

**BIG LAKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY, JULY 17, 2023**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

President Alan Heidemann called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners present: Donna Clarksean, Jim Dickinson, Ken Geroux, Alan Heidemann, Paul Knier, Cindy Lemm, and Kim Noding. Also present: BLEDA Executive Director Therese Haffner, BLEDA Assistant Treasurer Deb Wegeleben, and BLEDA Secretary Corrie Scott.

**4. ADOPT AGENDA**

Commissioner Knier motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Lemm, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

**5. APPROVE BLEDA MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 12, 2023**

Commissioner Dickinson motioned to approve the June 12, 2023 BLEDA minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Noding, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

**6. BLEDA BUSINESS ITEMS**

**6A. 2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Haffner reviewed the 2023-2023 Strategic Plan and asked the BLEDA to discuss and recommend revisions as needed. Haffner discussed adding 421 Foley Avenue to the Strategic Plan. Noding asked if there is a plan for demolition for the 421 Foley property. Haffner stated that once demolition takes place the timeline begins for TIF (Tax Increment Financing). Noding stated that she understands the clock starts ticking once demolition takes place, but that the property seems like a liability. She asked if there is a way to fence off the area or secure it to ensure there isn't a potential accident. Haffner stated that the Police Department is monitoring the area and Public Works is using one

of the buildings for storage. Wegeleben stated that there are locks on the buildings and Public Works is patching the roof.

Knier asked about a developer purchasing the houses in the area. Haffner stated that there is interest in the site from a private developer, but there hasn't been any movement beyond that. Geroux stated that acquiring the half block to the south is the next step in the original plan. Knier asked if the BLEDA should purchase those lots first or wait for an interested private developer. Geroux stated that he feels acquiring the property and rezoning it is the first step. Geroux stated that there should be a more secure plan with the property. Dickinson stated that this is a long term project. He stated that if there is a city owned parcel in the mix it will be more attractive to developers. Knier asked if something needs to be done to move forward with the project. Dickinson stated that this project will take multiple years. Dickinson recommended adding 421 Foley Avenue in the Strategic Plan after number three and listing the same actions as 420 Putnam Avenue. Consensus was to add as suggested.

Heidemann stated that it would be a good idea to put away money so that it is on hand when another purchase opportunity comes before the BLEDA. Geroux stated that this topic could be explored during the budget discussion. Dickinson stated that it is beneficial to have projects listed on the Strategic Plan so they are taken more seriously if applying for grant funding. Clarksean asked how the BLEDA account can be grown. Wegeleben stated that 2026 is when the levy is projected to increase. Knier asked if the sale of the community school building will grow the account. Wegeleben confirmed that when that sale is made it will not go into the general fund and it will stay with the BLEDA.

Geroux stated that it is important to have action steps on the Strategic Plan to ensure that the BLEDA is being held accountable for moving toward achieving the objectives. Haffner asked if the BLEDA would like this property discussion to be brought back at the next meeting. Knier asked about a vision for the project and if staff would create that or if the BLEDA should. Haffner stated that she is looking for direction from the BLEDA.

Geroux stated that the overall vision for the project when the purchase agreement was originally signed was to work with the catholic church down to the old Amoco station for redevelopment. He stated that the vision with 421 Foley was to acquire the properties neighboring to make one cohesive section. Wegeleben stated that some of that area is considered multifamily so some rezoning might need to take place. Dickinson stated that due to lack of interest in the area, the BLEDA purchased the land to try and make it more marketable for private development. Wegeleben stated that prior City Councils specifically wanted that area zoned for multifamily. She stated that if the vision is for something other than multifamily to use that land, then first steps would be to work on changing the Comprehensive Plan and zoning of that land.

Haffner asked if the BLEDA would like to actively market the land for sale. Dickinson stated that it is premature for marketing the land unless a developer specifically seeks out purchase of the land. Noding asked about applying for grant funding and creating a plan now. Haffner stated that the plan can be created now, but that it is too soon to apply for grant funding until there is an interested developer. Noding asked if mixed use could be considered multifamily. Haffner stated that mixed use would be a combination of high density residential with commercial. Noding asked if the way it is currently zoned if mixed use would be allowed in that space. Haffner stated that it would need to be multifamily and mixed use would not be allowed with the current zoning.

Haffner asked if she should reach out to existing property owners. Geroux stated that he would like to wait on that until there is a plan in writing. He stated that having the property's intended use determined should be priority. Knier asked if that property could host an apartment building. Haffner stated that it could if there is additional property acquired. Dickinson stated that the plan for Putnam could also be used for the Foley property. Haffner stated that she will make the proposed changes to the Strategic Plan as suggested. Knier asked what the next steps are for the 421 Foley property. Geroux stated that the BLEDA will continue monitoring the parcel. Dickinson stated that as soon as surrounding parcels become available for purchase, the BLEDA could acquire those properties. Geroux stated that there isn't money in the account at this time that would cover the purchase of those properties. Wegeleben stated that the BLEDA would then need to ask the City for the funds to make the purchase. Geroux stated that it would be a good idea to prepare the funding necessary in advance rather than when it is needed. Dickinson stated that relocation benefit agreements are something that should be avoided and if there is a written plan that stated specific parcels are being sought out, then that would create barriers for the project.

Knier asked for an overview of what the next steps are. Haffner stated that staff will monitor contiguous properties and if they are put up for sale they will become priority to acquire. Lemm asked if one of the contiguous properties comes on the market would it need to wait until the upcoming BLEDA meeting to be purchased and in that case could the property be sold before the BLEDA has a chance to acquire it. Haffner stated that there is a risk with that. Geroux recommended having some kind of plan so that if a property becomes available then the purchase can be streamlined. Wegeleben stated that the City would have to determine which balance the funds would come from and in what amount. Dickinson stated that in order for the project to move forward it has to be a City Council priority and Wegeleben agreed. Lemm recommended making a motion to allow Haffner to move forward with purchase of properties if they become available. Geroux stated that the amount that would be allowed would need to be predetermined. Dickinson stated that if the amount is predetermined then that poses a risk during the buying process. Noding asked if a specific dollar amount would need to be determined. Wegeleben stated that for a designated fund to be created she would need a specific dollar amount.

## **6B. COMMUNITY SCHOOL BUILDING PID 65-477-0115**

Haffner reviewed that LHB will be completing a building inspection on July 19, 2023 to report findings related to the conditions of the community school building attached to City Hall to determine if the parcels qualify for a Tax Increment District. Haffner offered to take BLEDA members on a tour of the building if they are interested. Knier asked what the next step is. Haffner stated that the findings from the inspection will be brought back to the BLEDA and if it does meet the criteria then a Resolution will be brought forward to be reserved for a potential TIF district. She stated that depending on the findings the next steps would differ on how to market the building for sale.

## **6C. BLEDA 2024 BUDGET**

Wegeleben reviewed the proposed 2024 BLEDA Preliminary Budget and asked the BLEDA to discuss. Geroux asked if the Council is planning to transfer more funds to the BLEDA. Wegeleben stated that the Council approved the \$600,000, but will not be approving additional funds because that is all of the excess funds that the City had. Knier asked about the \$50,000 marketing funds and what it can be used for. Wegeleben stated that it could be used to market the sale of 421 Foley. She stated that even if those funds aren't used by the end of each year they will not go away.

Commissioner Knier motioned to approve a the proposed 2024 BLEDA Preliminary Budget. Seconded by Commissioner Noding, the motion passed on a vote of 6:1 with Commissioners Clarksean, Geroux, Heidemann, Knier, Lemm, and Noding voting aye and Commissioner Dickinson voting nay.

## **6D. BLEDA BUDGET AND LIST OF CLAIMS**

Commissioner Dickinson motioned to accept the budget report and approve the BLEDA List of Claims for June 2023 as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Lemm, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

## **6E. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

Haffner discussed the status of various projects within Community Development. This update included Housing, Commercial and Industrial, BLEDA, Planning and Zoning, and Building. Scott gave an update regarding Recreation and Communication.

## **7. OTHER**

Knier stated that one of the modifications to the Strategic Plan was regarding marketing the Revolving Loan Fund. He stated that because there hasn't been interest in the RLF, he is happy to see there is a goal is to more heavily advertise the program.

**8. ADJOURN**

Commissioner Knier motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Dickinson, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.