

**Attachment D –  
BWC Meeting Minutes from  
February 18, 2026,  
Recommendation for the DUI  
Licensure**



## **Behavioral Wellness Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

In-Person & Remote Virtual Participation

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Facilitator:** E. Maria Valencia, 3rd District, Chair.

**Commission Members Present:** Cheryl Smith, 1<sup>st</sup> District; Lynne Gibbs, 2<sup>nd</sup> District; Leonie Mattison, 2<sup>nd</sup> District; Evie Vesper, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Vice Chair; Pamela Flynt Tambo, 3<sup>rd</sup> District; Keith McLellan, 3<sup>rd</sup> District; James Halsell 4<sup>th</sup> District; Lisa Dominguez, 5<sup>th</sup> District; E. Maria Valencia, 5<sup>th</sup> District, Chair.

**Commission Members via Teleconference/Santa Maria:** Oscar Rivera, 3<sup>rd</sup> District; Nancy Crawford, 4<sup>th</sup> District; Karen Draper, 4<sup>th</sup> District.

**Commission Members via Zoom/Excused:** Michelle Madril, 1<sup>st</sup> District; Patrina Jones, 3<sup>rd</sup> District; Yvette Villa, 5<sup>th</sup> District.

**Commission Members Excused:** Laura Capps, 2<sup>nd</sup> District Supervisor; Lauren Penepacker, 2<sup>nd</sup> District; Faith Davis, 4<sup>th</sup> District; Edward Lamberson, 5<sup>th</sup> District.

**Behavioral Wellness Department Staff:** Toni Navarro, Director; Jamie Huthsing, Assistant Director; Laura Zeitz, Assistant Director; Dipak Neupane, Chief Operations Officer; Melissa Wilkins, Branch Chief, Alcohol & Drug Program; Kristine Haugh, BWC Program Administrator/Executive Assistant to the Director.

- 1. Call-to-Order and Conduct Roll-Call:** Chair Valencia called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and Kristine Haugh conducted roll-call.
- 2. Establish Quorum:** Kristine Haugh established a quorum.
  - Chair Valencia requested that commissioners confirm attendance and email her directly for excused absences.
- 3. Welcome and Introductions:** Chair Valencia welcomed everyone in attendance and asked guests to introduce themselves.

**Action:** No action.

- 4. General Public Comment:** Commissioner Yvette Villa, attending via Zoom as a member of the public, offered the following public comment:
  - My name is Yvette Villa-Arriola, and I am the founder of Project Blue 805. I am here today to formally introduce our organization to the Behavioral Wellness Commission and to share our

*mission of advancing cultural competency and long-term stability for veterans in Santa Barbara County.*

*Project Blue 805 was founded by transforming personal loss into a dedicated advocacy movement. We focus specifically on the unique needs of women veterans and underserved communities. Our organizational foundation is rooted in discipline, grit, and a proven history of pro per litigation and corporate accountability. We serve as a vital bridge, connecting grassroots veteran needs with essential federal and county resources.*

*Our primary objective is to bridge the gap between periodic, emergency support and permanent, long-term stability. While many resources provide temporary relief, Project Blue 805 is committed to ensuring that critical services and community connections remain accessible every day of the year. We believe that by building a sustained, year-round support system, we can move beyond crisis intervention and toward true wellness and recovery for our veteran population.*

*This vision is partly inspired by the work of Supervisor Steve Lavagnino and the annual Santa Barbara County Veterans Stand Down. For over a decade, this event has provided life-changing resources to hundreds of veterans in Santa Maria. Project Blue 805 seeks to honor that legacy by evolving this successful one-day model into a consistent, year-round presence.*

*In recognition of these goals, I respectfully request a letter of support or formal recognition from the Commission acknowledging the mission of Project Blue 805. Such a gesture would greatly assist us as we continue to advocate for the behavioral health and stability of our local veterans.*

*Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to our community's well-being.*

**Action:** *No action.*

**5. Chairperson Announcements:** *Chair Valencia announced the following:*

- *Upcoming 40-HR. Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training February 16-20, 2026, at Santa Ynez Valley Marriott in Buellton – Commissioner Lynne Gibbs offered information about the event.*
- *CALBHB/C Training & Meeting Report – Chair Valencia shared her experience of the most recent meeting and recommended that commissioners attend in the future.*
- *HR-1 Federal Mandate – Chair Valencia requested information regarding HR-1 – Director Navarro indicated that BWell is working on a one-page FAQ outline with talking points and will provide that information soon. In the meantime, she mentioned the following:*
  - *The mandate applies to “adults with affordable care MediCal only”*
  - *Work requirements do not apply to SUD or specialty system (BWell’s level of care) and others*
  - *Changes in back repayment from 90 days to 30- or 60-days eligibility*
  - *The responsibility is on BWell to get people reconnected to MediCal – Social Services*

**Action:** *No action.*

6. **Review and Approve Minutes of January 21, 2026, BWC Meeting** Chair Valencia asked Commission members to review the January 21, 2026, meeting minutes (attachment 6a).

**Action:** *Commissioner Gibbs made a motion to approve January 21, 2026, BWC Meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Flynt Tambo seconded. Commissioner Mattison abstained. No objections. Motion carried.*

7. **Prospective Future Agenda Items** - Commission members discussed future agenda items. (attachment 7a)

- *Chair Valencia asked that commissioners request agenda items and discussion regarding future agenda items ensued.*

**Action:** *No action.*

8. **Director's Report:** *Director Toni Navarro provided an overview of the February report which highlighted the following:*

*February is Black History Month; March is Social Work Month – Recognizing the Impact of Social Workers; Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) Update; Youth-Led Media Campaign Aims to Reduce Underage Drinking; Behavioral Wellness in the Community; National and State News; and Systems Change Calendar.*

**Action:** *No action.*

### **New Business:**

9. **Behavioral Health Connect and the 1115 Waiver**  
(attachment 9a)

*Director Navarro reviewed the PowerPoint Presentation; questions were asked & discussion ensued.*

*BWell invited the BWC to provide feedback regarding the presentation:*

- *Commissioner Gibbs commented about:*
  - *The capacity for 6 additional beds at the PHF from historical information and Assistant Director Zeitz confirmed that only 2 additional beds are possible.*
  - *Information about the possibility and availability of more beds in Crestwood, AD Zeitz offered the current information regarding beds at Crestwood and Director Navarro spoke about bed use by other counties and funding changes along with the possibility of expansion in the future.*
  - *It's good to see a mandate for Evidence Based Practices and asked about the timeframe for the re-implementation of FACT. Director Navarro indicated the re-implementation begins July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.*
- *Commissioner McLellan*
  - *Asked for clarity about the reason for the presentation and was informed that the presentation is to make the Board of Supervisors aware of Behavioral Health Connect and to walk them through BWell's decision making process of which the conclusion is that, at this point in time, the IMD Waiver is not effective for Santa Barbara County.*
  - *Indicated that the recommendation makes sense.*
  - *Requested that in future, such presentations begin with setting the groundwork with a clear statement regarding "this is why we are not recommending..." at the onset of*

*the presentation. This was received by Director Navarro, who thanked Commissioner McLellan for the suggestion.*

- *Commissioner Dominguez indicated that 16 beds seem inadequate for the county and wondered about the possibility of more robust resources around the county. Director Navarro offered information about BWell's attempt to procure funding for future building.*
- *Commissioner Mattison stated that the rationale regarding the recommended actions make fiscal sense.*

**Action:** *No action.*

**1. Alcohol & Drug Program Request For Proposal for Driving Under the Influence Program Follow Up**  
(attachment 10a)

*Melissa Wilkins, Branch Chief of BWell Alcohol Drug Program reviewed the BWell ADP DUI RFP process surrounding the choice of Zona Seca. invited BWC feedback/comments regarding Zona Seca's DUI Program application.*

*Discussion ensued and the following questions were asked & comments were provided:*

- *Commissioner McLellan requested to look at the budget; he was interested in costs and sustainability. Branch Chief Wilkins indicated that DUI Programs self-sustainability of the program is legally required and based on revenue collected from client fees associated with the DUIs and directed commissioners to the proposed budget in the documents provided based on a proposed fee schedule to allow for sustainability. Branch Chief Wilkins also mentioned regulations allow for start-up cost support and the County is considering this option.*
- *Commissioner Mattison asked about the longevity of the program – Branch Chief Wilkins clarified that DUI programs are licensed by DHCS but are required to submit for DUI license renewal every two (2) years.*
- *Commissioner Dominguez commented that the backgrounds of the staff running the programs did not include much secondary training or education and asked about minimal staffing qualifications as part of the criteria. Branch Chief Wilkins responded that these programs are licensed by the state and there are minimal regulatory requirements on the training or education requirements for the staff providing services.*
- *Commissioner Halsell commented that reimbursement rates are often lower than organizations can afford for hiring staff.*
- *Commissioner Draper expressed concerns regarding the level of education & certification of staff, language barriers, and the hours of service.*
- *Commissioner Mattison added comments about the RFP process and asked about how the RFP application was developed and asked how many people were on the RFP evaluation panel. Branch Chief Wilkins explained that BWell used the exact elements from the DHCS State application, adding those questions into the County "Responsive System" for the RFP process and did not add additional elements to the application outside of the State application requirements.*
- *Commissioner Villa, as a member of the public via Zoom, requested that a clear goal and definition of the project be posted on the BWell website.*
- *Commissioner Vesper asked about how long the contract would be in place. Branch Chief Wilkins clarified that a contract would be in place for the duration of time that the program is licensed as a DUI provider by DHCS.*

**Action:** *Commissioner Valencia made a motion to:*

- Find that the Commission reviewed the application of Zona Seca to operate a Driving-Under-the-Influence program for Wet and Reckless and First Offenders DUI program services in the City of Santa Maria*
  - Adopt the recorded Commission comments regarding Zona Seca's DUI program application*
  - Recommend Zona Seca for DUI program licensure as presented*
  - Direct staff (BWC Administrator Kristine Haugh) to submit the Commission's comments and the recommendation regarding Zona Seca's DUI program application to the County Board of Supervisors*
- Commissioner McLellan seconded the motion. 11 aye votes. No abstentions. 1 nay vote by Commissioner Draper. Motion passes.*

**Commission Business:**

**10. Commissioner Introductions, Background Information & Reason for Joining the BWC**

- Chair Valencia, Vice Chair Vesper along with Commissioners Rivera, Draper, Dominguez and McLellan all introduced themselves and gave their background information & reasons for joining the BWC.*

**Action:** *No action.*

**11. Adjournment - Chair Valencia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.**