BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES

JUNE 17, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Ken Geroux, Ken Halverson, Paul Knier, Kim Noding, and Paul Seefeld. Also present: City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Marie Popp, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Police Chief Sam Olson, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Dan Childs, and Big Lake Student Liaison Adelyn Gosewisch.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA

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

4. BUSINESS

4A. 2026 Work Plan Update

Hanna Klimmek provided an update on the 2026 Work Plan which is based on the city's strategic plan. Klimmek explained the Work Plan consists of projects that are above and beyond the everyday services the city provides, noting most projects within the Work Plan begin with one member of the Management Team, but can affect multiple departments and will take the time of several positions within the organization.

Council Member Noding asked how long it will take to complete the cyber security plan. Deb Wegeleben responded part of the plan was completed through Marco, and we will continue working with the League of MN Cities on the remainder, noting it will take a couple of years to complete. Council Member Halverson asked how much this is going to cost us. Wegeleben discussed the work with Marco is through our monthly contract and the League of MN Cities provides this service as part of our membership.

Mayor Knier suggested the work plan also identify projects in process. Knier also expressed the need for the city to remain proactive on its cybersecurity efforts as municipalities are a target for hackers. Knier asked if the Public Safety Facility team is already established, and Klimmek confirmed it is.

4B. Big Lake Strategic Plan Discussion

Hanna Klimmek discussed the City's current 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, which expires on December 31, 2026. Staff provided background on the strategic planning process completed on February 23, 2024, which included participation by the City Council and Staff Management Team and was facilitated by an outside consultant. The Council reviewed options for the next strategic planning process including updating the existing plan, hiring a professional facilitator, holding a Council-led planning session with staff leadership, or appointing a strategic planning task force. Council direction was requested regarding whether to update the existing Strategic Plan or develop a new plan, the preferred planning process, the desired level of staff participation, and the timeline for completion.

Council Member Geroux discussed the importance for the city to have a current strategic plan, and noted he feels we can do it in-house. Mayor Knier asked what Council Member Geroux considers a finished strategic plan. Geroux responded it needs to be much more descriptive than what we have now, noting several things currently can't be measured. He discussed he would like us to get to the point where we don't need separate strategic and work plans. Council Member Noding discussed she feels the work plan is for staff and the strategic plan is for Council. Council Member Geroux discussed actionable steps can be identified at the strategic planning session.

Klimmek asked for Council feedback on how they would like the setting to be for a strategic planning session. Council discussion centered on having an in-house strategic planning session on an evening separate from a regular meeting, possibly with management team members in attendance.

Council directed Staff to move forward with updating the existing Strategic Plan, with a planning session occurring during an evening separate from a council meeting, prior to the end of the year.

4C. Emergency Siren Discussion

Sam Olson reviewed the transition away from Xcel's outdoor early warning sirens following FEMA's approval of Xcel's move to an all-digital early warning system. Sherburne County has temporarily accepted the sirens into its inventory to allow local jurisdictions time to decide whether to accept responsibility for sirens located within their boundaries. The County will operate and maintain the sirens through 2026 and has requested local decisions by July 1, 2026. Olson reviewed actions taken by surrounding townships, noting Orrock Township declined transfer of its sirens, Becker Township requested resident feedback, and Big Lake Township decided to decommission its sirens. The City of Big Lake has one siren within its corporate boundary and may either accept responsibility for its operation and maintenance or decline the transfer and rely on alternative early warning methods. Staff reviewed alternative early warning options, including IPAWS, Hyper-Reach, and NOAA Weather Radio, and noted the estimated annual cost to operate and maintain the City's one siren would be approximately $8,180, with a potential additional head/horn replacement cost estimated at $33,000 to $37,000. Staff requested Council direction on whether to accept the transfer of the City's outdoor warning siren for City operation and maintenance or decline the transfer and proceed with an alternative early warning option.

Mayor Knier stated he prefers decommissioning the current siren.

Council Member Geroux reviewed when the one siren was put in, our population and boundary was much smaller.

Council Member Halverson noted we used to have two sires before the old fire station was torn down.

Council Member Seefeld discussed he has talked to a County Commissioner on this topic, and expressed some residents don't have cell phones.

Olson reviewed options for alternative early warning options, noting we will need to educate people on service options available.

Council directed Staff to decline the offer and allow the early warning system to be decommissioned. Council also directed staff to move forward with educating citizens on alternative early warning options.

4D. List of Claims Formatting Update

Deb Wegeleben reviewed proposed changes to the List of Claims process based on cybersecurity and fraud risk concerns discussed at a recent networking meeting. Staff also contacted the League of Minnesota Cities regarding council packet posting requirements and best practices. Staff noted cities are not required to post full council packets online, but must make meeting materials available for public inspection as required by the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. To reduce risk, staff will revise the public packet to include only the total amount of claims paid and note the complete List of Claims is available for public inspection at City Hall upon request. Wegeleben noted Council will continue to receive the full claims listing separately prior to meetings for review and approval purposes, and staff anticipates implementing the revised procedure beginning with the July council packet.

4E. Discus City Hall Fleet Expansion Request

Deb Wegeleben reviewed the need for an additional City Hall fleet vehicle due to increased staff use for inspections, site visits, meetings, training, and other City business. The City Hall fleet currently includes three vehicles, and staff noted an additional vehicle would help reduce scheduling conflicts and support operational needs. If approved, staff would pursue cost-effective options through Minnesota State Surplus Services or quotes for a reliable used vehicle, with a purchase price not to exceed $10,000. Funding would come from proceeds from the recent sale of former city fleet vehicles, with any additional amount funded through the CIP Fund. Staff recommended Council authorize the purchase of one additional City Hall fleet vehicle. Norm Michels reviewed issues we were having with Police Department vehicles recently sold at auction, noting City Hall is currently one vehicle short.

Council Member Halverson discussed the Big Lake Fire Department will be selling a truck and it currently has less than 20,000 miles on it, so we should check into purchasing it from the Fire Department.

Council directed Staff to move forward with looking into purchasing a Fire Department vehicle they will be selling.

4F. Discuss Letters of Support Request from Sand Development LLC

Marie Popp reviewed Sand Development LLC's request for City Council letters of support to accompany its Minnesota Housing financing application for a proposed 48-unit income-restricted apartment building near Goldenrod Glen. Popp noted the units would generally be restricted to households at 60% of area median income, with some units potentially subject to additional restrictions depending on the final application. Popp noted similar letters were previously provided for the Goldenrod Glen project. Popp also discussed the BLEDA reviewed the same request at their June 8, 2026 meeting, and recommended denial. Staff requested Council direction on whether to approve or deny issuing letters of support for Sand Development LLC's pursuit of state assistance.

Council Member Halverson asked what the difference is between this project and past projects we have previously approved. Popp responded the main differences are the size and use.

Mayor Knier stated he voted no as a member of the BLEDA and will say no at the council level also. Knier noted we have said yes to this type of housing in the city, and he feels we have an amount of affordable housing here in Big Lake. Knier also discussed when you have an affordable housing building, as a city we only get a quarter of the tax revenue compared to tax revenue market value properties provide. Knier also discussed we already have a wastewater treatment facility that is near capacity.

Council Member Halverson asked if denial of this request could open us up to an issue because we have supported past projects. Mayor Knier stated he feels we are in a different position now than before. Council Member Geroux stated past action shouldn't set a precedence, noting this is based on individual applications. Geroux also stated that from an EDA standpoint, recouping 25% of tax doesn't make sense when we already have considerable income-based housing available. To him, it is more of a balance thing, noting if we were a community that had no access to affordable housing, he would be looking at this a different way as communities do need balance. However, we do have what he feels is a suitable amount of housing styles, noting 48% of our multi-family housing is income based.

Council directed Staff to deny issuing letters of support to Sand Development, LLC for their pursuit of state assistance.

4E. 2027 Street Project Update

Layne Otteson reviewed the preliminary 2027 street project for Lakeshore Drive and Hiawatha Avenue, which includes approximately 2.2 miles of resurfacing, concrete curb repairs, and related pavement improvements due to deteriorating curb and pavement conditions. Otteson noted estimated project costs are expected to range from $800,000 to $950,000, with funding anticipated from the City's State Aid Account and special assessments to benefiting properties in accordance with the City's Special Assessment Policy. Staff requested Council concurrence to prepare project information and schedule resident open houses in mid-July, with resident feedback to be brought back to Council in August.

Council Member Halverson asked how this project would be funded. Otteson responded it would be advanced through our State Aid account.

Council Member Seefeld asked if there are grants that could fund these improvements, and Otteson responded currently there are no grant programs available.

Council Member Geroux asked what the process would be for the open houses. Otteson discussed the importance of getting public feedback prior to designing the project, noting the open houses provide an avenue for open communication.

Council Member Halverson asked if we would offer the driveway option again. Deb Wegeleben responded we will no longer offer driveway options on our street projects, noting we really should not have offered this option in the past as we statutorily don't have authority to offer this.

Council directed Staff to move forward with preparing 2027 street project information and schedule resident open houses.

5. <u>OTHER</u>

Council Member Seefeld asked how we can keep our parks from being vandalized, noting the new Shores of Lake Mitchell playground equipment wasn't even open yet before vandalism occurred. Council Member Halverson asked if we could offer a reward, and Seefeld suggested we place signage encouraging a pro-active approach to keeping our park system in good condition. Council Member Noding suggested signage geared toward kids. Discussion was held that if we go after the parents civilly, the word will get around the schools. Sam Olson discussed new laws scheduled to take effect on August 1, 2026, that youth aged 12 and under cannot be prosecuted for a crime. Halverson discussed if we do nothing, the vandalism will continue. Mayor Knier discussed we should address known vandalism cases with parents. Seefeld suggested hosting neighborhood meetings to encourage citizens to keep an eye out for their neighborhood park. Council Member Geroux discussed it is the cost of doing business if we are going to have parks, noting it is almost impossible to prove fault. Geroux discussed most of the time threatening prosecution isn't a viable deterrent, and feels criminalizing and offering rewards isn't going to work. Halverson noted the problem with continuing to do nothing, is nothing will change. Seefeld discussed there is also the embarrassment factor by having neighbors watch out for their park system. Geroux stated we need to be realistic on what can actually be done, noting there is always going to be the element of bad choices. Council Member Noding discussed you can't criminalize the behavior due to age restrictions. Olson discussed having a chat with a person can have a positive effect, so we do want to catch them and provide educational guidance to parents and kids. Klimmek discussed focusing on the need to care for our parks at ribbon cuttings and at Night to Unite events, and Geroux suggested we have a standardized message that can be included in city media platforms and water bills.

Sam Olson provided an update on issues with electronic motorized vehicles, scooters, bikes etc. He has reached out to surrounding communities to obtain information on how they are enforcing the operation of this type of equipment. Olson noted Elk River allows everything on their sidewalks, Becker is a little more restrictive on what they allow and have been providing educational stops. Olson noted the Police Department is looking for guidance from Council on how they would like officers to address these issues, noting in Big Lake, it is not legal to be riding on the sidewalk. Mayor Knier stated he would like the department to keep educating users on what the regulations are. Council Member Geroux agreed he would like officers to continue to educate and to follow state statute. Council directed staff to start advertising a date we will start to ticket, with a goal of ticketing starting in 2027, and to hand out educational literature. Knier discussed still allowing non-motorized bikes to operate on the sidewalk, just restricting motorized vehicles from operating on sidewalks.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 6:09 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Noding unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck	07.15.2026
City Clerk	Date Approved by Council