BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES
MAY 22, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER
Mayor Wallen called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL
Council Members present: Dick Backlund, Seth Hansen, Rose Johnson, Paul Knier, and Mike Wallen. Also present: City Administrator Clay Wilfahrt, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Community Development Director Hanna Klimmek, Public Works Director Mike Goebel, City Engineer Layne Otteson, City Planner Michael Healy, Building Official Mick Kaehler, and Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA
Council Member Knier motioned to adopt the proposed agenda as presented. Seconded by Council Member Johnson, unanimous ayes, agenda adopted.

4. BUSINESS
4A. Lake Mitchell Launch Discussion
Clay Wilfahrt reviewed a 2017 staff memo that was produced the last time the BLCLA requested the Mitchell Lake Boat Launch be closed. Wilfahrt also reviewed the City’s partnership with Sherburne County Soil and Water Conservation District to install “Internet Landing Installed Device Sensors” (I-LIDS) at Big Lake boat launch sites to monitor boat launch activity and to inform boaters of the proper rules for launching a boat to avoid the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). If a violation occurs, the video can be sent to law enforcement for potential charges. Staff has reviewed I-LIDS footage and data and determined that 21 launches occurred from August to November 2018, which is down from the 2016 figure during the same time period when there were 51 launches. Staff asked for comments from Council on if the City’s position has changed regarding use of the Mitchell Lake Boat Launch.

Karna Lundquist, President of the Big Lake Community Lake Association (BLCLA) presented Council with a request asking that the City close the Mitchell Lake Boat Launch during the open water season due to concerns about the spreading of AIS from boats entering our lakes. Many reasons have come to light since this was reviewed by Council in 2017. Lundquist reviewed the risks of Starry Stonewort and Zebra Mussels, noting that once you lose the balance of a healthy lake, you will never get it back. The primary objection for closing the access is convenience, but noted that on-site inspection is the best way to prevent infestation. The Lake Association stressed that it is economically unfeasible to staff inspectors at both Big Lake and Mitchell Lake, and that we should focus our efforts at a single launch, with that being at Lakeside Park.
Council discussed the likelihood of an AIS lake infestation, and how those numbers could be affected by closing the Lake Mitchell Boat Launch. Deb Hart from the Lake Association informed Council that there is confirmed use of the Mitchell Boat Launch by boaters who also use Lake Koronis, which has confirmed infestation of Starry Stonewort. Lundquist reviewed research from the University of Minnesota relating to data obtained to determine the likelihood of specific lakes being infested if we continue with the boat movements and patterns that currently exist. Council Member Johnson stressed that reducing the number of launch sites, reduces the risk, noting that launch inspectors can provide education to boaters. Council Member Knier discussed comments from citizens in favor of both closing the launch as well as leaving it open. Knier stated that he respects all viewpoints and recognizes that AIS is a very serious matter. Knier acknowledged that the lake system is an asset and could cost the City substantial dollars to protect, but is very sensitive to taking away people’s freedoms and liberties. Knier stated that the major problems seem to be a lack of education and movement of boats from other lakes, and suggested limiting launch access on Mitchell Lake to only City residents and issuing a gate key and provide education to those users, and possibly re-evaluating within a certain number of years. Knier stated that he feels it’s a good compromise to limit the launch to only City of Big Lake users. Discussion was held that even Big Laker’s could potentially put their boats on other lakes and bring back to Big Lake potentially causing an infestation. Council Member Hansen discussed concerns with issuing gate keys to residents, noting that an access card might eliminate the concern that the key holder would duplicate the key. Hansen stated that he isn’t ready to make a decision at this point. Council Member Johnson asked how much convenience are we willing to chance for 21 users. Johnson also stated that she is totally comfortable with a sunset provision, and would like to open up discussions on eliminating Lakeside Park parking fees for City residents so our residents don’t feel inconvenienced by closing the Mitchell Lake Boat Launch. Mayor Wallen discontinued discussion due to time constraints.

Clay Wilfahrt discussed public input that was gathered when this topic was last reviewed in 2017, suggesting that Council assign a taskforce to determine the next steps. Council Member Johnson stated that she would like to see the discussion eventually opened up to the public. Council Members Johnson and Knier offered to serve on the taskforce along with key City Staff. Members from the Lake Association thanked the City for agreeing to open up discussions on the Mitchell Lake Boat Launch.

**4B. LEAN Event Presentation**

Item was tabled due to lack of time.

**4C. Sketch Plan Review – Detached Townhome Concept**

Michael Healy reviewed a preliminary detached townhome concept for a 2.5 acre parcel located directly across the road from the Prairie Meadows Development. The parcel is currently located in Big Lake Township and would require annexation prior to moving forward. Healy explained that at this point, the Council is being asked for an informal “first impression” of the project. Jesse Hartung from Modern Construction of MN is proposing to construct detached townhomes on small lots that have townhome-style layouts, dimensions, and architectural characteristics.
These types of structures are often popular with seniors looking to downsize, and with young families looking for a single-family home level of privacy, but with townhome pricing and yardwork responsibilities. Healy noted that currently, detached townhomes are only allowed in the R-2 Medium Density Residential Zoning District and only with PUD approval. The parcel is currently platted in the Big Lake Township Sandhill Acres Plat which is a semi-rural subdivision that was platted in 2015. Both the City and the Township were opposed to the Plat because it created a semi-rural subdivision in an area that was being steered towards a future City neighborhood. It violated both the City and the Township Comprehensive Plans. At the time it was platted, it met Sherburne County’s zoning requirements and the County was legally obligated to approve the Plat. Two of the four lots created by the Sandhill Acres Subdivision have already been built on with single family homes that are connected to septic systems and well water. The proposed detached townhome development could provide an opportunity to steer one of the remaining two lots back towards city-style development which would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Healy reviewed approvals that would be required to complete this development which include Concept Plan Review by the Planning Commission and City Council, Annexation, Rezoning to R-2, PUD approval that includes concept plan, preliminary plan and final plat with public hearings, and Platting with a Development Contract.

Jesse Hartung reviewed proposed plans for the detached townhome concept.

Council Member Johnson discussed concern with the location of the project, stating that she feels seniors would prefer to have closer access to City amenities. Johnson also noted that the proposed design is out of character with surrounding structures, and discussed concern that Townhome Associations can cease to exist which can present future issues. Johnson also stated that she doesn’t see any major issues regarding the project. Mayor Wallen discussed the need for more sunset style housing concepts in the area, noting that the design would also be a nice entry level home for a young person. Wallen stated that he wants to let the market dictate sales.

4D. SAC/WAC Payment Incentive Policy Revision

Hanna Klimmek reviewed proposed revisions to the City’s SAC/WAC Payment Incentive Policy. Revisions include structuring the incentive as a 429 Assessment which would be certified to Sherburne County, structuring the terms of the assessment to match the City’s Assessment Policy terms, and omitting the eligibility requirement that the applicant must prove a gap in financials. BLEDA sees this revision as an opportunity to take advantage of a marketing tool that welcomes eligible businesses into the community and incentivizes current business to expand.

Council directed staff to bring the revisions to a future Council Meeting for consideration.

4E. Highline Trail Grant Award

Layne Otteson informed Council that the City received notice from MNDOT of a successful application for the Highline Drive Corridor Trail project. Staff applied for funding through the very competitive Transportation Alternatives Program, and Big Lake was awarded $285,597 towards the project. The funding is programmed for 2022 – 2023. Otteson noted that the project can be
advanced, but clarified that the City will not be reimbursed until 2023. Otteson also explained that the trail is identified in our comprehensive plan as a priority, and will complete a missing segment along Highline Drive and County Road 73. The segment will begin at Highland Trail near Highline Park, and will end at Mitchell Road. Estimated project costs include construction costs at $356,996, and engineering/surveying/testing costed at $15,000, totaling $371,996. The City’s portion of this cost will amount to $86,399 which is allocated in the CIP fund.

4F. New Ideas Discussion

Mayor Wallen discussed the possibility of showcasing a City business during the Community Development monthly updates. Council Member Knier discussed his concern that a competitor of a showcased business could find it inequitable. Council also discussed the need to set a time limit on these types of presentations. Council directed Staff to put together some criteria and bring back to Council for further discussion.

5. OTHER – No other.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Knier motioned to adjourn at 5:56 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Backlund unanimous ayes, motion carried.