

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
CITY OF BIG LAKE, BIG LAKE TOWNSHIP, ORROCK TOWNSHIP, BIG LAKE
SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND THE SHERBURNE COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

JANUARY 21, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Knier called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. ROLL CALL

Big Lake City Council Members present: Mayor Paul Knier, Council Members Ken Halverson, Sam Hanson, and Paul Seefeld.

Big Lake Township Board Members present: Supervisors Dean Brenteson, Mark Hedstrom, and Norm Leslie.

Orrock Township Board Members present: Supervisors Paul Ellinger, Gregg Felber, and Clerk Chris Weber.

Big Lake School Board Members present: Chair Tonya Reasoner, Lenette Brown, Lori Kampa, Dan Nygaard, and Tony Scales.

Sherburne County Commissioner present: Chair Raeanne Danielowski.

Staff present: City Administrator Clay Wilfahrt, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Community Development Director Hanna Klimmek, MN State Representative Paul Novotny, Sherburne County Assistant Administrator Dan Weber, Big Lake School District Superintendent Tim Truebenbach, Director of Community Education & Communication Services Allen Berg, Liberty Elementary Principal Caryl Gordy, Big Lake Township Treasurer Ken Warneke, and Big Lake Student Liaison Ella Dotzler.

4. PROPOSED AGENDA

Commissioner Danielowski motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda. Seconded by Council Member Halverson, unanimous ayes, Agenda adopted.

5. BUSINESS

5A. County Topics

Dan Weber provided an update on the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how the County utilized \$11.6M in CARES Act funds throughout the County. Weber indicated that those funds allowed the County to implement COVID safety measures including the driver's license appointment system to lessen the number of citizens coming into the County building, expansion of the Veteran's Office, and implementation of jail safety improvements. Sherburne County also distributed \$2.87M in business relief funds as well as \$3M to non-profits and schools. Weber provided an update on the County's plans for vaccination clinics, legislative priorities, their 5-year road plan, and their efforts to acquire the historic Kern Bridge. Tony Scales asked for further information on the proposed vaccination clinics. Weber responded that the County will utilize large facilities/sites for their clinics.

Raeanne Danielowski discussed the need for broadband collaborative partnerships with all entities within Sherburne County, and expressed to the State how thankful Big Lake businesses are for the business relief funds that were approved and distributed in this time of need. Representative Novotny expressed that staff at the State level were instrumental in bringing these relief fund opportunities to the legislature for their consideration. Mayor Knier asked for clarification on the status of the Kern Bridge acquisition. Weber indicated that the County is one of four finalists.

5B. Big Lake Township Topics

Dean Brenteson discussed residential development in the Township in 2020, reviewed the Township's 2021 estimated Net Tax Capacity and estimated Taxable Market Value, and the Township's certified 2021 Levy. Brenteson also reviewed 2020 road improvements, snow and ice control efforts, spring sweeping costs, and allocation of CARES Act funds the Township received. Brenteson noted that Supervisor Bob Hofer retired and new Supervisor Mark Hedstrom was elected to fill the vacancy and took his Oath of Office in December 2020. Supervisors Aubol and Brenteson were re-elected for another 4-year term. Brenteson reviewed that the Township held five elections in 2020 and they now have 5,745 registered voters in the Township. Brenteson reviewed the 2020 Recycle Day event and reviewed staffing at the Big Lake Fire Department noting the Department currently has 34 members.

5C. Orrock Township Topics

Paul Ellinger discussed new residential construction in Orrock Township noting that a developer is expected to construct up to 86 homes in the Shores of Eagle Lake Development within the next 5 years, and reviewed the Township's 2021 estimated Net Tax Capacity, estimated Taxable Market Value, and certified 2021 Levy. Ellinger recapped activities at the annual Recycling Day event held in May, and discussed road and snow/ice maintenance costs. Ellinger also noted that the Township distributed CARES Act Funds amongst four entities including to the Big Lake Food Shelf. Ellinger reviewed elections held in 2020 noting that due to the pandemic, Orrock Township's polling site was moved to the snowmobile building to facilitate social distancing on Election Day.

5D. School Topics

New School Superintendent Truebenbach introduced himself to the group. Truebenbach discussed how the pandemic has affected the school, noting that their goal is to go from responding to issues to pro-actively addressing school needs. They have been ramping up their communication efforts, increasing social media outreach, and are finalizing a formal communications plan for the District. The school has pursued Big Lake Online, and they currently have 653 students enrolled which far exceeded their projections. The online student base has helped the school maintain their enrollment numbers which drives revenue for the District. Truebenbach also discussed the school's goal to add the Apprenticeship program to the Big Lake Online program. Truebenbach provided an update on the most current learning models which has Elementary Schools returning to in person learning on January 19th, and Secondary Schools returning to hybrid learning on January 21st. The school's goal is to figure out what it will take to get all students back to full-time learning. Truebenbach thanked Sherburne County for the CARES Act funding they received which allowed them to purchase and implement the Big Lake Online program and offset emergency childcare costs. Mayor Knier asked about funding for the Big Lake Online program and how that will affect homeschool students. Truebenbach indicated that it would provide a prorated amount for homeschool students who wish to utilize online classes. Knier also asked for a STEM update. Caryl Gordy discussed implementation of the STEM program which had just started at the onset of the pandemic. This program is similar to the previous "Project Lead the Way" program, and extensive teacher training has been embedded in the program. Gordy noted that the Explore/Create/Imagine STEM program is alive and well. Allen Berg discussed the Big Lake Preschool program which is recognized by the State of MN. The program defines a pathway from Early Childhood all the way through High School. Independence Elementary School also facilitated a "STEM Day at Home" program for their students during the pandemic which was well received. Knier also discussed his concerns with changes to the Social Studies Standards that is projected to move towards race relations instead of Social Studies, and asked for feedback on if the

District will be following these changes. Truebenbach indicated that the District has some local control, but will work with the State on implementing standards that are required.

5E. City of Big Lake Topics

Clay Wilfahrt reviewed COVID 19 impacts on City operations including a vast increase in law enforcement incidents, temporary stalling of development activity, infrastructure projects that have been put on hold, a 30% increase in sales at our municipal liquor store, and operational changes in various City departments that have taken an increased amount of Staff time to learn the new regulations, respond to COVID exposure, and educating residents. Wilfahrt also reviewed residential and commercial developments, the Wastewater Treatment Facility expansion project, and potential future developments. Wilfahrt also congratulated Mayor Paul Knier and new Council Members Ken Halverson, Sam Hanson and Paul Seefeld on their successful elections. Wilfahrt reviewed the City's 2021 Budget and Levy and the Framework 2030 goals. Wilfahrt also discussed the five elections held in the City in 2020, and reviewed the Special Election that Council has ordered to fill a vacancy that will be held on April 13th. In 2021, the City will be considering reconstructing numerous streets that haven't been updated since the 1960's, updating our Strategic Plan, and completing a rebranding project. Wilfahrt also thanked former Mayor Mike Wallen and former Council Members Seth Hansen, Scott Zettervall, and the late Rose Johnson for their years of service to the Big Lake community.

6. OTHER

Mayor Knier indicated that Big Lake Township Resident Bret Collier has requested to speak at the meeting. Mayor Knier informed Mr. Collier that he would allow him to speak under the same rules the City has for persons wishing to speak during Open Forum which limits his time to 2 minutes or less.

Bret Collier, 22549 172nd Street NW Big Lake Township – Discussed concerns with potential changes to the Social Studies curriculum, questioned who gives the go ahead for the Google project, and questioned why taxpayers have to subsidize the costs for Northstar to be operating during a pandemic.

7. ADJOURN

Council Member Hanson motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Halverson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
Clerk

01/27/21
Date Approved by the Big Lake City Council