BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES

JULY 15, 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, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, Fire Chief Seth Hansen, and Big Lake Student Liaison Adelyn Gosewisch.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA

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

4. BUSINESS

4A. Water Tower Rehabilitation Presentation

Hanna Klimmek reviewed water tower rehabilitation needs in the city, noting in 2023, KLM Engineering inspected the city's water towers and provided recommendations for the rehabilitation and long-term maintenance for each of the three water towers. Recognizing the importance of maintaining the City's water infrastructure, staff have since worked with the Finance Department to begin setting aside funds for future water tower rehabilitation projects. Based on the 2023 inspection findings including delaminating interior paint and other maintenance concerns, Water Tower No. 3 has been identified as the highest priority and is the first tower recommended for reconditioning. Dewey Prinzing from KLM Engineering reviewed the rehabilitation process, benefits of proactive maintenance, and outlined potential cost savings with planning/completing the project before the tower further deteriorates.

Mayor Knier asked if we are doing this tower earlier than necessary so we don't have to do all three towers at the same time. Prinzing reviewed we will start seeing some corrosion on the tower and noted we have seen inflation increasing pricing.

Council Member Halverson asked if there are other companies who do this type of work. Halverson noted their fee is $105,000 on top of the cost of the rehabilitation improvements and asked if we have more than just one bid. Prinzing explained KLM is an engineering firm that provides professional services, noting there are other firms out there that provide this service as well, but not to the quality and knowledge they have. Prinzing explained when their firm does these evaluation reports and puts the specification report together for a city, their job is to mitigate change orders, and get everything right for OSHA, the American Water Works Association, and the MN Department of Health. Halverson stated if we are going to spend this kind of money we should have more than just one bid. Prinzing explained they only provide engineering professional services, noting they would coordinate the bidding process. Their firm would provide the specifications, and inspection services to make sure whoever is awarded the bid is doing the work properly according to the specifications and to the material data sheets.

Council Member Noding asked which tower is by Lakeside Park. Norm Michels noted Tower No. 2 (north tower) is the tower at Lakeside Park, Tower No. 4 is off Delta Avenue north of town, and Tower No. 3 (south tower) is near Public Works. Noding discussed some years ago we had an issue with the north tower that caused a contamination in the city's water supply, expressing when these towers need repair, they need immediate repair.

Mayor Knier asked if we have funding set aside for this project. Deb Wegeleben reviewed funding for the project, noting the city has been setting aside $200,000 every year in preparation to rehab the city's water towers, and currently has $632,000 allocated for these improvements as well as an additional $300,000 to pay for professional services to coordinate the projects. Mayor Knier discussed he is ok with moving forward on doing the project now, noting we could wait another year but understands we could probably save money by doing the rehabilitation now. The inflation part doesn't bother him because it is a rising tide. The fact that it could deteriorate more over the next year, therefore increasing the cost to fix, factors into him being ok with moving forward now.

Council Member Halverson discussed he has a problem with us not bidding it out as different engineering firms can use different contractors. Wegeleben explained the construction part of the project is required to be a sealed bid process due to the anticipated cost. Wegeleben discussed per MN State Statute, the only thing that doesn't have to go out for bid out is professional service contracts such as engineering. The contract to construct the project has to be a sealed bid per MN State Statute as the cost will exceed $175,000. Prinzing explained their set contract amount will be based off the size of the tank, mobilization of equipment and for their engineering services.

Mayor Knier asked how long these improvements are expected to last, and Prinzing responded the rehabilitation project is anticipated to last between 25 to 30 years.

Council Member Noding stated she is in favor of moving forward with the project.

Council Member Geroux discussed the city had the foresight to plan ahead for funding for these improvements. He is in favor of moving forward with the project. Mayor Knier agreed he is happy we have planned for funding the project in advance, so we don't have to bond for the improvements, and Council Member Noding noted we are continuing to set dollars aside to complete the next tower rehab when needed.

Council Member Seefeld stated he is in favor of moving forward with the project.

Council directed Staff to move forward with rehabilitating Water Tower No. 3 as recommended by staff and KLM Engineering.

Dave Pickala, resident of Big Lake, asked if the engineering company will be covered being an inspector during the ongoing process. Prinzing reviewed KLM will have a resident inspector on site daily to ensure the work is being done correctly. Council Member Noding asked if there are contractors he wouldn't use, and asked how they vet contractors. Prinzing reviewed there will be a letter of recommendation based on all the bid tabs. The letters of recommendation will reflect the fact that the contractor has the qualifications necessary to do the job.

4B. Ice Rink/Warming House Discussion

Norm Michels discussed the annual lease agreement the city has with Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church, dating back to the late 1990's. The lease agreement allows the city to utilize the open space adjacent to the City Hall parking lot for outdoor community ice-skating rinks, a public warming house, and a space for a community holiday tree. The city currently has two boarded ice-skating rinks, one open ice-skating rink, and a warming house on the leased site. The city pays the Church $1,900 each year, and maintains the vacant area throughout the year, which includes mowing the grassy area during the summer months. Considering the future relocation of City Hall to a new location in late 2027 or early 2028, along with the recent closing and potential sale of the entire Church property, staff is seeking council discussion and direction on the possible relocation of the outdoor ice-skating rinks. The current lease agreement will end on December 31, 2026. If the city does not sign a new lease agreement for 2027, all structures must be removed by the city prior to the end of the current lease. Michels reviewed the status of the warming house structure, noting it was closed for public use in 2020. With unpredictable winter weather since that time, and the poor condition of the warming house, staff has not reopened the building for public use. Staff has looked into the possibility of adding a self-locking door system to the building to minimize having to schedule a warming house attendant, but found the building framing will not support a self-locking door system. Staff requested council consider permanently removing the warming house due to its poor condition, and to provide direction on starting to look for a replacement site for outdoor skating rinks.

Council authorized removal of the warming house structure, and authorized staff to research potential new locations for an outdoor ice-skating rink.

4C. Discuss Lakeside Park Fishing Pier Access Improvements

Norm Michels discussed the fishing pier located at Lakeside Park that is the responsibility of the city to maintain. Staff has noticed that over the last few years sand has washed up around the entrance to the pier creating access issues, and is no longer ADA compliant. Staff reached out to the DNR Hydrologist to discuss options available to address the access issues. The two options available for the city to consider include Option 1: excavation under the pier to create a level surfaced for access onto the pier, and Option 2: adding a dock section built to match the current dock sections and would allow for adjustability with changing water levels. Michels noted the DNR does not recommend Option 1 as it would be an ongoing maintenance issue and would require a new permit every time maintenance is needed. The DNR recommends Option 2 and staff supports that recommendation. Michels reviewed costs to bring the Lakeside Park fishing pier into ADA compliance would be funded through Fund 198 (Lakeside Park Allocation).

Council authorized staff to move forward with Option 2 to bring the Lakeside Park fishing pier into ADA compliance.

4D. City Hall Fleet Expansion Request Update

Deb Wegeleben reviewed discussion at the June 17, 2026, City Council workshop where staff identified the need for an additional vehicle to support City Hall operations. Historically, vehicles no longer needed by the Police Department have been reassigned to the City Hall fleet for use by Engineering, Code Enforcement, Administration, Inspections, and other staff. As staffing levels and field responsibilities have increased, the availability of City Hall fleet vehicles has become limited. At the workshop, Council directed staff to investigate whether a surplus vehicle from the Fire Department could be reassigned for City Hall use. Following discussions with the Fire Department Finance Committee it was determined two surplus vehicles are being recommended to be sold to a local fire department and the proceeds will be used for the purchase of a duty vehicle for the Fire Department. As a result, no surplus Fire Department vehicle will be available for reassignment. Wegeleben reviewed the current City Hall fleet consisting of three shared vehicles, a 2018 Ford Explorer, a 2002 Ford Sport Trac, and a 2004 Ford Sport Trac which are used by multiple departments for inspections, site visits, meetings, training, and other City business. As City staffing and operational demands have grown, the limited number of available vehicles has resulted in scheduling conflicts and reduced operational efficiency. Wegeleben noted staff is recommending purchasing a reliable four-door sedan or small SUV that can accommodate multiple employees traveling to meetings, conferences, training, inspections, and other City business. Providing an economical fleet vehicle for these trips would reduce the City's mileage reimbursement costs, which are currently reimbursed at $0.76 per mile, while also reducing the City's exposure to potential liability associated with employees using their personal vehicles for official City business. An additional fleet vehicle would also provide greater flexibility in scheduling and improve the efficiency of daily operations. If approved, staff would pursue the most cost-effective option available through Minnesota State Surplus Services, local dealerships, or other sources. The goal is to purchase a reliable used vehicle with low operating and maintenance costs for $10,000 or less. Wegeleben reviewed recent sales of surplus City fleet vehicles generated $14,150 in proceeds, including $10,250 from the most recent auction and $3,900 from a previous City Hall vehicle sale. Staff anticipate these proceeds will fully fund the purchase without requiring additional City resources. Wegeleben reviewed current market pricing, which demonstrates reliable vehicles meeting the City's needs are currently available within the proposed budget.

Council Member Noding discussed the style of vehicle administration would benefit from, noting she feels this would be a good investment.

Council authorized the purchase of one additional City Hall fleet vehicle at a cost not to exceed $10,000, utilizing available proceeds from prior City fleet vehicle sales. Council also authorized the Fleet

Superintendent to complete the purchase of the most cost-effective vehicle that meets the operational needs of the City through Minnesota State Surplus Services, a licensed dealership, or other qualified source.

4E. Discuss Fire Department Vehicle Purchase/Sale

Seth Hansen reviewed discussions from the July 7, 2026 Fire Board meeting where the Board discussed the potential sale of the Department's 2000 Grass Truck 14 and 2001 Grass Truck 16, fully outfitted with equipment, to a neighboring fire department that has expressed interest in purchasing the units. The proceeds from the sale would be used to purchase a newer Duty Officer Command Vehicle that would better meet the operational needs of the department. Currently, Grass Truck 14 is being utilized as the department's duty officer command vehicle. While functional, it was originally designed as a grass fire response vehicle and does not adequately meet the needs of a command vehicle. Replacing it with a dedicated Duty Officer Command Vehicle would provide improved functionality, reliability, and efficiency during emergency responses. In July 2025, both the City and Township authorized the sale of the skid unit equipment including the tank and pump from Grass Truck 14. However, there was no market interest in purchasing the equipment separately. Staff estimates the sale of both fully equipped grass trucks could generate approximately $35,000. Those proceeds would then be applied toward the purchase of a newer Duty Officer Command Vehicle. Hansen discussed the Fire Board approved moving forward with the sale of both vehicles and authorized the purchase of a replacement Duty Officer Command Vehicle with the following conditions: 1) The purchase price shall be no more than $10,000 above the proceeds received from the sale of the two grass trucks, and 2) The goal is to complete the transaction with little to no net financial impact to the City and Township. Hansen discussed the consensus from the City Council and Township boards is needed before moving forward with the proposed transaction. If consensus is received, staff will work with the interested fire department to obtain a formal purchase offer for Grass Truck 14 and Grass Truck 16 and identify a replacement Duty Officer Command Vehicle that meets the Fire Board's approved budget parameters. The proposed sale and purchase will then be presented to both governing bodies for final approval, which for the City would be at the August 19, 2026 meeting.

Council directed Staff to proceed with negotiating the sale of Grass Truck 14 and Grass Truck 16 and the purchase of a replacement Duty Officer Command Vehicle, consistent with the parameters established by the Fire Board, and to bring final purchase and sale agreements for formal approval at the August 2026 Council meeting.

5. <u>OTHER</u>

Council Member Geroux asked to revisit discussion on the Council's strategic planning session that will be held this fall. Geroux suggested the planning session should be attended by elected officials and that the council not require staff leadership to attend other than the City Administrator, Finance Director and City Clerk. Geroux noted he feels having that many people attend is pretty inefficient. At the end of the day, it is the council's strategic plan, and they need to take responsibility for it. He is also very mindful of proper use of staff time. Staff will obviously become involved when we get to the execution phase of the plan so it is not that they won't have a role in this, but he feels the initial meeting should be kept to city council and designated staff.

Council Member Halverson discussed he feels members of the management team are the ones who have the most knowledge on how the city operates, so having them attend may be useful. It would be hard for finance to talk about Public Works if something is brought up. Halverson asked when the management leads would have an opportunity to give feedback if they aren't included in the planning session. Geroux responded the planning session should be a high-level view of the things the council wants to accomplish over the next six years. If there is something concerning, that is when the execution phase comes in which is when staff would be brought in. This wouldn't be taking them out of the discussion; it would be bringing them in at the right time.

Hanna Klimmek reviewed there will be a dedicated council workshop in September to focus on the draft strategic plan. This will provide an opportunity for feedback from staff. Mayor Knier discussed he isn't entirely sure how the strategic plan will look, but he thinks it does make sense to keep it simple at the planning phase, and then have staff be a bigger part of it at the right time.

Council Member Noding asked if there is a way we can solicitate department head input into the discussion ahead of time, and suggested getting their targeted feedback prior to the planning session. Klimmek discussed there are opportunities for leadership input. The city's Management Team meets weekly so that is something we can prepare for discussion during those meetings. Klimmek also noted we have been working off our established work plans for a number of years, so we already have a baseline of that information. Council Member Halverson suggested we have department heads put together their plan and have that information at the council's planning session so they can see it versus council coming up with a plan and then going back to staff. Noding agreed she would like to hear from department heads prior to the council's strategic planning session. Klimmek reiterated we already have the work plan in place so gathering an update shouldn't be a problem, which can be sent out ahead of the planning session.

The general consensus of the council was to include elected officials and designated staff to attend the council's strategic planning session, and to request department heads to update their work plans prior to the planning session so that information can be available to council at the strategic planning session.

6. <u>ADJOURN</u>

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 5:51 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Noding, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
City Clerk

08.19.26
Date Approved by Council