Mayor/Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J. EDWARD TEWES, Interim City Manager/City Clerk

