

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

**MAY 13, 2020**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Wallen called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Council Members present: Seth Hansen, Rose Johnson, Paul Knier, Mike Wallen, and Scott Zettervall. Also present: City Administrator Clay Wilfahrt, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Hanna Klimmek, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Police Chief Joel Scharf, Deputy Chief Matt Hayen, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, and Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey.

**3. PROPOSED AGENDA**

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

**4. BUSINESS**

**4A. City Council Meeting Date Changes**

Gina Wolbeck reviewed potential Council Meeting date changes through year-end 2020 due to holiday conflicts. Staff recommended Council move the first meeting in November to Thursday, November 12, the second meeting in November to Tuesday, November 24, and asked for feedback from Council on whether to cancel the second meeting in December. Staff also recommended Council hold the Canvass Board Meeting at a special meeting on Monday, November 9, and schedule the annual Public Input Hearing during the November 24 Council Meeting. Wolbeck also reviewed additional meetings needed including the annual Committee Workshop to be scheduled on Tuesday, December 1, and the annual Joint City/County/Township/School Meeting to be scheduled on Thursday, January 21.

Council was in agreement on all Staff recommendations, and Council unanimously recommended canceling the December 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Council directed Staff to bring this item to the next Council Meeting for Council consideration to set special meetings and identify meeting date changes.

**4B. Code Revision Task Force Member Selection**

Hanna Klimmek discussed the creation of a Code Revision Task Force in an effort to proactively discuss and recommend reasonable and necessary changes to the City Code. The overall goal of the Code Revision Task Force is to allow for well thought out change that strives to create

efficiencies in process, establish user friendly language, and cater to a developer-friendly approach. Klimmek noted that City Planner Amy Barthel will be leading the task force, and estimates that the committee will meet quarterly. The task force will be made up of 1 member from the Council, Planning Commission, BLEDA, and Parks Committee along with Staff. Mayor Wallen volunteered to serve as the Council Representative on the Code Revision Task Force.

#### **4C. New Ideas Discussion**

Council Member Zettervall discussed the possibility for the City to host a recreational/ATV parade through the City. This type of event would provide positive community relief from our current restrictions. Zettervall stated that he has discussed this concept with the Police Chief, and indicated that Chief Scharf really likes the concept. Council discussed possibly holding this event within the first two weeks of June, and that it would provide an opportunity to market some of our businesses. Discussion was held about ways to manage people congregating on the public streets if there are still restrictions in place. Clay Wilfahrt reviewed expected action by the Governor.

Mayor Wallen asked that Council consider adding an item to the Regular Agenda to approve a Resolution in opposition to the Governor's Order No. 20-48. Wallen indicated that given the current state of our economy and business concerns, a Minnesota city recently approved a declaration in opposition to the Governor's Order that sparked his interest in starting to look at what would be beneficial for Big Lake to consider. Mayor Wallen stated that this idea was absolutely not Staff driven, but was brought forward by himself. Wallen also stated that he has serious concerns for the health of our law enforcement Staff which is one of the main reasons for the timing of this.

Council Member Knier stated that he is not going to argue about communication protocol. Knier stated that Staff has provided the draft resolution to the City Attorney, and from a legal perspective the attorney did not have any comments. Knier also stressed that the draft resolution is written in a very respectful way. Knier also clarified that when he ran for Council, he promised to promote business, keep government off people's backs, and to pay down the City's debt. Knier stressed that residents and business owners are hurting here in Big Lake and he wants to represent our citizens. He feels the resolution is more than symbolic, in that it will give citizens a small feeling of control to be able to voice their concerns to their Governor through their representation at a City level. Knier questioned whether there was actually a problem with how this idea was brought forward. Council Member Johnson reviewed past discussions about individual Council Members not approaching staff, but instead to discuss topics under "New Ideas" at workshop to get feedback from Council whether an item should be placed on a future agenda.

Council Member Zettervall reviewed proper communication protocol that the Mayor previously enforced. Zettervall stated that he feels the Mayor was not transparent in directing Staff to produce an opposition resolution, stressing that partisan politics should not be at the local level. Zettervall also stated his concern with the City's insurance policy through the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust. Zettervall stressed that he feels this type of resolution could produce

liability concerns and he would like to speak directly to the City Attorney. Zettervall also reviewed that the League of MN Cities has recommended cities not adopt these types of resolutions, and stated his frustration that we haven't even talked as a Council about what the message should be.

Council Member Johnson stated that she is extremely discouraged with the process that was followed. We are supposed to be transparent and the Mayor has lectured Council Members on that in the past. Johnson stated that this resolution is only symbolic and really makes no difference. Johnson also indicated that 82% of Minnesotans agree with the Governor's Order. Johnson clarified that she is very sympathetic to the businesses in this town, and suggested that a possible better approach would be to send a letter to the Governor that says we would like our businesses to be able to reopen. Johnson stated that she feels the Council doesn't have authority to approve this type of resolution. Johnson also stated that she wants our City Attorney to be in attendance when Council considers this document, and questioned what the rush is to approve this type of document. She has not gotten a single correspondence that says they want this resolution, but she has received comments begging us not to go down this road. Johnson feels this is a purely political ploy, and that it shows a total disrespect for front line medical personnel and vulnerable citizens.

Council Member Hansen stated that whatever we do is symbolic, and stressed the importance of supporting our businesses. Hansen stressed that the Mayor has taken a substantial amount of criticism and ample feedback from Council Members, and asked if we want to move forward with the resolution.

Mayor Wallen stated that he is not demanding that we push this through tonight, noting that he is not opposed to writing a letter in lieu of a resolution. Wallen admitted that he just wanted to get something started, and that he most likely didn't follow established procedures, but isn't sorry that we have started the conversation. He would like the City to do the right thing, at the right time. Wallen confirmed that it is a very difficult and trying time, and wants the people of Big Lake to understand that we care. Wallen stated that he would like the Council to come together as a whole and draft a letter for future Council approval. Council Member Johnson and Knier offered to draft language in a letter format and bring back to the next meeting for full Council consideration.

5. **OTHER** – No other.

6. **ADJOURN**

Council Member Knier motioned to adjourn at 6:01 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Johnson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.