

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

JUNE 28, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Ken Halverson, Sam Hanson, Paul Knier, Kim Noding, and Paul Seefeld. Also present: City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Therese Haffner, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Police Chief John Kaczmarek, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Dan Childs, and Big Lake Student Liaison Allie Cross.

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. ECFE in the Park Funding Discussion

Therese Haffner discussed the ECFE in the Park joint program with the City and Big Lake schools. The City's role in the program is staff assistance in determining park locations each year as well as City funding up to \$10,000 per year. Big Lake Schools takes on the challenge of coordinating the event, hosting the series, and funding up to \$7,000 per year. Haffner reviewed as of January 2023, there are \$13,000 in funds budgeted toward the ECFE in the Park program. These funds were donated by Climb Theatre, who is no longer operating as a Charitable Gambling Organization in the City. The current dollars we have will fund the program through 2023 only, and Council was asked to discuss options for future funding of the ECFE in the Park program. Stephanie Hillman from Big Lake Schools presented information on the program, which impacts up to 90 families at each event and builds a strong relationship with local families and the ECFE program, which in turn incentivizes families to keep their children in the Big Lake School District. Along with ECFE, it builds relationships between families and other resources in the area including CentraCare, Big Lake Fire and Police Departments, Help Me Grow, Head Start, and various youth programs and organizations throughout the community. The series also introduces families in the area to the beautiful park system that is maintained by the City.

Sara Fritch from ECFE reviewed results of the Community Needs Assessment Survey that was conducted in 2016, noting the top finding of the survey identified the need for free or reduced cost programming for families. Fritch also reviewed the survey showed area residents didn't realize how many amazing

parks are in Big Lake, which is how the ECFE in the Park program started. Fritch discussed participation from the School District and the City shows how much both these entities value our youth and families.

Council Member Halverson asked who participates in funding this program. Fritch responded the program has been funded by the City of Big Lake and Big Lake Schools.

Council Member Noding asked how many people utilize the program from outside the City limits. Fritch responded families are asked to register for the program through Community Education, but noted participants are allowed to participate without registering so the numbers might not be completely true to the number of people who attend. Fritch stated they are welcoming to all who want to attend.

Council Member Seefeld discussed funding the program, noting the school's contribution is \$7,000 and he would like to see the breakdown of all attendees. Seefeld also asked if they have reached out to gambling organizations to request donations, suggesting they seek funding from the Big Lake American Legion, and he knows of other organizations that would donate as well. Fritch reiterated this program has been an amazing partnership with the City and it shows the City values its young families.

Mayor Knier discussed the total budget for the program which is \$17,000 per year. Deb Wegeleben discussed the City's funding of the program which was initially City seeded, and then Climb Theatre donated \$31,000 to use as we saw fit so those donated funds were allocated to this program.

Council Member Halverson discussed we are reinvesting back to our taxpayers through this program, noting it will stay in the community.

Council Member Noding discussed this program is a huge investment in young families, stressing families need support from each other.

Mayor Knier stated he likes the program, likes that it is helping families, and is building our youngest citizens in town by giving them a good foundation. Knier discussed ECFE should seek financial support from other entities as well as the City, noting he is supportive of the City continuing with financial support for the program.

Council Member Noding agreed the program is a great investment in our community, and suggested they still seek additional funds to grow the program. Fritch discussed we want people to realize how great our park system is on its own, but the program does provide an educational component to our park system. Knier discussed the City's involvement in the program falls within a local governments role for park outreach.

Council Member Hanson discussed he is fine with moving forward with continuing to fund \$10,000 annually toward the program, and possibly funneling charitable gambling dollars for the City to continue to fund the program. Wegeleben clarified if ECFE gets additional funding it would just lower the funds provided by the City.

Council Member Halverson stated he doesn't have a problem with funding the program.

Hillman reviewed the programming they do, and discussed long term sustainability of the program.

Council Member Seefeld encouraged them to try to get charitable gambling funding. Mayor Knier suggested corporate sponsors would more than likely be happy to participate in this type of program.

Council directed Staff to

4B. Discuss Lakeside Park Sidewalk System Upgrade

Norm Michels discussed inquiries the City has received to extend sidewalk areas at Lakeside Park to the pavilion areas to allow easier access and make them ADA compliant. Lakeside Park has two pavilions which neither of them having sidewalks leading to them from the bathroom area or the parking lot. Michels reviewed staff's recommendation to add a 5'x52' sidewalk leading to the upper shelter, and a 5'x53' sidewalk leading to the lower shelter. Public Works has the capacity and skill to construct and final grade the sidewalk area in-house. Final grading materials would come from the Public Works Department's current supply so there shouldn't be a need to purchase new materials. Michels reviewed the estimated costs which total \$1,748.28 and funding would come from unallocated funds, Park Maintenance CIP fund 195.

Council directed Staff to move forward with completing the sidewalk improvement project in the pavilion area at Lakeside Park.

5. OTHER

Council Member Hanson discussed the DNR has indicated they will be stocking the lake every other year, noting the Lake Association would like to stock on the off years with the cost expected to be \$5,000 every other year. Hanson indicated he will be going to charitable gambling organizations to secure some of the funding and asked if the City would consider participating in the cost as well. Norm Michels reviewed the reason the DNR only stocks every other year is due to the yellow perch food supply, noting the DNR doesn't necessarily support stocking the lake every year. Hanson noted he will bring the item back to the Lake Association to further discuss.

Council Member Noding discussed the condition of the City owned Brown's Park located along Highway 10 in front of City Hall. Noding asked if a Park is protected if funded by federal dollars. Therese Haffner explained when an area is platted property, a park within the plat is likely acquired by a dedication of land. Noding asked if we want to continue maintaining the park. Hanna Klimmek suggested we have a conversation about this at a future workshop.

Hanna Klimmek discussed recent Cannabis legislation and asked Council if they want to have staff work on bringing back an item for further discussion at a future workshop on regulating Cannabis use on public property. Council directed staff bring this item back to a future workshop.

Council Member Halverson discussed street assessments in cul-de-sac areas, asking for Council support to hold further discussions at a workshop in the near future. Council directed staff to bring this topic to a future workshop agenda.

Mayor Knier discussed the CMRP group which has changed direction from its original purpose of discussing the location of a future bridge crossing as this discussion is now being headed up at the county level. Knier asked for more discussion on the City continuing to fund this group. Discussion was held on if the City decides to get out of the group, how that could affect our transportation bartering power for funding. Council directed staff to bring this item back to a future workshop for further discussion.

Therese Haffner informed Council the new hire for the Planning Technician position has decided to not accept the job, and we will repost for the vacant position.

Layne Otteson discussed the MNDOT Easement Agreement for the Highline Drive Trail Project he would like added to the regular agenda. Otteson also asked that the Public Works Drive Lane Project be added to the ST2022-1 street project. Council directed staff move forward with adding the Public Works Drive Lane Project to ST2022-1.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Hanson motioned to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Seefeld, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
City Clerk

07.12.23
Date Approved by Council