AGENDA
BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2019
5:00 p.m.

1) CALL TO ORDER
2) ROLL CALL
3) ADOPT PROPOSED AGENDA
4) BUSINESS
   4A. City Staff Organizational Changes Review
   4B. 2020 Budget/Levy Review
   4C. Snow and Ice Removal Policy Discussion
   4D. New Ideas Discussion
5) OTHER
6) ADJOURN

Disclaimer: This agenda has been prepared to provide information regarding an upcoming workshop of the Big Lake City Council. This document does not claim to be complete and is subject to change.
COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUESTED

Discuss changes to City Staff organizational structure.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

With the retirement of Public Works Director Goebel, the Personnel Committee directed staff to do a comprehensive review of the City’s organizational structure in order to determine its current efficiency as well as the possibility of any efficiency changes. Staff has met extensively to discuss the option, and a recommendation from the personnel committee has been made to change some positions in order to optimize efficiency. Below is a summary of recommendations from the Personnel Committee.

Public Works

Public Works Director Mike Goebel resigned in late October. City staff has had a succession plan in place for some time that laid out the basic plan for a retirement succession plan. The City Administrator met with outgoing Director Goebel, Engineer Otteson, the Public Works union stewards, and the Finance Director about the structure to gain input. Then the Personnel Committee discussed all of the input and made the following recommendation:

1. **Combine the Engineer and Public Works Director positions.**
   a. **What it is:** Move the position to Grade 21 on the pay scale. Appoint City Engineer Layne Otteson to this position.
   b. **Rationale:** The engineer does a lot of the planning, design, and budgeting for the various infrastructure pieces of the City, and Public Works typically handles the maintenance of those items. In addition Public Works handles the parks in the same manner. A combination of these positions could be an effective way to have a single person managing all of these aspects which will allow for continuity of philosophy throughout the life of the City’s various infrastructure components. In addition, this combination saves the City a significant amount of money. However, on the converse, both positions will not be able to be accomplished by one person, and therefore, the City will need to offload some of the duties of these positions on to other staff.

   Layne is the only qualified candidate internally, is willing to take the position, and has received positive performance reviews throughout his time in Big Lake. Layne also has experience as the Assistant Public Works Director and Interim Public Works Director in Fridley, MN.
2. Appoint both a Water and Wastewater Superintendent and Streets and Parks Superintendent in place of the existing Foreman positions.
   a. **What it is:** make the foreman positions more administrative in nature as Superintendents to absorb some of the work previously handled by the Public Works Director.
   b. **Rationale:** The City has already made the move to a water and wastewater superintendent, though the position remains vacant during the hiring process. The idea behind the move is to hire staff that takes on a more administrative role in managing the facilities rather than a “hands-on” approach. Instead of spending 50%-70% of their time working on tasks completed by water and wastewater operators, or streets and parks staff, the superintendent would spend almost all of their time on administrative duties. New duties will include budgeting, hiring and discipline, scheduling, etc. This will free up time for the Public Works Director/City Engineer, but will also place some more burden on the laborers. If we choose to move to a combined City Engineer and Public Works Director, this change will be necessary, but it will likely come with the need to add one or two additional workers to cover the change in duties from the foreman to the superintendent. Changes to the cost of these positions are basically cost neutral because the wage increases, but overtime and on-call pay are eliminated because these staff are exempt. Staff will hold application and interview processes for both positions. Initial application and interview processes will be internal.

3. **Add One Streets and Parks 2 and one Water/Wastewater 2 position** –
   a. **What it is:** Adding one additional Streets and Parks 2 employee, and one additional Water/Wastewater 2 employee. Job descriptions are attached.
   b. **Rationale:** If the City chooses to move towards a City Engineer/Director of Public Works, and elevate the Foreman positions to superintendents, it would need to consider adding an additional staff person at this level in each water/wastewater and streets and parks. The Superintendents will not be doing day-to-day operational activities, so we will need to make up those hours. In doing so, the City would gain capacity lost by the transition from foreman to Superintendent. In talking with the current Public Works Director, the two Foreman, and the union stewards all in separate meetings, they all agreed that this will be a need under the new structure. The combination of the Public Works Director position with the City Engineer position offsets almost the entire cost of these two positions.

4. Add “Lead” positions in Water/Wastewater and Streets and Parks to receive a pay differential to be in charge during the absence of the Superintendent –
   a. **What it is:** In the absence of the Superintendent, there needs to be someone in charge of operations.
   b. **Rationale:** Without a clear chain of command, decisions are difficult to make, which often leads to confusion of who is in charge. Sometimes decisions need to be made in the absence of a Superintendent, otherwise work does not get done. For this reason, staff believes that Lead positions should be established for both Water and Wastewater as well as Streets and Parks. These positions would receive a pay differential while the Superintendent was absent for the additional responsibilities. The cost differential will be a few thousand dollars annually.

5. **Reduce the Public Works’ Administrative Assistant’s hours to 20 hours per week** –
   a. **What it is:** reduce the Public Works Administrative Assistant’s hours to 20 hours per week starting January 2020.
   b. **Rationale:** Assuming the position is approved, the Director of Public Works and City Engineer intends to office out of City Hall. The Administrative Assistant at Public Works does a majority of her work for the Public Works Director. The Personnel Committee believes that this position
could be cut to 20 hours per week without the presence of the Public Works Director at the Public Works building. The duties of the Administrative Assistant would largely shift to staff at City Hall. Some of those duties include coordination of parks commission packets and general administrative support of the Director of Public Works.

**Community Development**

1. **Change the Recreation Coordinator position to a Recreation and Communication Coordinator position.**
   a. **What it is:** Change the Recreation Coordinator position to a Recreation and Communication Coordinator, and make it a full-time exempt position.
   b. **Rationale:** This position has always been designed for a person with strong communication skills, so moving all communication duties to this position allows a unified approach from a staff person with skills in the area. This position could take on the website, newsletter, social media communications, and internal city communication duties. These duties are primarily handled by an Administrative Assistant, but other staff get involved in them as well. If made full-time, this individual would also be in charge of the budgeting for the recreation and farmers market budgets. There will be an additional expense to make this position full-time, but it can be offset by reducing hours of administrative assistants.

2. **Move from two administrative assistants down to one full-time administrative assistant and one half-time administrative assistant.**
   a. **What it is:** Make one of the Community Development Administrative Assistants part-time and leave the second position full-time.
   b. **Rationale:** Staff believes that moving some duties from the current administrative assistants to other staff will eliminate the need for both positions to be full-time. First, City communications including the newsletter, website, and social media will be consolidated under one position with the Recreation and Communication coordinator. This will allow the City to have one person in charge of all mediums of communication which creates specialization and efficiencies. EDA and Planning packets and minutes will be taken over by the Recreation Coordinator/Communication Coordinator. The Community Development Director has reviewed this plan and believes that there is adequate capacity with the change in roles and structure.

**Police**

1. **Hire an additional police officer.**
   a. **What it is:** Add an additional police officer.
   b. **Rationale:** Attached is a memo from Chief Scharf. In summary, there are a few main reasons as to why we are requesting another officer.
      i. We currently have only one officer on duty from 4am to 8am, which is a safety issue for our officers to not have immediately available backup. Adding this position would allow us to have two officers on shift at all times.
      ii. We can significantly reduce overtime by making this change.
      iii. The community has grown significantly over the past few years, and more growth is slated to happen.

Staff would like Council to have a conversation about the Personnel Committee’s recommendation and direct staff how to proceed.
**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

This change fits within the City’s budget for 2020, and if we look long term at the potential costs, it will raise the City’s budget approximately $33,000 annually. This is developed by assuming salaries for all current and proposed positions at a step five of their respective grades while also assuming that all employees receive average levels of benefits.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Direct Staff to proceed as presented.
2. Direct staff to make changes to what is proposed and move forward.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Updated Organizational Chart
- Memo from Chief Scharf
MEMORANDUM

To: Clay Wilfahrt, City Administrator

From: Joel Scharf, Chief of Police

Date: November 4, 2019

Subject: Request to Amend 2020 Police Budget

The Big Lake Police Department has been through highs, and lows as they relate to staffing in both sworn and civilian positions. Below is a historical perspective of our staffing resources over the past 10 years, and a view of some of our surrounding police departments.

Big Lake Police 2008 - 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sworn</th>
<th>Civilian</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Calls - Service</th>
<th>Officer/1,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9,714</td>
<td>7,007</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,198</td>
<td>6,501</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>11 ½</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,309</td>
<td>7,667</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,350</td>
<td>9,230</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11,456</td>
<td>10,915</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>State Average for Cities 10,000 to 25,000 (Group 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*11,750</td>
<td>*15,934</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*12,100</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*12,100</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surrounding Agencies – 2018 Data

- Becker: 7 sworn, 1 civilian, Population 4,880, Officer/1,000 1.43
- Elk River: 34 sworn, 9 civilian, Population 24,724, Officer/1,000 1.38
- Princeton: 12 sworn, 2 civilian, Population 4,666, Officer/1,000 2.57

In our strategic planning, we were going to request funding for an additional officer. With a major reorganization of the City Staffing Structure pending, it was our collective decision to make a request for an additional officer beginning 7-1-2020. The request is based upon a number of factors including:

- **Work Load:** A growing work load for our officers, this relates to calls for service, arrests, assignments, and true community policing efforts.
• **Officer Safety:** Staffing our shifts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with two officers. We currently will drop to one officer from 4 am to 8 am. Adding 40 hours of time to our staffing would allow for an absolute rule of 2 officers on shift.

• **Staffing:** In order to accommodate staffing, our officers are frequently requested to work additional shifts. In 2020, we added nearly $20,000 in overtime to accommodate this growing need.

• **Officer Wellness:** Our department works diligently to allow for leave for our officers to ensure time with their families, and to care for their overall wellness. Our young department is aging each year, and with that comes more demands upon leave.

• **Programs:** Our department has been incredibly successful at outreach, and interaction with our community. These activities translate to work hours, our desire is to continue to focus on this, and even further enhance it.

• **Lakeside Park:** Our department with the addition of an officer, would be welcoming to assuming the duties associated with parking enforcement, and more frequent foot patrols of Lakeside Park should the parking arrangement be changed.

• **Staffing Ratios:** The addition of one officer would bring us in line with similar sized communities and return us to 2008 staffing levels.

• **Planning:** Implementing an officer midyear would allow us to recruit and train an officer to begin fully staffed in approximately 1-1-2021.

• **Growth:** Our community is experiencing solid and strong growth in both residential, and multiunit buildings.

We are incredibly proud of several achievements;

• **Recruitment and Retention:** We are bucking the trend as it relates to attracting and retaining quality officers.

• **Technology:** We embrace technology to allow us to communicate with our citizens and fulfill our missions in the most efficient manner possible.

• **Outreach:** Our department is viewed as a model for interaction with its residents, and region on social media.

• **Minnesota’s Safety City:** We are incredibly proud of being at, or near the top of this ranking the last several years. Its takes work, and resources to attain this level, and maintain it.

• **Succession Planning:** Our department works diligently to build leaders, and roles within the organization.

• **Training:** We pride ourselves on the quality, and volume of training our officers receive.

• **Productivity:** The arrests, and self-initiated activities undertaken by our officers are second to no other department our size.

In order to address our staffing needs, and maintain the quality of our continued success, we are requesting the addition of a Police Officer January 1, 2020. The projected cost for a full year, would be $86,000 including benefits. To implement this position as requested and removing the $15,000 in overtime budgeted for shift shortages would result in a projected final impact of **$71,000**.
There are a number of factors that drive staffing levels, including the level of commercial and business traffic, proximity to high volume roadways, proximity to higher population areas, types of housing, and so forth. While our level of calls driven by businesses is lower, our volumes of “pass through crimes” continue to grow.

Thank you for your consideration!
PROPOSED 2020 Organizational Structure

City Council

City Administrator

Police Chief
- Investigator
- Administrative Specialists (2)
- Police Captain
- Administrative Assistant (Part Time)
- Sergaents (2)
- Officers (9)

Engineer/Public Works Director
- Water/Wastewater Superintendent
- Water/Wastewater Operator I/II (5)
- Streets and Parks Superintendent
- Streets/Parks Employee I/II (8)
- Engineering Intern
- Fleet Mechanic
- Permanent Part-time Parks Worker
- Seasonal Parks Staff

Community Development Director
- Building Official
- Planner
- Administrative Assistant (Part Time)
- Administrative Assistant
- Recreation & Communications Coordinator (FT)
- Code Enforcement Intern

City Clerk

Finance Director

Liquor Store Manager
- Accounting, Payroll, Deputy City Clerk
- Assistant Liquor Manager
- Accounting Technician UB/AP/AR
- FT Liquor Clerk
- PT Liquor Staff
COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUESTED
Direction to Staff regarding the proposed 2020 final budget numbers.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION
During this budget workshop all that is being presented is the Liquor Store 2020 Budget. The direction from Council at the October 9 Workshop was to move forward with the 2020 Preliminary General Fund Budget as discussed, and to bring back further discussion on the Liquor Store budget. Just a reminder that the approval of the 2020 General Fund Budget does not guarantee the same funding level for future budgets. Future funding levels are at the discretion of the City Council.

Workshop discussion will focus on the Liquor Store Enterprise Fund:

- Liquor Store
  - Revenues - proposed decrease of 4.23% or $198,780.
    - Gross Profit % projected at 27% of sales.
    - Net Profit % less Transfer to General Fund - 10%.
  - Expenditures - proposed decrease of 4.31% or $202,655.
    - Re-evaluated personnel line item – increase $15,199.
  - Cost of Goods Sold line decreased by $49,582.
    - Products purchased for resale decreased by $64,582.
    - Loyalty Program changed and only budgeting $15,000 for year.
      - Staff will change the reward system; ideal expense each month would be $1,000.
  - Transfer to General Fund is $450,000.
  - Projected Net Profit with depreciation and transfer to General Fund is $4,964.
  - Project Net Profit before the transfer to the General Fund is $454,964 or 10%.

GENERAL FUND BUDGET – LEVY
- Public Input Meeting is November 26, 2019 at 6:00 pm
- Total Levy - $4,507,342 – down $58,611 compared to preliminary
- City Tax Rate 49.89 down by 2.54%
  - Impact on residential property with value of $216,000 – increase of $3.39 due to projected increase of values of 8%
- General Fund Budget - $5,357,251

Final presentation to council for final approval of the 2020 Levy and Budget will be on December 11, 2019.
**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

N/A

**ALTERNATIVES**

Change any liquor store line item as council directs staff to do so.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Liquor Store proposed 2020 budget
## Liquor Store Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019 Budget</th>
<th>2020 Final Budget</th>
<th>$ Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Sales</td>
<td>4,694,225</td>
<td>4,494,157</td>
<td>(200,068)</td>
<td>-4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Sales</td>
<td>3,350,832</td>
<td>3,301,250</td>
<td>(49,582)</td>
<td>-1.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Profit</td>
<td>1,343,393</td>
<td>1,192,907</td>
<td>(150,486)</td>
<td>-11.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Budget</td>
<td>4,504,607</td>
<td>4,499,643</td>
<td>(5,964)</td>
<td>-0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Sales</td>
<td>4,694,225</td>
<td>4,494,157</td>
<td>(200,068)</td>
<td>-4.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenues</td>
<td>9,162</td>
<td>10,450</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>14.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenues</td>
<td>4,703,387</td>
<td>4,504,607</td>
<td>(198,780)</td>
<td>-4.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense Budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>490,187</td>
<td>505,386</td>
<td>15,199</td>
<td>3.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>6,044</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>(344)</td>
<td>-5.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>147,149</td>
<td>158,406</td>
<td>11,257</td>
<td>7.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Sales</td>
<td>3,350,832</td>
<td>3,286,250</td>
<td>(64,582)</td>
<td>-1.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Sales - Loyalty Club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital/Transfers</td>
<td>630,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>(130,000)</td>
<td>-25.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt</td>
<td>12,408</td>
<td>10,901</td>
<td>(247)</td>
<td>-2.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation</td>
<td>65,688</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>2,312</td>
<td>3.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>4,702,308</td>
<td>4,499,643</td>
<td>(202,665)</td>
<td>-4.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Income/(Loss) with Depreciation</td>
<td>$ 1,079</td>
<td>$ 4,964</td>
<td>$ 3,885</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected Ending Cash</td>
<td>$ 898,301</td>
<td>$ 891,328</td>
<td>$ (6,973)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Projected cash balance is after principal debt payments are made**

Net profit before transfer $454,964

Net profit % before transfer 10%
COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUESTED
Staff asks that Council provide direction regarding the recommendations made by the Snow Removal Policy Task Force.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION
The Snow Removal Policy Task Force met on Monday, October 28, 2019 to discuss both snow removal of streets and clearing of sidewalks. This discussion was prompted by the City receiving complaints during the 2018/2019 snow season.

After discussion, the Snow Removal Policy Task Force decided on the following to recommend to City Council:
- Streets – keep the policy as is.
- Sidewalks – two items were discussed with recommended changes:
  - Snow Removal Fee – The current fee is $163 in addition to the contractor’s time for every offense. The group discussed a less punitive approach. It is recommended to change the fee schedule to reflect a three-tiered system. The first offense would charge a fee of $50 in addition to the contractor’s time, second offense would charge a fee of $100 in addition to the contractor’s time, and the third offense would charge a fee of $150 in addition to the contractor’s time.
  - Snow removal along commercial streets – It is recommended to add language to the policy regarding residences that have a sidewalk adjacent to streets with a width of 40’ or greater. Those who have a sidewalk along a commercial street will have 48 (rather than 24) hours to remove their snow. Public Works will also remove snow off of the boulevard in these areas to assist the homeowners.

FINANCIAL IMPACT
If approved, there will be a change to the fee schedule by adding a tiered system of billing.

ALTERNATIVES
N/A

ATTACHMENTS
Memo to the Snow Removal Policy Task Force
Snow & Ice Control Policy
Sidewalk Snow Removal Policy
BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION
Last year the City received complaints about snow removal on both streets and sidewalks. Since the two issues are very different, we will approach them separately.

1. Streets Snow Removal
   Last year we received a few snow complaints. We reached record depths of snow, so much of the concern was surrounding the amount of snow, by some was directed at our procedures. Specifically, people were concerned about the fact that we don’t plow for every snow fall, that we don’t clear out mailboxes and fire hydrants, and that when mailboxes are broken by snow being plowed into them, we don’t replace them. We only replace boxes that are hit by our trucks.

   Attached is a copy of the City’s snow removal policy pulled from the City website. In general, the City will remove snow if there are two or more inches, or drifting or icy conditions that impede travel. Routes are prioritized, and those serving public safety interests are plowed first, school, business, and residential streets are second priority, and parking lots, cul-de-sacs, and alleys are third priority. City staff and Council has traditionally held the position that less than two inches of snow is not a hazard or impediment to travel, and therefore we should not spend the dollars to clear the streets. Making some simple assumptions, if we require 11 people 8 hours to clean our streets, and those staff are making $35/hr in total compensation, we are paying $3,080 in wages to clean streets plus gas and wear and tear on vehicles. Additionally, this may come with overtime or call back pay. It’s reasonable to assume that the cost of plowing our streets is greater than $5,000 per snowfall.

   The City’s policy addresses property damage of both mailboxes and landscaping:

   **Mailboxes**
   If a mailbox that complies with the Big Lake City Code Section 1020.08 Minnesota Statutes Section 169.072, Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818, and United States Postal Service specifications is damaged as a result of direct contact by City snow removal equipment and the property owner promptly reports the damage to the Public Works Director the City will replace the mailbox with a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox and replace the support post as necessary with a four foot by four foot, decay resistance wood support post, both installed by the City. Alternatively the City will reimburse the mailbox owner in an amount not to exceed $200 for the replacement of the mailbox and post by others. The City will not repair or reimburse for damage to media or newspaper boxes. Final cleaning adjacent to mailboxes is the responsibility of the owner.

   **Landscaping**
   Only those items which are installed properly and allowed by City Ordinance to be adjacent to boulevards and damaged by actual contact with City equipment will be considered for repair or replacement at City expense. Damage to trees, fences, shrubbery, sprinkler heads, and other landscaping in the City’s right-of-way will not be considered for compensation. Lawns that are scraped or gouged by City snow and ice operations will be repaired by top dressing and seeding in the following spring.
Basically unless there is direct contact between the plow and a mailbox, the City will not reimburse property owners for damage. Additionally, residents are responsible for clearing their mailboxes after the plow clears the street. We estimated that the cost of the City clearing mailboxes would cost $70k in staff time annually.

Staff would like clarification on the Task Force’s comfort level with the current policy, and specifically how mailbox clearing and replacement is handled as well as the two inch threshold.

2. Sidewalk Clearing

Over the past couple of years, the City has been much more aggressive with requiring residents to clear their sidewalks. We have members of our community who rely on them for children to get to school, and there are several physically handicapped people who are unable to drive and regularly use sidewalks as a means of transportation. There are also some who like to use the trails for recreation purposes throughout the winter. Because of these uses, the City highly values the removal of snow from sidewalks.

I want to give a brief side note about sidewalk plowing. If we built streets where the sidewalk is immediately adjacent to the street due to design issues, the City clears the sidewalk. Examples of this include Lake Street and Eagle Lake Road. The City does not clear the remainder of the sidewalks because it would take a large amount of time to do so.

City code requires that snow be removed from property owners’ sidewalks within 24 hours of the snowfall ending. Residents that do not shovel their snow receive a $163 administrative fine plus the hourly cost of our contractor to remove the snow. The administrative cost was developed by estimating the amount of time that administrative staff spends on these each year and dividing it amongst the number of fines issued. City staff announces that a sweep will be occurring on its website and Facebook page the day prior to the sweep occurring.

Last year, we received numerous complaints about this policy, mostly from those who violated the policy. They were concerned with the cost of the fine, and also that uncontrollable circumstances sometimes was the reason for not clearing sidewalks. The fine issue was discussed prior, and the uncontrollable circumstances are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. If there is a compelling reason to waive a fee, staff occasionally does so.

Finally, there is another issue that emerged last year. Some areas of the City have sidewalks that get absolutely buried in plowed snow. Staff has been sent pictures showing areas where several feet of packed snow are plowed onto a sidewalk. In Hudson woods for example, Marketplace Drive is 54’ wide which is almost double the size of some of our residential streets. The sidewalk is set back 5’ from the curb. Because of the added surface area and limited sidewalk setback, the sidewalk is often buried in several feet of packed snow. Residents have complained that their residential snow blowers are not equipped to handle such volumes of snow.

Staff would like the Task Force to discuss the snow clearing policy, and in particular the fined, uncontrollable circumstances, and the areas with extraordinary plowed snow on sidewalks.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Snow Removal Policies
Sidewalk Snow Removal

The City received numerous complaints during the winter of 2017-2018 regarding sidewalks which were not being consistently cleared of snow. Big Lake is a walk-able community and many residents, especially children and those with physical handicaps who cannot drive, rely on the sidewalk system to safely navigate their neighborhoods and access community resources. It only takes one snowy/icy sidewalk section to force pedestrians into the road where their safety is compromised.

The City’s Sidewalk Ordinance States:

The owner or occupant of any premises in city limits has 24 hours from the end of any snowfall to clear their sidewalk of snow and loose ice. After 24 hours, the City or its authorized contractor will clear the snow, serve a notice, and bill the property owner for the cost of the snow removal. The 2018 fee schedule sets the fee for each violation at: $163 administrative charge + the contractor’s hourly rate for all time spent at the property

* If the fee is not paid, it will be added to the property taxes as an assessment.

The City will be sending out its authorized contractor after every significant snowfall to perform a “sweep” of the sidewalk system to ensure compliance with the ordinance. These sweeps will take place:

1. Automatically, any time a single snowfall event drops more than two (2) inches of snow
2. Automatically, any time multiple snowfall events in a row result in more than two (2) inches of snow building up.
3. At the City’s discretion, any time the City receives complaints regarding non-compliance with the ordinance. The ordinance requires that all snow be shoveled within 24 hours after the end of snowfall. Sidewalks must still be shoveled even if less than two (2) inches of snow has fallen.

The City will not send its authorized contractor out to perform a “sweep” until at least 24 hours has passed since the last snow has fallen so residents will have sufficient time to comply with the ordinance. When a sweep has been deemed necessary, the City shall provide notice on its website and Facebook page alerting residents that a sweep will be taking place the following day. The authorized contractor will begin the sweep at 8:00 AM the day following the City’s announcement.

Questions about the ordinance can be directed to City Planner Michael Healy at mhealy@biglakemn.org or 763-251-2977.

CONTACT US

Michael Healy
City Planner
Email Michael Healy
Phone: 763-251-2977

Subscribe!

You can sign up to receive a text or email alert the day before a sidewalk snow removal sweep is set to occur. Click here to subscribe.

Sidewalk Ordinance

A link to the full text of the sidewalk ordinance can be found here. (Chapter 5; Section 550)
Snow & Ice Control Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Snow and Ice Control Policy is to establish and maintain uniform procedures concerning snow and ice operations for the City of Big Lake. The City shall provide such control in a safe and cost effective manner while keeping safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns in mind. The City shall use its employees, equipment, and/or private contractors to provide this service. It is in the City’s best interest to have a snow and ice control policy, but because of variable weather conditions, the policy must remain flexible.

II. Policy

Operations will continue until all City streets are passable. However, the City does not guarantee bare, dry pavement conditions after each snowfall or that streets will be totally free of ice and snow or driving hazards common to Minnesota winter weather.

III. Procedures

A. The Public Works Director or designee shall be responsible for enforcing and implementing this policy.
B. The Public Works Director, or designee, will decide when to begin snow and ice control operations. The criteria for that decision shall be based upon:
   1. Snow accumulation of two inches or more.
   2. Drifting of snow that impairs travel.
   3. Icy conditions which seriously hinders travel.
   4. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy traffic use of streets.
   5. Time of snowfall in relationship to its melting off the streets.

   Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snow accumulations of less than two inches.

C. Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize any traffic obstructions. Snow will be plowed so the discharge is directed onto the boulevard area of the street. In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always be immediately and completely cleared of snow.
D. Where space does not allow for snow to be piled in the boulevard, the City may remove the snow by truck from a given area. Such snow removal operations will not commence until other snow removal operations and City duties have been completed.
E. The Public Works Director or designee shall establish a snowplowing route as seen fit under certain conditions. In times of extreme snowfall, high traffic volume streets which connect major sections of the City and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services, will be plowed first.

Second priority streets are those streets providing access to schools, commercial businesses, and residential streets.

Third priority streets are alleys, parking lots, and cul-de-sacs.

Priority ranking may be interrupted in order to respond to emergency requests for assistance or at the direction of the Public Works Director or designee.
F. Snow and ice control operations shall be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of City employees and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include, but are not limited to, severe cold temperature, significant wind speed, limited visibility, and rapid accumulation of snow and ice.

G. Sand, salt, and other chemicals may be used where hazardous icy or slippery conditions exist. Sand, salt, or other chemicals may be placed at intersections, hills, crosswalks, curves, and required vehicle stop areas as necessary for driving safety. This provides for traction, but is not intended to provide bare pavement during winter driving conditions.

The City of Big Lake is concerned with the effect of such chemicals on the environment and will limit use of such chemicals. This policy does not require the City to use chemicals on City streets.

IV. Damage to Property

Snow and ice operations can cause property damage even under the best circumstances and care on the part of the operators. The intent of the right-of-way is to provide room for snow storage, utilities, boulevard trees, sidewalks, and other City uses.

A. Mailboxes

If a mailbox that complies with the Big Lake City Code Section 1020.08 Minnesota Statutes Section 169.072, Minnesota Rules Chapter 8818, and United States Postal Service specifications is damaged as a result of direct contact by City snow removal equipment and the property owner promptly reports the damage to the Public Works Director the City will replace the mailbox with a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox and replace the support post as necessary with a four foot by four foot, decay resistance wood support post, both installed by the City. Alternatively the City will reimburse the mailbox owner in an amount not to exceed $200 for the replacement of the mailbox and post by others. The City will not repair or reimburse for damage to media or newspaper boxes. Final cleaning adjacent to mailboxes is the responsibility of the owner.

B. Landscaping

Only those items which are installed properly and allowed by City Ordinance to be adjacent to boulevards and damaged by actual contact with City equipment will be considered for repair or replacement at City expense. Damage to trees, fences, shrubbery, sprinkler heads, and other landscaping in the City's right-of-way will not be considered for compensation. Lawns that are scraped or gouged by City snow and ice operations will be repaired by top dressing and seeding in the following spring.

V. Resident Responsibility

Under Big Lake City Code Section 500.04 residents are responsible for removing snow and ice from public sidewalks abutting their property.

Residents are also responsible for clearing their driveway. Snow plowing on the street can cause additional snow to be deposited in driveway approaches and around roadside obstacles, so residents are responsible for clearing their driveways after their street has been plowed.

CONTACT US

Public Works
Physical Address
18041 198th Avenue
Big Lake, MN 55309

Phone: 763-263-2268
Fax: 763-263-1713

Hours
Monday - Friday
7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
COUNCIL DIRECTION REQUESTED
None

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION
In early 2019, the Council discussed having a standing item on the agenda where Councilmembers could bring up ideas. This time is dedicated for Council to bring up any ideas that they have to the rest of Council and staff.

FINANCIAL IMPACT
None

ALTERNATIVES
None

ATTACHMENTS
None