

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

JANUARY 13, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Paul Knier called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Mayor Knier noted that the Oath of Office was taken by himself and new Council Members Sam Hanson and Paul Seefeld prior to the start of the January 13th meetings.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Knier invited Pastor Mark Snyder from Bethany Bible Church to conduct an Invocation to start the meeting off.

3. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Ken Halverson, Sam Hanson, Paul Knier, and Paul Seefeld. Also present: City Administrator Clay Wilfahrt, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Hanna Klimmek, City Planner Lucinda Meyers, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Deputy Police Chief Matt Hayen, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Fire Chief Seth Hansen, and Big Lake Student Liaison Ella Dotzler.

4. OPEN FORUM

Mayor Knier opened the Open Forum at 6:02 p.m. No one came forward. Mayor Knier closed the Open Forum at 6:03 p.m.

5. PROPOSED AGENDA

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda as presented. Seconded by Council Member Hanson, unanimous ayes, Agenda adopted.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

Council Member Hanson motioned to approve the Consent Agenda with the removal of items no. 6E and 6H for separate consideration. Seconded by Council Member Halverson, unanimous ayes, Consent Agenda approved. The Consent Agenda consisted of 6A. Approve List of Claims, 6B. Approve Special Council Workshop Minutes of December 9, 2020, 6C. Approve Regular Council Meeting Minutes of December 9, 2020, 6D. Approve the Hire of Part-time Liquor Clerk Carter Hansen, ~~6E. Approve Resolution Ordering a Preliminary Engineering Report for the 2021 Street and Utility Improvement Project No. ST2021-1~~, 6F. Approve Appointment of Jim Dickinson to the Big Lake Economic Development Authority for a term expiring December 31, 2026, 6G. Approve City Financial Policy Amendments, ~~6H. Approve Cargill Variance Development Application Resolution~~, 6I. Approve Employment Status Changes for Part-time Liquor Clerks Dain Thompson, Lisa Geroux, and Donna Houn, 6J. Approve Resolution No. 2021-02 approving a Tobacco License Application for Big Lake Smokes, Inc. dba Smokedale Tobacco to operate at 726 Martin Avenue, Ste. 108, 6K. Approve the 2021 Farmers Market Compeer Financial Grant Agreement, 6L. Approve an Employment Status Change for Police Officer Tyler Hecht, 6M. Approve the 2020 Budget Amendment No. 1 Resolution No. 2021-03, and 6N. Approve the Minnesota Pay Equity Compliance Report.

6E. Approve a Resolution Ordering a Preliminary Engineering Report for the 2021 Street and Utility Improvement Project No. ST2021-1

Council Member Ken Halverson requested that this item be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration. Halverson stated that he is not in favor of removing sidewalks from Euclid Avenue due to safety reasons, and asked the Council to consider including the sidewalk on Euclid Avenue in the final report.

Council Member Seefeld motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-04 ordering the preparation of the Preliminary Engineering Report on the 2021 Street and Utility Improvement Project ST2021-1. Seconded by Council Member Hanson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

6H. Cargill Variance Development Application Resolution

Council Member Seefeld requested this item be removed from the Consent Agenda as he plans to abstain from the vote due to his employment with the Applicant.

Council Member Halverson motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-01 approving a Resolution granting a Variance to allow seven accessory structures to exceed the maximum height permitted for 20021 176th Street NW. Seconded by Council Member Hanson, vote passed with a 3:1 vote with Mayor Knier and Council Members Halverson and Hanson voting aye, and Council Member Seefeld abstaining. Motion carried.

7. BUSINESS

7A. Declare City Council Vacancy and Discuss Options to Fill the Vacancy

Clay Wilfahrt discussed that Mayor Knier has submitted a written resignation for his Council Member seat effective upon taking the Oath of Office for the Mayor seat.

Council Member Hanson motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-05 accepting the resignation of Council Member Paul Knier effective upon him taking the Mayoral Seat Oath of Office, and declaring a vacancy on the City Council. Seconded by Council Member Seefeld, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Wilfahrt reviewed the options available for filling the vacancy including an ordinance ordering a Special Election specific to this vacancy, an ordinance that would amend Section 200 (City Elections) of the City Code that would require a special election to fill a vacancy that has more than one-year remaining on the term, and filling the vacancy by appointment. Wilfahrt asked for Council feedback on what direction they would like to move forward with to fill the vacancy.

Council Member Halverson questioned if turnout projects are so low, can we combine our polling places into just one location. Gina Wolbeck responded that the City Attorney and County Auditor have advised that state law requires that we have all regular voting precincts open for all special City elections.

Council Member Seefeld discussed if we need to include the 180 day requirement in our code amendment. Wolbeck indicated that it is up to the discretion of the City Council to include, remove or amend Staff's recommended language. Seefeld stated that it would be more clear if the language is changed to the nearest allowable date.

Mayor Knier stated that he has long taken the stance that we need to let the people decide on their own representation and stated that he prefers we change the code to require a Special Election for all vacancies with more than one year remaining on the term. Mayor Knier also stated that he disagrees with including staff time in cost estimates for special elections.

Motion by Council Member Seefeld to approve Ordinance No. 2021-01 Amending Chapter 2 (Operations and Administration), Section 200 (City Elections) of the Big Lake City Code with an amendment to change the 180 day requirement to "The special election shall be held at the earliest date permitted by Minnesota Statute § 205.10, subd. 3a", and approve Summary Publication Resolution No. 2021-06. Seconded by Council Member Hanson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7B. 2021 Official City Appointments

Clay Wilfahrt reviewed City and Council Committee appointments for 2021. With the

significant change-over in the City Council this year, most officials will be new to various boards/committees. Mayor Knier has reviewed the various committee options as well as the preferred choices submitted by each Council Member. Mayor Knier has provided his recommendations for Council committee appointments and has asked that once the vacancy on the Council is permanently filled, the assignments will be re-evaluated and split between the 5 elected officials. Wilfahrt also reviewed discussions during the Workshop regarding designation of a newspaper. During the Workshop, the general consensus of the Council was to designate the Elk River Star News as their publication rate was substantially lower than the Patriot newspaper, and that public notices are also available from the City website.

Council Member Halverson stated that we should be putting people in places where they can best serve the taxpayers and he feels there were a couple of speedbumps where we could have represented taxpayers better.

Mayor Knier discussed that appointments will be re-evaluated when the new Council Member comes on after the Special Election in April.

Council Member Hanson motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-07 adopting the 2021 Official City Appointments. Seconded by Council Member Seefeld, vote passed with a vote of 3:1 with Mayor Knier and Council Members Hanson and Seefeld voting aye, and Council Member Halverson voting nay. Motion carried.

Council Member Hanson motioned to authorize an amendment to his motion approving Resolution No. 2021-07 to include designating the Elk River Star News as the City's designated newspaper. The Amendment was seconded by Council Member Seefeld, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7C. Donations towards the Big Lake Police Department from Big Lake Spud Fest and the Big Lake Senior Group

Matt Hayen reviewed recent donations made to the Police Department. Donations included a \$3,000 cash donation provided by the Big Lake Spud Fest Organization to enhance the Department's ability to communicate with, de-escalate, and locate individuals in distress, and a \$100 cash donation from the Big Lake Senior Citizens Group towards the purchase of unbudgeted capital expenses within the Department. Council thanked both organizations for their generous donations.

Council Member Halverson motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-08 accepting donations towards the Big Lake Police Department as presented. Seconded by Council Member Seefeld, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7D. Donations towards the Big Lake Freedom Rock Project

Deb Wegeleben reviewed donations received towards the Big Lake Freedom Rock project received through December 2020. The Citizens for the Big Lake Freedom Rock group have established a Paver Tribute program which will offer a unique opportunity for anyone wanting to honor a veteran and leave a permanent legacy in the community. The estimated cost of the project is \$30,000 which will be covered in its entirety by donations both in cash and in-kind. Donations received through December 2020 amount to \$10,277.

Council Member Hanson motioned to approve Resolution No. 2021-09 accepting donations towards the Big Lake Freedom Rock totaling \$10,277.00, submitted from November 8, 2019 through December 31, 2020. Seconded by Council Member Halverson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

7E. Liquor Store Online Ordering Process Presentation

Greg Zurbey discussed the Liquor Store's new online store. The online feature allows customers to register and order products online. Customers setup an account and pre-pay on the site using a credit card payment. Lake Liquors then fills the order and customers can pick-up their order either from inside the store, or curbside. The online store opened for business on December 20, 2020 and staff will continue to add inventory items as customers request them and time is available. The online store will be active from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

7F. Monthly Department Reports

Fire Department – Fire Chief Seth Hansen provided statistical information on calls for service for the month of December as well as year-end numbers. Hansen also reviewed online training that included Incident Command and Ventilation, discussed the December 19th Fire Department Auxiliary Santa Parade and the amount of food donations collected for the Big Lake Food Shelf, thanked area businesses for their donations over the holidays, and recognized former Mayor Don Orrock and former Fire Chief Jim Howe who recently passed away. Council Member Halverson asked how many page outs occurred in 2020. Hansen indicated that page outs for 2020 totaled 287. Halverson also asked for clarification on the number of page outs for lift assist calls where the Fire Department was not utilized. Hansen estimated that the Department's trucks get called back approximately 40% of the time.

Police Department – Deputy Police Chief Matt Hayen updated Council on police statistics, calls for service, significant arrests, and self-initiated policing activities for the month of December as well as year-end numbers. Hayen discussed a theft involving theft from a construction site, and reminded the public to keep their car doors locked and remove garage door openers. Hayen also reviewed swatting calls that the City has experienced. Swatting is when a person calls in a fake critical incident to have police respond to a chosen location. Hayen discussed the new Master Patrol Officer program that started

January 1st. The program is intended for officers with 5+ years of experience at our Department and who take on extra responsibilities. Hayen noted that we currently have 6 officers who meet this incentive. The Department also recently completed work on their garage area and thanked the Public Works crew for helping with the project. Hayen also discussed the benefits of the City's new financial software recognizing Finance Director Deb Wegeleben for her efforts to get this software up and running. Hayen informed Council that new Police Officer Tim Mikelson will be starting employment with the City on January 18th, and reviewed the Department's participation in the Fire Auxiliary Food Drive parade. Hayen also noted that the January 8th virtual ride along scheduled for Friday, January 8th has been postponed due to possible inclement weather. Council Member Seefeld asked for more information on the thefts occurring in the City. Hayen indicated that most of these thefts generally occur during the night and encouraged citizens to keep their outside lights on. Mayor Knier asked what the penalty is for swatting. Hayen indicated that swatting is so new that Staff doesn't have that information yet, and law enforcement agencies have had a difficult time in pinpointing the culprit.

Engineering/Public Works Department – Layne Otteson provided an update on engineering projects underway in the City and activities in the Utilities Department. Otteson reviewed operations and maintenance at the wastewater plant, and activities in the water division. Otteson reviewed the status of projects currently underway including AIS planning, the Safe Routes to School project, reviewed the potential for a new city park at Brom Lane and Tarrytown Road, ongoing discussion with the MNDNR regarding the channel and peninsula, and the Red Oak lot split and infrastructure extension. Council Member Seefeld reviewed the Brom Park concept and discussed swampy land in this area. Otteson explained that a wetland delineation will need to be done in this area to determine if it will be a concern. Seefeld discussed the City of Elk River's "natural" park concept that could be an interesting plan for this area. Mayor Knier asked for further information on the need to drop water levels in our water towers. Otteson discussed icing issues, noting that we could purchase re-circulators to remedy this issue explaining that we are in the beginning phases of evaluating the ice issue.

Student Liaison – Ella Dotzler provided an update on Big Lake Schools. Dotzler discussed COVID-19 and its current impact on the schools. Elementary schools will be returning to the hybrid learning model on January 19th, and Grades 6-12 and will be going back to the hybrid learning model on January 21st and activities and athletics have resumed in person. Dotzler also reviewed newly elected School Board officials, discussed the percentage of in-person learning days, discussed the new Big Lake Online platform, welcomed new School Superintendent Tim Truebenbach, and noted that Big Lake has become a 1:1 school district which means all students have electronic devices. Council Member Hanson asked about the 2.5 hour late start on Wednesdays. Dotzler explained that schedule is part of the Governor's plan for education to give teachers more time to prepare for the rest of the week.

8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Clay Wilfahrt discussed the joint meeting scheduled next week, online LMC training opportunities for newly elected officials, and noted that a few more Facebook Live events are coming soon that will include a plow truck experience, the water treatment plant, and a police ride along. Wilfahrt also discussed communications with residents from the Mount Curve neighborhood relating to freeze up issues. The City Engineer has engineered a less expensive option, and Staff will continue to monitor.

9. MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORTS and QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

No reports given.

10. OTHER – No other.

11. ADJOURN

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 7:19 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Hanson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
Clerk

Date Approved By Council 01/27/21