

**BIG LAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2020**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

President Alan Heidemann called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present: J. Brian Calva, Jim Dickinson, Ken Geroux, Greg Green, Alan Heidemann, Rose Johnson, and Mike Wallen.

Also present: BLEDA Executive Director Hanna Klimmek, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, and BLEDA Secretary Corrie Scott.

Scott exited the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

**4. ADOPT AGENDA**

Commissioner Johnson motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Dickinson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

**5. BLEDA BUSINESS ITEMS**

**5A. OPEN DISCUSSION ON BLEDA STRATEGIC PLAN**

Klimmek gave a hiring update. The City has chosen a Chief Building Official that will go to Council for appointment on April 22, 2020 and will start in May 2020. A Code Enforcement Intern was also hired and will start in May. The City is currently taking applications for an Administrative Assistant.

Klimmek stated that this meeting is being held for an open discussion on the BLEDA's Strategic Plan. Johnson and Geroux stated that they should start by creating a template that would set conditions for how the BLEDA determines a parcel of land should be redeveloped. One condition would be blight. Wegeleben commented that there are specific guidelines for what constitutes blight in the City of Big Lake.

Dickinson brought up whether or not the goal is to set up private or public investment. Calva stated that one main issue for Big Lake is that there isn't a central downtown area currently in Big Lake. This potential strategic plan could help Big Lake to create a more centralized downtown area. Geroux brought up that another condition for consideration could be vacant buildings. Green brought up that another condition to consider would be whether or not the BLEDA wants downtown to be centralized on Highway 10 or another area. Geroux asked if there are any conditions that should be considered regarding zoning. Johnson commented that commercial and multi-family should be considered. Johnson brought up that rezoning might have to take place depending on the location that is chosen. Heidemann stated that the BLEDA should ensure that any rezoning should be in line with the goals of the comprehensive plan. Wallen stated that the BLEDA should be careful not to deny potential opportunities strictly because of the comprehensive plan goals. He stated that the comprehensive plan should be able to be amended in the case of positive change. Dickinson asked staff to confirm that the comprehensive plan's purpose is to guide land use. Klimmek confirmed that the comprehensive plan is created to guide land use in the City of Big Lake. Dickinson stated that underutilized land should be a main focus and that there is underutilized land on both sides of Highway 10.

Wallen commented that focusing strictly on underutilized property for redevelopment could form a fragmented map of land. Wallen stated that the focus should be on land that is centralized. Geroux asked the BLEDA what the goal of potential redevelopment is. Dickinson stated that the purpose for meeting is to create value. Calva asked staff if one reason for a conversation on redevelopment is because the BLEDA is caught up on their tasks. Klimmek stated that last year the focus for the BLEDA was to set up the industrial park for sale opportunities. She confirmed that once this was achieved, the BLEDA's schedule was cleared.

Geroux stated that any task that is completed by the BLEDA should have economic benefit. Green asked staff if there are examples that have been created by other cities who have a focus on redevelopment. Calva stated that Columbia Heights could be a good example. Johnson mentioned that Stillwater could be a good example to refer to. Klimmek brought up Sauk Rapids. Wallen brought up Maple Grove. Johnson brought up St. Louis Park. Calva brought up the Shops at West End. Dickinson stated that a redevelopment plan will be a long term project. Geroux stated that the first step should be to set conditions in order to help choose the properties that should be considered.

Johnson stated that communities need to be growing to be successful. Wallen reviewed an example of a small business that takes up land, but only creates a small number of jobs. Geroux asked the BLEDA to review why they consider growth success. He stated that there are other communities that do not increase numbers of businesses and population, but are considered successful. An example Geroux brought up is Edina. Johnson stated that Big Lake is incomparable to Edina because they are completely developed where Big Lake has land that can still be developed. Heidemann commented

that the way communities can set themselves apart from other communities is by offering amenities. He stated that regardless of the cost of living, if a community offers attractive amenities, they will draw people to live there. Johnson stated that growth doesn't rely on population growth and that it can be related to an increase in vibrancy and vitality instead. Wallen pointed out that the conversation ended up with a focus on residential rather than commercial. Dickinson stated that any kind of redevelopment discussion has to include a commercial component.

Dickinson stated that the BLEDA should concentrate on areas that are bringing in individuals to the community such as Highway 25 and Highway 10. Geroux commented that the accessibility of Big Lake from Highway 10 compared to other communities that require an exit from Highway 94 makes Big Lake more attractive as a stop. Dickinson stated that one condition for redevelopment should include locations near major roadways such as Highway 25 and Highway 10. Wallen stated that there should be an anchored block that is focused on. An area that has more open land is near the industrial park. Dickinson stated that development will become easier in the East portion of Big Lake. Dickinson stated that multiple zones should be created and then multiple strategies for developing each zone should be created. Geroux stated that the BLEDA should have caution when comparing Big Lake to other Cities. He stated that Big Lake should put a priority on being unique.

Geroux asked City staff for their opinion on the ongoing discussion. Wegeleben stated that she also wants a focus on keeping Big Lake unique. Klimmek stated that there is some benefit to using colleague's experience to avoid mistakes and create simpler projects. Dickinson stated that there is importance in identifying what is sacred to be preserved in the zones that are being considered.

Geroux stated that it would be easier to start with a smaller project for redevelopment and then work up to the more challenging areas in town. He commented that this would encourage the public to be in favor of additional redevelopment projects. Wallen stated that the BLEDA's number one strategy last year was to streamline the sale of land in the industrial park, which has been accomplished. He stated that streamlining the potential redevelopment of land should be a priority in any future redevelopment plan.

Geroux asked the BLEDA to review the conditions that were set during the meeting. Dickinson stated that location near major roadways is one condition. Johnson stated that underutilized property is another condition. Dickinson stated that maximum value is another condition. Geroux noted that economic value should be considered as a condition. Wallen stated that property taxes will be a priority for the public and that it should be kept in mind when communicating to the public in the future. Johnson stated that job creation should be a condition. Calva commented that connectivity of the community should be considered.

Johnson stated that the next step should be to downsize the list of conditions and then locate potential parcels. Klimmek stated that she will do further research on the proposed conditions. After this is completed the strategic planning committee will review it and bring it to a regular meeting.

6. **OTHER** – None.

7. **ADJOURN**

Commissioner Wallen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Green, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.