



**BURLINGAME CITY COUNCIL
Unapproved Minutes
City Council Study Session on March 16, 2026**

1. CALL TO ORDER

A duly noticed meeting of the Burlingame City Council was held on the above date in person and via Zoom at 6:15 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brownrigg, Colson, Pappajohn, Stevenson, Thayer
MEMBERS ABSENT: None

3. REPORT OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

There were no reports.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. STUDY SESSION

a. PLANNING FOR AMERICA'S 250TH

Mayor Brownrigg stated that he had no formal agenda for this session but wanted to hear ideas from staff and Council. He noted that Councilmember Colson had some ideas and invited staff to start.

Parks & Recreation Director Glomstad stated that the City already has many annual activities and emphasized that the goal should be to attach 250th anniversary branding to existing events where possible to avoid overstressing limited staff. For possible events, she identified:

- Time Capsule
- Commemorative tree
- Public art concept

City Librarian McCulley said staff had been discussing 250th anniversary ideas for a couple of months and described concepts as “smaller ideas” rather than a single large event. Ideas described were:

- Essay contests with prizes such as a \$100 gift certificate or \$200 to \$300 scholarships.
- Distribution of copies of the U.S. Constitution by the Library Foundation.
- “Happy Birthday America” pop-up events with staff giving away slices of cake.

Parks & Recreation Director Glomstad noted that July 4 falls on a Saturday, and many people may be out of town before or after the holiday. She suggested picking dates that maximize attendance, such as the week after July 4. She mentioned the idea of a community potluck, where each person brings a dish from where their family originally came from, or a favorite childhood food. Parks & Recreation Director Glomstad echoed support for the cake idea, emphasizing the simplicity and repeatability of it.

City Librarian McCulley shared that he found a 1970s Bicentennial slogan—“Get into America”—aimed at engaging teens and younger children. He suggested creating new slogans for the 250th and developing a logo for all City departments to use on 250th-related materials. He noted that he had already asked the City’s graphic artist to draft a logo. City Librarian McCulley then asked jokingly what term should be used for the 250th: “semi-quincentennial” or “sestercentennial.”

Councilmember Stevenson stated that he framed his thinking around the messages he would want to impart. He mentioned “Uniquely Burlingame” as one idea, emphasizing the City’s trees and natural environment. He also emphasized service and multiculturalism, as well as Anson Burlingame’s values. Councilmember Stevenson’s written ideas included:

- A time capsule
- A mural
- A community service event
- Planting 250 trees
- A global food and cultural event

Councilmember Colson suggested “250 Years of Burlingame by the Decades,” an idea she had been developing at the national level. This concept would be structured as 25 “things” over 25 decades, either beginning in 1776 or going back from the present. The series would span one year, with a new feature every two weeks. Councilmember Colson acknowledged that Burlingame as a city is only a bit over 100 years old, but the land’s history was rich, and the project would highlight what was happening on this land or in the broader region that is relevant to Burlingame. Councilmember Colson proposed coordinated social media postings across City channels and commented that the content could be drafted quickly.

Mayor Brownrigg praised the 25 chapters by decade concept and suggested turning the decade pieces into plaques along El Camino Real, forming a walkable timeline.

Parks & Recreation Director Glomstad proposed translating the history into a mural “by decade” on the large blank wall adjacent to the Town Square. She noted that the wall belongs to a private property owner, so permission would be required. Additionally, the City would need to follow its Public Art Policy and

process for commissioning and decommissioning artwork. She mentioned that the Art Task Force meets the next day, and she would raise the concept with them.

City Librarian McCulley referenced a historical mural in San Francisco near 15th and Church that depicts history decade by decade. He noted that fitting 25 decades into a single mural can be challenging but feasible.

Mayor Brownrigg commented that the building owner has been cooperative in the past and acknowledged that the mural process would involve budget commitments and Council approvals. He supported at least getting a mural concept underway as part of the 250th work plan, even if execution comes later.

Councilmember Thayer voiced support for holding at least one 250th-themed event in the new Town Square, even if it were just a cake giveaway accompanied by special decorations.

Councilmember Colson suggested a “patriotic day” or red-white-and-blue party, where residents would be encouraged to wear patriotic colors and gather for a picnic-style event. She noted an educational opportunity to clarify the difference between patriotism and nationalism, framing the celebration around inclusive civic pride rather than exclusionary themes, and suggested that such an event could be potluck-style, which would reduce demands on City staff to manage all food.

Vice Mayor Pappajohn commented that she liked all the ideas presented so far, especially those grounded in Burlingame’s own story. She supported Councilmember Colson’s history-by-decades idea and offered to help staff.

Mayor Brownrigg reiterated that the session was for creating space for colleagues and staff to share their thoughts rather than to present ideas of his own. He indicated that the Council would be willing to help where possible, such as to help judge youth essays. He raised the question of where a commemorative tree might be located, suggesting in front of the new City Hall or Town Square.

City Manager Goldman expressed caution about placing a tree in front of the new City Hall given uncertainty in final design.

Mayor Brownrigg commented that a “250th anniversary tree” should not end up “randomly in Washington Park” but ideally in a symbolic location.

Councilmember Colson proposed a “decorate your house for the 4th of July” contest, modeled on the City’s Christmas and Halloween decorating contests, with awards for the “most patriotic homes.” She acknowledged that such a contest would be easier for homeowners than renters but emphasized its community-building potential. She expanded the decorating idea to businesses and cars as well.

Councilmember Stevenson suggested a 4th of July parade, starting on Broadway and finishing downtown at Town Square. He cited feedback from residents at the Pet Parade asking why Burlingame no longer had a 4th of July parade.

Mayor Brownrigg expressed concern that Hillsborough already has a strong 4th of July parade tradition and worried Burlingame might appear to be copying, so he signaled caution around that option.

Mayor Brownrigg proposed a community recipe collection where residents submit home recipes from their cultures or family traditions. Recipes would be compiled into a “book of recipes from all over the world” contributed by Burlingame residents.

City Librarian McCulley confirmed that the Library had done a recipe project during the pandemic for “United Against Hate.” He suggested that the 250th recipe book could expand on and revive that concept, possibly under a diversity-related theme.

Councilmember Thayer suggested an online map-based recipe collection, where recipes could be hosted online, mapped to countries or regions, and accessed as a digital “book.”

Mayor Brownrigg emphasized that, for him, the Bill of Rights is what truly distinguishes the United States. He noted that although the Bill of Rights came after 1776, it protects individual freedoms and sets the U.S. apart from many other nations. He wanted a way to center the Bill of Rights in the 250th programming and considered possibly staging events that dramatize constitutional history.

Councilmember Colson acknowledged that it can be hard to get people engaged around civic topics, even simple things such as getting people to use “I Voted” stickers. She suggested documentaries or movies focused on constitutional rights, and using the Town Square as a venue for outdoor film screenings or lectures by constitutional experts. She noted that involving performers or actors to dramatize historical figures or events was a possibility as well.

Mayor Brownrigg stated that he imagined costumed portrayals of figures like Abraham Lincoln or Anson Burlingame, dramatizing debates over slavery and other topics.

Councilmember Colson suggested partnering with local high school theater programs and joked with Mayor Brownrigg about which of them would play which historical figure.

Mayor Brownrigg reiterated that, while the 250th “shouldn’t be a super heavy lift,” it was already March, and a midsummer deadline means moving quickly.

Parks & Recreation Director Glomstad offered that her staff would compile ideas and prepare a department plan, and they would then e-mail City Manager Goldman, who would forward the plan to the Council.

Mayor Brownrigg agreed and emphasized that the City needs to be mindful of the burden on staff, who already have many responsibilities. He also noted that Councilmembers and Commissioners should step in where feasible.

Councilmember Colson volunteered to be the point person for the “25 decades” history project and would coordinate with Historical Society staff to select images and build a decade-by-decade narrative.

Councilmember Stevenson asked to flesh out one or more of his concepts, particularly the 250 trees initiative. He suggested that residents would purchase and plant trees on private property, and they would then take a photo and “register” the tree as part of a “City of Trees – 250 Trees for 250 Years” collage.

Mayor Brownrigg suggested asking the Beautification Commission to help implement this program. Councilmember Stevenson agreed.

Mayor Brownrigg volunteered to take on the task of conceptualizing Bill of Rights-focused programming, including possible historical reenactments or events with high school theater groups. He mentioned contacting the high school’s theater group to see if they might participate in historical performance pieces.

Mayor Brownrigg proposed that any new ideas after the meeting should be sent to Directors Glomstad and McCulley to avoid Brown Act issues, and staff would serve as the “clearinghouse” for further 250th suggestions.

Mayor Brownrigg opened the item up for public comment.

Joanne Garrison noted that March 26 marks the day Anza came through the area. There is already an Anza plaque near Safeway, and she suggested the City consider rededicating that plaque as a simple, near-term 250th-related activity. She mentioned having recently watched a short video about the expedition, describing how it took significant persuasion to recruit the roughly 300 people in the Anza party, as many did not initially want to go to California.

Mayor Brownrigg thanked colleagues and staff for the productive exercise and noted that there were only a few minutes until the regular session.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Brownrigg adjourned the study session at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Isabelle Huang
Administrative Assistant