

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

MARCH 22, 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, Deputy City Clerk Janette Rust, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Therese Haffner, City Planner Lucinda Spanier, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Police Chief John Kaczmarek, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, 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. Towing Services Discussion

Hanna Klimmek reviewed past towing service agreements that City has had, and recapped that the Council action at the December 14, 2022 Council Meeting was to bring the item back in March 2023 to give the owner of Bob's Towing and Recovery time to come into compliance with the storage of their towed vehicles. Klimmek reviewed that Bob's Towing and Recovery had vehicles stores at 101 Lake Street South, which were out of compliance with the City's zoning code/policies as identified at the December 14 meeting. During the December 14, 2022 City Council meeting, staff recommended that the City Council approve an Agreement for Towing, Impounding, and Storage of Motor Vehicle Services between the City of Big Lake and Collins Brothers Towing, Inc. (dba Peterson's Towing and Recovery). Even though Bob's Towing and Recovery came in at the lowest and most reasonable bid, they were out of compliance with City policy, which was the justification for recommending to move forward with Collins Brothers Towing, Inc. Through discussion on December 14, 2022, Council Member Hanson made a motion to table the discussion until March, which would provide Bob's Towing enough time to remove their vehicles from the 101 Lake Street South property. It was also mentioned that Bob's Towing was still in a lease agreement with the owners of 101 Lake Street South through February 28, 2023. Klimmek reviewed that during the week of February 20th (prior to the end of Bob's Towing lease agreement with 101 Lake Street South), a representative of Bob's Towing contacted the city stating that all vehicles had been removed

from the property. City staff contacted the owner of the property, afterwards, and the owner validated that all vehicles that Bob's Towing was responsible for had been removed.

Council Member Halverson commented that he didn't believe the City handled the towing contract bidding process ethically by giving Bob's Towing a year to become compliant with City code and that a comment was made regarding another vendor that it wasn't the City's job to help grow a private business. Halverson stated that ethically and morally we should give Peterson's an opportunity because they did negotiate in good faith and have been code compliant the entire year. Halverson also stated that the Police Chief and City Staff recommended contracting with Peterson's Towing.

Mayor Knier stated the Council wasn't trying to help one business over another but that Bob's Towing came in cheaper and it was about saving the Taxpayers money.

Council Member Seefeld agreed with Mayor Knier that Bob's Towing, in some services, were half the price of Peterson's Towing.

Halverson inquired if we ever approached Peterson's Towing and asked if they would be willing to match the quote from Bob's Towing as was done with the newspaper.

Mayor Knier explained that the Patriot News didn't submit their bid in time and there was a communication issue but the City never contacted the Patriot News regarding a resubmission of their bid.

Council Member Noding asked if the City could even ask for Peterson's Towing to match the lower bid. Noding also discussed that Bob's Towing was locked into a lease for one year and that was the why they were not compliant with City Code, that they are cheaper than Peterson's, and since we are comparison shopping it would make sense to go with them.

Council Member Seefeld discussed that we never did approach the Patriot News and that we had gone with the Monticello Times for two years and then the third year the Patriot finally lowered their price.

Council Member Hanson likes the lower price with Bob's Towing but wasn't happy they took so long to get the vehicles out of their previous location. Hanson reminded Council that the reason we were looking into this was because someone had brought up that they had their vehicle towed and it was so much money. Hanson doesn't want to put a restriction on what a business can make but if we want to offer citizens a lower towing price this will be it. Hanson also inquired how long the contract will be for.

Klimmek discussed that the terms are that if we are unhappy with service we can give them a 30-day notice.

Halverson asked if we get another complaint if there is a way we can verify that prices didn't increase. Klimmek explained that this contract is between the Police Department and Bob's Towing.

Council directed Staff to bring this item back to a future Council meeting.

4B. Bulk Water Fill Station Discussion

Norm Michels reviewed the two options the City currently has for contractors to fill bulk water at the Public Works building. Option 1 involves staff setting up an account, placing a meter on a hydrant in front of the Public Works building with a tag identifying the contractor name, which allows for the contractor to fill with bulk water at their convenience. In the fall season before freeze-ups, or when the contractor is finished with their water needs, staff records the numbers for billing purposes and removes the meter. Option 2 involves staff setting up an account, and when a contractor needs bulk water they fill through a water connection on the north side of the Public Works building during normal operating hours. Staff reads the numbers on the meter before and after the bulk water fill, and records the numbers for billing purposes. Michels reviewed concerns with each option, noting that a major concern is that contractors are able to fill at unmetered hydrants at the Public Works building and throughout the City which results in lost revenue. Staff also cannot monitor if back flow protection is used which could result in back siphonage of toxins into the City's drinking water supply. Staff has also experienced damaged hydrants from being operated incorrectly. Michels reviewed options other communities are using for bulk water filling and found other cities either already have, or are planning on switching to a bulk filling station system to eliminate the issues and concerns identified. Staff looked at various options for a Bulk Water Fill Station and feel the FS20 Model would best fit the City's needs. This is also the model recommended by communities currently using them. The FS20 utilizes a user software management program which requires no weekly or monthly manual recording by staff. Michels reviewed benefits of implementing a Bulk Water Fill Station that include; 1) Control lost revenue, 2) Minimizes staff monitoring time 3) Eliminates contractors using the wrong meter, 4) Requires all bulk water to be filled through a bulk fill station, 5) Minimizes damage to fire hydrants, and 6) Minimizes potential cross-connections. Michels noted that funding for this equipment would come from Miscellaneous CIP Water Fund No. 399, and staff recommends Council authorize the install of a Bulk Water Fill Station at the Big Lake Public Works building as presented.

Mayor Knier asked if Michels had an estimate on how much we would save. Michels explained it would save 8 to 10 man hours per week. Wegeleben discussed the savings with lost water revenue as well.

Discussion was held regarding commercial, residential and bulk water rates; if a convenience fee could be charged; and contractor and residential water needs.

Michels explained how the system operated with each truck having a vendor number and if that number isn't entered into the system, the water doesn't get turned on.

Council directed Staff to move forward with the purchase and installation of a Bulk Water Fill Station at the Big Lake Public Works building.

5. OTHER

Council Member Halverson discussed that he would like the Code revision to be brought to a Council Workshop so that the items requiring further discussion, such as covered parking and the administrative variance, are resolved prior to being on a regular meeting agenda. Seefeld asked if Halverson would accept that if the consensus was against his vote at this Workshop, he would not bring it up again at the regular meeting. If he wouldn't be willing to accept that then we should just discuss it at the regular meeting.

Council directed Staff to bring this item back to a future Council Workshop.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 5: 52 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Noding unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Janette Rust
Deputy Clerk

04.12.23
Date Approved by Council