

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

**MARCH 8, 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 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 Seefeld motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda as presented. Seconded by Council Member Halverson, unanimous ayes, Agenda adopted.

**4. BUSINESS**

**4A. Water use Restrictions Discussion**

Dan Childs reviewed amendments Council approved in 2022 on Section 800.27 (Water Use Restrictions; penalties). At that time, Council directed that the permanent water restrictions be re-enacted for one year, with a review of the changes to be brought back to a workshop in March 2023. Childs stated that Staff is recommending the current ordinance language remain in place for permanent restriction on the City's water supply system for lawn and/or garden sprinkling or other irrigation to be limited to an odd-even schedule. Childs reviewed record amounts of water that have been used since 2020, and the City's response to recent drought conditions that included non-irrigation of City parks and not using the dryer for bio-solids. Staff reduced water use from the City as much as we could and the City still produced record amounts of water. Excessive water use has been very taxing on the City's water system, and the City has experienced growth with the approval of construction of additional residential dwellings and businesses. Childs noted that this increased growth has greatly increased the demand on infrastructure, and noted the importance for the City's infrastructure to grow with the demand. Childs also reviewed a recent recommendation from the MN Department of Health that the City implement water conservation Best Management Practices to mitigate capacity demands.

Mayor Knier asked if the City has received any resident complaints regarding the current restrictions in place. Childs responded that he was notified of a few comments on social media, but none that were sent in to the City. Knier discussed that he is in favor of continuing the current restrictions for another year, and to revisit next March.

Council Member Halverson asked if the current restrictions include garden areas. Childs responded that the City Code includes garden areas in the odd/even restrictions. Childs also discussed that current restrictions were put into place for the benefit of the whole community and to ensure we have an ample water supply for firefighting. Halverson noted that the Smith property has a well on it, noting that the property is on the market so it could be something we should look at for a potential future well site.

Council Member Noding asked if we have a plan for another well location. Childs discussed that the City has been working on allocating CIP funds for a new well since 2017, noting that COVID and multiple drought years have been very hard on our water system. Childs also discussed that prices have significantly increased, noting that our water towers need to be sandblasted and painted, and financing of another well could be done together with these other necessary improvements. Deb Wegeleben discussed that we could bond for these costs with the wastewater treatment facility improvements. Childs discussed that the current cost to sandblast and paint a water tower is approximately \$1 million.

Council directed Staff to look into the feasibility of purchasing a small parcel along CR 43 as a possible future well, to keep the permanent water ban ordinance language in place for another year, and to revisit in March 2024.

#### **4B. Review Proposed Amendments to the Advance Resignation Program**

Deb Wegeleben reviewed the Advance Resignation Notice program that was implemented in 2019. The current policy is scheduled to sunset at the end of 2023 and Staff is looking for Council direction on extending the program with changes. The changes recommended by Staff will be more cost efficient and fairer to the employees regardless of the position the employee is vacating by proposing the benefit be based on actual amounts based on time of notice versus hours of pay. Wegeleben also noted that the program is available to only active full-time employees who have at least a minimum of three years of employment with the City.

Council directed Staff to move forward with extending the Advance Resignation Notice Program through December 31, 2025 with the program being based on time of notice, and bring back to a future Council Meeting for consideration of a January 1, 2024 effective date.

#### **4C. Review Proposed Personnel Policy Amendments**

Deb Wegeleben reviewed proposed changes to the City's Personnel Policy. Wegeleben noted that effective August 1, 2023, the State of MN will now recognize June 19 (Juneteenth) as a state holiday in which public business cannot be conducted, with the change being effective in 2024, and the possible addition of Indigenous People's Day in October 2023. Wegeleben also discussed the need to ease the administration of the City's Employee Service Recognition program and reviewed how recognitions

would take place and changes to the award scale.

Mayor Knier suggested having Department Heads Department acknowledge employee milestone anniversaries during their bi-monthly department reports instead of their names just being read off at a meeting.

Council directed Staff to move forward with changes to the Employee Recognition Program, and to bring back the financial impact of offering a paid holiday for the day after Thanksgiving.

5. **OTHER** – no other.

6. **ADJOURN**

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 5:22 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Hanson unanimous ayes, motion carried.

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Gina Wolbeck  
City Clerk

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3/22/2023  
Date Approved by Council