

**BIG LAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES**

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Alan Heidemann called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Donna Clarksean, Ken Geroux, Alan Heidemann, Paul Knier, Kristopher Knodle, and Kathryn Parsons. Commissioners absent: Jake Rohrbeck.

Also present: BLEDA Executive Director Marie Popp, City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, BLEDA Assistant Treasurer Deb Wegeleben and BLEDA Secretary Lisa Miller.

4. ADOPT AGENDA

Commissioner Knier motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Geroux, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

5. APPROVE BLEDA MINUTES OF APRIL 13, 2026

Commissioner Geroux motioned to approve the BLEDA minutes of April 13, 2026, as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Parsons, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

6A. CITY-OWNED LOTS ON HIGHWAY 25 AND PLEASANT AVENUE

BLEDA Executive Director Marie Popp discussed two City-owned parcels along Highway 25 near Pleasant Avenue that formerly housed the senior center. Popp explained while the Comprehensive Plan designates the properties for Business use, they are currently zoned R-3 High Density Residential within the Downtown District Transition Zone. Popp noted parcels intended for economic development have historically been owned and managed by BLEDA. The land use map shows the area as being business along Highway 25, including current homes. R-3 setbacks on the front and rear of the two properties show one as 50 feet and the other as 40 feet, which would take up the entire site. She stated if BLEDA wishes to take a more active role in preparing the site for future development, the parcels would need to be rezoned and

combined to align with the intended land-use vision. Popp also noted BLEDA could consider acquiring additional property nearby to create a larger and more marketable development opportunity. Popp asked BLEDA to discuss if they would like to consider the site a priority for future economic development planning and if there is any interest in pursuing next steps.

BLEDA Commissioners discussed the future development potential of city-owned parcels along Highway 25 and the possibility of combining adjacent parcels to create a more marketable redevelopment site. Popp explained the current concept would involve combining two city-owned parcels and potentially acquiring an additional privately owned parcel to improve site size, access, and development feasibility. Discussion included possible future commercial uses, including a small coffee shop or similar business, and how the site aligns with the City's long-term land use plans for business development. BLEDA discussed differing perspectives regarding whether the City and EDA should continue acquiring and assembling property for redevelopment purposes or instead return existing properties to the private sector and tax rolls. Some Commissioners expressed support for holding the properties for future redevelopment opportunities, while others favored minimizing City ownership unless additional acquisition would significantly improve redevelopment potential. Popp reviewed the existing zoning and land use designations in the area, noting that portions of the area are currently zoned R-3 but identified for future business and high-density residential uses in the comprehensive plan. Discussion was had on the potential administrative process of transferring ownership of the parcels between the City and EDA if redevelopment efforts move forward.

Consensus of the BLEDA was to continue holding the existing parcels and not actively pursue acquisition of the adjacent private parcel at this time, but to remain open to future discussions if the property owner expresses interest or redevelopment opportunities arise.

6B. CITY ORDINANCE FEEDBACK DISCUSSION

Popp discussed BLEDA has historically taken an active role in reviewing City ordinances when efficiencies can be identified or when feedback suggests certain requirements may be outdated or burdensome for area businesses. Popp reviewed recent comments received from the business community and asked for BLEDA discussion and recommended direction.

BLEDA discussion was held regarding potential amendments to the City's landscaping, building height, and downtown design standards ordinances. Concerns were raised about the cost and practicality of current landscaping requirements for commercial developments, with discussion focusing on balancing aesthetics with affordability and maintenance considerations. Popp reviewed neighboring community standards, noting Becker has limited landscaping requirements while Elk River has more extensive standards. Consensus was reached for staff to further review landscaping and hardscape requirements and return with recommendations.

Popp presented information regarding current maximum building height regulations, noting most zoning districts are limited to 35 feet, with the TOD district allowing up to 60 feet. Discussion included recent requests from industrial businesses seeking additional building height to accommodate equipment and overhead cranes. BLEDA discussed concerns that the current restrictions may limit business growth, building design flexibility, and economic development opportunities. Comparisons with surrounding communities were reviewed, including industrial height allowances exceeding 100 feet in some areas. General consensus supported reviewing and potentially increasing allowable building heights, up to 199 feet, in certain zoning districts while maintaining current single-family residential standards. Staff was directed to continue researching surrounding community standards, infrastructure considerations, and district-specific recommendations.

Discussion also occurred regarding the City's downtown design standards and overlay districts. BLEDA discussed the history and intent of the standards, which were originally established in the late 1990s to improve aesthetics and create a more cohesive downtown appearance. Concerns were expressed that portions of the standards are overly prescriptive, create confusion for developers, and may hinder redevelopment opportunities. Specific examples were shared regarding past development challenges and requirements that were viewed as impractical for businesses. Popp reviewed the current downtown design district map and explained that some transition overlay areas no longer carry enforceable requirements. General consensus of the BLEDA supported eliminating or substantially revising the outdated downtown design standards and simplifying the process for future development and redevelopment projects.

6C. BLEDA STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

Popp explained that BLEDA recently reviewed its Strategic Plan and made only minor revisions. During those discussions, a potential land sale prompted additional conversations about future action steps and tactical approaches for certain targeted parcels. Popp requested BLEDA revisit the Strategic Plan to ensure it continues to reflect the organization's priorities, provides clear direction to staff, and aligns long-term goals with near-term action items.

BLEDA discussed the potential pursuit of additional redevelopment and land acquisition opportunities within the downtown area. Popp noted there are funds available to pursue strategic property acquisitions if desired by BLEDA. Discussion included the importance of monitoring properties that may become available, including those not formally listed for sale, and maintaining communication with property owners and developers. BLEDA discussed the long-term vision for redevelopment in the downtown area, including concerns regarding the financial return on investment and the length of time it may take to recover acquisition costs.

through future property tax revenue. Some members expressed support for a proactive redevelopment approach, while others questioned the extent to which the City should be involved versus allowing private market redevelopment to occur independently. Popp provided an update regarding recent activity surrounding nearby storage facility properties and explained current zoning regulations would not allow additional storage buildings without further approvals, as existing facilities are grandfathered under current zoning. Discussion followed regarding whether redevelopment efforts should focus on adjacent properties and encouraging private investment rather than direct City acquisition. BLEDA also discussed the importance of preparing the area for future redevelopment opportunities in advance of the anticipated Public Safety Facility relocation in spring 2028. Popp explained that ongoing environmental work, planning efforts, zoning updates, comprehensive plan amendments, and revised development guidelines are intended to position the site for future marketing and redevelopment. Popp noted developers often seek certainty regarding zoning and development requirements prior to committing to projects. Discussion also included the future Request for Proposals (RFP) process, potential redevelopment criteria, and the importance of identifying EDA priorities for future development, including desired uses, density, and design expectations. Popp stated preliminary cleanup and planning work could likely be completed over the coming months before broader marketing efforts begin. BLEDA acknowledged redevelopment efforts require significant preparation and coordination but agreed continued planning and communication with interested developers and property owners remains important.

Consensus of the BLEDA was to continue the discussion on the strategic plan at the next meeting.

6D. BLEDA FINANCIAL REPORT AND LIST OF CLAIMS FOR APRIL 2026

Deb Wegeleben reviewed the BLEDA financial report and list of claims for April 2026.

Commissioner Knier motioned to approve the BLEDA Financial Report and List of Claims for April 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Geroux unanimous ayes, motion carried.

6E. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Popp reviewed closing on the Pizza Factory relocation took place on May 7, 2026.

7. OTHER

8. ADJOURN

Commissioner Clarksean motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. Seconded by Knier, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.