

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

APRIL 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, Police Sergeant Guy Chaffee, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, and Water/Wastewater Superintendent Dan Childs.

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. Discuss Re-establishment of the Police K9 Program

Guy Chaffee reviewed the Big Lake Police Department is in the process of exploring re-establishment of the Police K9 Program and asked for Council discussion on proceeding with the program. Sam Olson noted the department had a canine program up until 2022 with the passing of K9 Bruno. When K9 Bruno passed away, the community came together and helped raise money to get another K9 for our department. Money was raised to purchase a new K9 squad, and this squad is currently equipped with everything needed as a K9 squad but is being utilized as a patrol vehicle. Olson reviewed our region continues to see strong narcotic activity, and our officers are very active in seeking these types of violations on traffic stops. K9 Bruno was deployed many times and was a great resource to ensure a thorough search of suspect vehicles was undertaken. The re-establishment of the K9 program would bring back efficiency to the many traffic stops our Big Lake Officers conduct and would assist in limiting the time spent on these types of stops. Olson discussed officers continue to see calls for service involving missing and vulnerable individuals, which a K9 is often used to track and locate these individuals. Chaffee noted K9's are also useful for conducting building searches for alarm, burglary, and open-door calls. A major benefit to having a K9 assist with these scenarios is increased officer safety. With the fast-growing pace of business and the size of the buildings in the Big Lake Industrial Park, a K9 can assist in cutting down the time clearing these types of large businesses and calls for service.

Chaffee reviewed the K9 equipment the department currently has and noted department staff would actively reach out to charitable organizations for donations to offset costs for the care of the K9 for items such as food, grooming, boarding when needed, and other miscellaneous necessary items. Chaffee indicated medical costs will be at no cost to the City of Big Lake as Granite City Pet Hospital provides care for area Police K9 programs at no cost. Olson reviewed there is currently \$39,156.94 in the K9 designated fund, and the City received an estimate from Performance Kennels Inc. for the cost of a Patrol K9 dog and 12-week combined detector/patrol training course in the amount of \$21,525.00. This would leave \$17,631.94 in the K9 program fund for additional training and miscellaneous approved items. Olson also discussed if the council decides to move forward with the K9 program, we have the option of turning the Chief's vehicle into the K9 squad, which has minimal miles on it. It is the same year as our current K9 squad, and equipment we currently have will fit in it. There would be a small cost for switching equipment over, but this option would extend the life of the K9 squad. The former K9 squad would then be utilized as the Chief's vehicle.

Mayor Knier asked if Chief Olson finds the program necessary. Olson responded he feels the K9 program is necessary, noting not only did the community raise money for the program, there has been substantial support from community members. Olson and Chaffee reviewed previous K9 deployments which were extremely beneficial to the safety of the department.

Council Member Halverson asked if the K9 would be trained for drug detection and apprehension. Chaffee responded our K9 would be trained for both. Chaffee also reviewed K9 dogs aren't imprinted on marijuana anymore other than jail, school, and airport dogs. Our dog would not be imprinted on detecting marijuana.

Mayor Knier stated he is in favor of re-establishing the K9 program in Big Lake.

Council Member Geroux stated he is in favor of re-establishing the K9 program. If the department feels it will be beneficial, he 100% supports the cause.

Council Member Noding stated she is in favor of re-establishing the K9 program, given the investment the community has given to the program.

Council directed Staff to move forward with re-establishment of the Big Lake Police K9 Program.

4B. 2026 Street and Utility Improvement Project No. ST2026-1 Scope Review

Layne Otteson reviewed the city was not awarded a grant through the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) from MnDOT, which requested \$1.4 million in funding for constructing the full length of Minnesota Avenue from County Road 43 to 180th Street. Otteson discussed the City's Street Committee (Geroux/Knier) met with staff on April 13, 2026 to discuss the scope of constructing Minnesota Avenue. The two construction options presented included Option A - a full-length asphalt segment from CR 43 east to 180th Avenue NW, and Option B - a short 550' asphalt segment, with a gravel emergency segment to the Industrial Park (180th Avenue NW). Discussion included impacts to the City's CIP street fund, potential future LRIP funding, and timing with construction of the Public Safety Facility (PSF). At the

conclusion of the meeting, the direction of the Street Committee was to recommend to the City Council to move forward with new Option C, only constructing the short 550' asphalt street segment without construction of the gravel emergency segment, and to pursue LRIP funding for 2027. Otteson discussed the City Council is being asked to provide direction on which option they would like to move forward with at tonight's Council Meeting for consideration. Option A included constructing the Minnesota Avenue full-length asphalt segment from CR 43 to 180th Avenue NW.

Council Member Halverson stated he would go for Option C, noting it would be a waste of taxpayer money to build a gravel road as emergency vehicles won't drive on this type of road. Halverson also noted the property could sell in the meantime.

Council Member Noding asked if we have to wait a year to reapply for LRIP funding. Otteson reviewed LRIP grant applications are due in November for the next year's funding. Noding also asked how the Smith Trust will reimburse the city for the cost of the road. Wegeleben explained how this type of special assessment would work, which would show up as a lien against the property until it sells, at which time the entire assessment would be due. Noding asked how much the gravel road would cost. Mayor Knier responded the estimated cost is \$35,000. Otteson discussed it would be re-evaluated in the future for finishing the construction.

Council Member Seefeld stated he prefers Option A due to the school and noted many workers in the Industrial Park would utilize the road. Seefeld expressed he feels completing the Minnesota Avenue extension is needed to address safety concerns. Seefeld stated he could also go with Option C if it is guaranteed we pursue 2027 LRIP funding and complete the section whether or not we get LRIP funds. Council Member Halverson asked how completing Minnesota Avenue would affect our CIP street fund. Council Member Geroux reviewed that was a large part of the discussion at the committee level, noting Option C gives us time to replenish street fund 196, and budget/plan for the improvement so we aren't depleting all our resources at this time. It would give us a little time to prepare for that.

Council Member Halverson discussed he has been listening to other council members say it's not government's job to get involved with the private sector, and it's not governments job to get involved with private building, and now we are looking at constructing a \$1.8M road on private property. Mayor Knier discussed it is a safety issue in that we have one inlet into an extremely fast-growing corridor in an industrial and school area. Knier stated we aren't doing this for one private citizen; we are doing it for the community. Council Member Seefeld clarified it would be across private property, but the road would be constructed in the city right of way. Council Member Halverson asked how we are going to come up with money to do the fix by the Police Department if we drain this account and reviewed another area of concern is the condition of Eagle Lake Road South. Halverson stated we need to prioritize where we are at with street maintenance costs.

Layne Otteson asked for clarification on Council Member Seefeld's support for Option C, noting he is requesting a guarantee from Council on completing Minnesota Avenue whether or not we receive LRIP funding in 2027. If that is the directive, that would need to be included in the Resolution tonight, which would become binding. Hanna Klimmek noted that is something we should get consensus on. Otteson suggested we have a pavement management plan review where it lists all the street improvement plans

for years 2027-2031. Council Member Seefeld discussed this is his fear that if we don't do the extension this year, it will keep getting kicked down the road. Mayor Knier discussed he fully intends to support we do the extension next year whether we get the LRIP funding or not but doesn't feel we need to tie our hands on it. Knier acknowledged we could change our minds due to some unforeseen catastrophe. Knier stated he feels it is an important road to complete, as well as our other roads that are important.

Council Member Halverson asked why we are spending taxpayer dollars to buy 1.5 acres for ponding when there isn't any benefit to the taxpayers. If that land stays with the Smith Trust, it would be the developer's responsibility to dig the pond and it would stay on the tax roll. This project is a never-ending flow of cash. Otteson clarified we have to acquire 1.5 acres to build Minnesota Avenue, or we have to have a need. If the property owner were to build Minnesota Avenue on his own, he would provide the land, but we need to oversize the pond area so the city would contribute because of the Public Safety Facility. This is an opportunity for us to take advantage of the ponding area for the Public Safety Facility. That part of the pond would be gained through an easement with the Smith Trust. Geroux discussed we would still need to put in a pond for our project. If we look at the whole piece, and apply some common sense, we can do this in one shot and negotiate with the Smith Trust to make a win-win deal here. Instead of having four separate retainage ponds all over the place, we could work with the property owner and come up with a plan that benefits both sides. Otteson noted it would be a regional ponding concept just like what Premier Marine did with their large pond area. They have to give us land for Minnesota Avenue and the cost of excavation goes into the assessment, so city taxpayers aren't paying for the pond. Halverson reiterated we would be paying to acquire 1.5 acres and taking the land off the tax roll, and Otteson clarified we are requiring 1.5 acres for ponding as the landowner has to provide land for ponding purposes. Halverson asked if we are paying them money for this 1.5 acres, and Geroux responded we have not negotiated that yet. Otteson noted there will be a substantial amount of soil coming out of there and they may want to keep it for future lots just like Premier Marine did.

A consensus of the Council was to bring Option C forward to tonight's Council Meeting for consideration.

4C. Discuss Wastewater Treatment Facility Expansion Project Recommendation

Hanna Klimmek reviewed the Wastewater Treatment Facility Expansion project 30% design deliverable presentation from SEH, Inc. at the February 18, 2026 workshop, and noted the presentation also included an overview of funding progress, potential delivery methods, and anticipated next steps. Staff requested direction on three items, 1) whether to develop a 30% project cost estimate, 2) whether to proceed to 100% design, and 3) which delivery method to utilize. The City Council directed the Public Building Planning Committee (PBPC) to review these items and return with a recommendation. Council Member Geroux reviewed the PBPC's recommendation from their meeting on March 23, 2026, which included recommendations to, 1) not develop a cost estimate at the 30% design stage, 2) proceed with advancing the project to 100% design, and 3) utilize the Construction Manager at Risk delivery method.

Klimmek discussed if the City Council provides consensus to proceed with this approach, staff recommends amending the existing contract for 30% design services. The amendment would include CMAR selection assistance, completion of final design, bidding support, and construction administration services. After completion and certification of final design, the project will be eligible for consideration as

a priority project through the State of Minnesota's Public Facilities Authority loan program. Dan Childs noted some projects have experienced up to a one-year delay in being placed on the priority list following certification.

Council directed Staff to move forward with the recommendations presented by the PBPC.

4D. 2026 Street Patching and Sealcoat Discussion

Layne Otteson reviewed street patching and sealcoating needs for 2026. Street patching costs are estimated to be \$40,000 and sealcoating needs are estimated to be \$210,000. Otteson discussed various points of interest including, 1) staff is seeing accelerated deterioration of pavement in isolated areas on collector streets that are 22 to 25 years old. Some areas are experiencing the top 2" turning to gravel this spring, 2) areas with poor drainage have the most severe pavement deterioration, which can typically be corrected during resurfacing to meet minimum engineering slopes, 3) curbing on Lakeshore Drive and Hiawatha Avenue has significant deterioration at many of the joints. A field survey shows about 10% of curb joints have a poor rating and should be repaired. This repair adds approximately \$250,000 to the resurfacing project, 4) there was significant residential and commercial growth in the city between 1998 and 2007. Those streets range from 19 to 28 years old and are reaching the typical age for resurfacing, 5) staff consensus recognizes sealcoat provides benefit by preserving pavement and extending the pavement life, and 6) funding the Pavement Management Plan requires a strategy to utilize state aid funding, general fund, bonding and possible grants to minimize the budget impact. Otteson noted large projects may require state aid funding advances. Otteson reviewed staff's recommendation is to move forward with 2026 patching and sealcoat planning and further develop project for approval at the May 20 Council meeting.

Council directed Staff to move forward with 2026 patching and sealcoat planning and further develop project for approval at the May 20 Council meeting.

4E. Discuss Water Meter Exchange Program – Water Service Shut Offs

Norm Michels reviewed the city started the water meter exchange program in the spring of 2024 to replace aging water meters citywide. The City contracted with Core and Main and HydroCorp to replace all water meters throughout the city. These new meters provide immediate up to date water usage data that is used for utility billing purposes and has assisted in trouble shooting high water usage issues occurring at properties. Michels discussed at the onset of the project, there were over 3,900 water meters to be switched out. The contractor has fulfilled the requirements of the contract, and in the summer of 2025, we were informed the program was being turned over the city for the remaining meters to be changed out. At the time the project was turned over to the city, the remaining water meters that needed to be replaced was over 450. Public Works staff along with City Hall staff have worked diligently trying to schedule the replacement of the remaining water meters. Currently, there are approximately 90 meters left to be changed out. Staff has tried contacting residents though multiple different methods including door knockers, phone messages and notices attached to utility bills. Michels discussed that due to the limited number of remaining old-style water meters, we can expect the city's current meter read company, RMR, will cease providing meter reading services. When this happens, Public Works staff will

have to take on the task of reading any remaining old-style meters monthly. As the City has provided a substantial amount of notifications to remaining old-style metered households, the only other recourse to get the meters updated is to begin the process of shutting off water service to these remaining properties. The city would provide one last notification to property owners that their old water meter equipment must be scheduled for replacement immediately or their water service will be shut off by a specific date. Water service would then be turned off until Public Works installs the new water meter equipment. Upon installation, Public Works will reinstate water service as soon as possible. Michels discussed per the city fee schedule, the fee for shutting off water service is \$60, and the fee for turning the service back on is an additional \$60. Staff does not have the authority to waive these fees, and it would be up to the Council's discretion to waive fees listed in the city fee schedule. Michels reiterated all of these property owners have received multiple notices that they need to schedule their water meter replacement and have not done so or have neglected to be home for their scheduled appointment. Public Works has notified all property owners a minimum of four times, in addition to multiple notices processed by HydroCorp. Michels' reviewed staff is seeking Council authorization to move forward with shutting off water services to specific properties due to lack of compliance with the water meter exchange program.

Council Member Noding asked if all non-compliant properties are single-family residential structures. Deb Wegeleben confirmed they are.

Mayor Knier asked how many services they can shut off at a time, and Michels responded he is recommending ten per week. Wegeleben discussed we are also going to be starting shut offs for non-payment also.

Council Member Geroux stated he agrees with staff's recommendation.

Council Member Halverson stated he feels we should not waive the fee due to the number of times property owners have been contacted, and Mayor Knier agreed.

Council Member Seefeld agreed with staff's recommendation.

Wegeleben clarified if a property owner schedules a time for public works staff to come in to replace the meter, and they aren't at the home to let staff into the dwelling, their water service will be immediately shut off.

Council directed Staff to begin the process of shutting off water services to those properties not compliant with the City's Water Meter Exchange Program, and to not waive water shut off fees.

4F. Future MNDOT Highway 10 Project Update

Layne Otteson provided a project update for the future 2029 and 2030 MnDOT US Highway 10 construction project. MnDOT has identified a 2029 US Hwy 10 Reconstruction Project from the esplanade area along Big Lake to Phyllis Street. Otteson noted the termini are subject to adjustment as it is early in the process. MnDOT has provided very little information other than it is full reconstruction and all

intersections are being studied. Staff has provided preliminary information and safety concerns along the corridor to MnDOT. Staff will meet with MnDOT when they have further developed preliminary concepts and layouts. Otteson noted MnDOT has inquired if the city has interest in lighting upgrades and streetscaping which could include aesthetic upgrades. The 2030 Resurfacing and Intersection upgrade project, MnDOT has indicated new J-turn configurations at 166th Street, 172nd Street and 176th Street are likely. This segment is from Phyllis Street to the Sherburne County Courthouse area in Elk River; however, recent discussions include designs that limit some of the expected turns as previously shared.

Mayor Knier discussed the proposed redesign will make it difficult to get to the businesses on the south side of Highway 10. This won't be good for those businesses and isn't equitable compared to the businesses on the north side. It was also discussed that sending a large commercial vehicle to use a U-turn in a 65 mile per hour speed zone poses significant safety concerns.

Council Member Halverson discussed most J turn designs are full J turns. The proposed three-quarter J turns will be hard for large vehicles to turn around in, especially in a highly industrial area like ours.

Council directed staff to draft a response to MnDOT that the city prefers full J turns at two of the three intersections east of town, and Council supported the City Engineer signing the MnDOT plans if this language is included.

5. OTHER

Norm Michels discussed the city received a request from George Quinn for improvements at Veteran's Memorial Park. Michels noted the city has received a \$3,500 donation from Big Lake Spud Fest to contribute towards the improvements. It won't cover all the costs but there are funds available in the park fund if needed. Hanna Klimmek noted they would like to make the improvements by Memorial Weekend if possible.

A consensus of the Council was to allow for the improvements to be completed as discussed at Veteran's Memorial Park.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 6:02 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Noding unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
City Clerk

05.20.2026
Date Approved by Council