



Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday February 28, 2024 6:00 pm

The Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors met in regular session, at 6:00 PM, on Wednesday February 28, 2024, at the Town of Big Lake Town Hall, located in the Big Lake Township's Lions Park Community Center, at 21960 County Road 5 NW, Big Lake Township, Sherburne County, State of Minnesota. The meeting was called to order by Chair Bruce Aubol and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Supervisor Larry Alfords – via telecommunications, per MN Statute Stat. 13D.02, Vice-Chair Dean Brenteson, Supervisor Laura Hayes, Supervisor Mark Hedstrom, Treasurer Kenneth Warneke, Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Captain Tim Davis – Big Lake Fire Department, Assistant County Administrator Dan Weber, County EDA Director Jessica Barthel, County Commissioner Raeanne Danielowski, Lieutenant Eric Rosa – Big Lake Fire Department, resident Jim Lorge, one guest, and newspaper reporter were in attendance. All voting was done by roll-call due to Supervisor Alfords' telecommunication attendance.

A moment of silence was observed for the two fallen officers and one firefighter from Burnsville.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to accept the presented agenda by: Hedstrom/Brenteson. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. Motion Prevailed. The meeting proceeded in accordance with the presented agenda.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda consists of: A) Approval of Minutes; Regular meeting of 02/14/2024. B) ratify claims and payroll paid between 02/14/2024 and 02/28/2024. C) Approve Recycle Day Agreement with Sherburne County. Motion/Second to Approve consent agenda by: Hayes/Brenteson. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion Prevailed.

Fire Department Report

Captain Tim Davis reported in January, the department responded to 37 calls – twenty-eight (28) in the city of Big Lake, seven (7) in Big Lake township, two (2) in Orrock township, and zero (0) mutual aid calls. Calls of interest included one fire, four motor vehicle accidents – one involved a pedestrian, three hazardous conditions (gas leak, electrical, etc.), one medical assist, and two sprinkler activations. Members took part in the annual hands-on Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), RIT training and annual gear inspection. New recruits have completed their firefighter one training and are able to respond to incidents – one recruit per truck. They are close to finishing their firefighter two training, and will begin emergency medical responder (EMR) training in March. Years of service anniversaries include Captain Time Davis – 30 years, Daren Hardies – 20 years, and Chief Seth Hansen – 15 years.

Open Forum

None.

Regular Business

Sherburne County Economic Development Update

Assistant County Administrator, Dan Weber and County EDA Director, Jessica Barthel were in attendance to update the board with information from the County EDA department. They shared the township's 2023 population was 8519 and there were 12 new homes built in the township in 2023. The Sherburne County Economic Development Strategic Plan was approved in 2023. This is a five-year outline that will enhance the economic well-being of the community through efforts that entail job creation, business retention, property tax base enhancements, and quality of life improvement initiatives. Areas in which they focused included business retention and expansion, housing, broadband coverage, and rural childcare provision. The department offers a business lab for county businesses which has been very successful. They are looking at various housing options for residents looking for single-family and multi-family dwellings. Including accessory dwellings for folks whose parents or adult children wish to be closer to family.

BLFDRA Benefit Increase Request

Lieutenant Eric Rosa was present to request and increase to the Big Lake Fire Department Relief Association members retirement benefit. The Big Lake Fire Department Relief Board members reviewed the relief fund liability with its financial advisor and found it to be funded at a ~ 110% - provided a 5% return on investments. During their annual meeting of members, the Relief Association voted to increase the benefit by \$400.00. The total benefit for retiring members would become \$5,800.00 per year of service. This would leave the relief funded at ~101% (provided a 5% return on investments). The Fire Department's Joint Powers Board met to discuss the increase and recommended the increase be presented to the City of Big Lake Council and Town of Big Lake Board for approval, at their respective meetings on February 28, 2024. The city and Town would be responsible for covering pensions if the fund balance were to fall below 85% funded. This might occur if all members retired at the same time, which is highly unlikely.

Motion/second to approve the pension benefit increase of \$400.00. Bringing the total benefit for retiring members to \$5,800.00 per year of service by: Hayes/Brenteson. Approved by Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, and Hayes. Supervisor Hedstrom abstained. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Large Fitness Combine IUP Addendum Request

Jim Lorge was present to request board comments on his request to amend the IUP for his fitness combine business. His request is to increase the maximum number of event participants from 14 to 40. Jim noted that there are many larger groups who would like to participate in events at the location. There are plans to provide additional parking away from Old County Road 79 and neighboring residences. The events would mainly be sports team-building type classes with an occasional corporate/business/municipal client. An example of such a class would be an instructor led youth hockey/football team attending a preseason class to help foster leadership and camaraderie. Most fitness classes will continue to be around 12 clients. The larger events would likely occur 4 -5 times a week during spring – fall. The original IUP was reviewed by the town board on October 29, 2020. The applicant satisfied the condition set forth in the IUP to have a detailed safety plan including directives for emergency response personnel (condition #8 of the IUP). Supervisor Alford noted there have been no concerns or complaints from neighbors.

The Town Board had no concerns with the proposed IUP amendment and recommended approval to the County Planning & Zoning department.

Employee Handbook – Benefits Section

Supervisors Hayes and Hedstrom – Personnel Committee, worked to provide the Board with a proposal for staff benefits. They gathered data from other local governing agencies to determine what benefits the Town of Big Lake should offer their current and future staff.

Their recommendations cover health reimbursement, increased number of paid time off (PTO) hours for full-time staff to 80 hours, paid holidays, leaves of absence (new), military leave (new), and

jury duty (new). Treasurer Warneke asked if he should be given 80 hours of PTO, as he generally works part-time hours (less than 20/week). Supervisors Hayes and Hedstrom noted the benefit is position based and up to the individual to decide if they want to use the benefit.

Motion/second adopt the presented staff benefits by: Aubol/Brenteson . Approved by Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Snow removal billing

Supervisor Hedstrom brought forth a question on the billing practices done for snow removal and ice treatment during the February 14, 2024 meeting. Currently claims are submitted for truck time which is internally accounted at 50% plowing and 50% ice control. During discussion, road committee members stated that when the vendors are plowing, they are generally dispensing ice control product at intersections, on hills, and curves. When treating for ice only, they oftentimes drop their plows to remove any softer snow, so the product is more effective. There has not been any concern with the work being done and the billing practices of the town's vendors, who contact road committee members before dispatching for snow removal and ice control.

The board determined there was no need to modify the billing practices. Road committee members will continue to monitor plowing and ice control efforts and billing practices and will work with the vendors if a change is deemed necessary.

2024 Budget

The finance committee met to review the budget numbers sent to Treasurer Warneke, prior to the board meeting. They made a few adjustments to the numbers submitted and presented the Board with their recommendation for the town's 2024 budget. The draft budget was reviewed by the board who had no concerns with the information presented.

Motion/Second to adopt the presented 2024 budget by: Aubol/Brenteson. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.
Approved budget will be retained as part of the official meeting minutes.

Roads

2024 Spring Road Restrictions – Overweight Permits

MNDOT considers Big Lake Township as part of the Metro area, regarding seasonal road load limits. MNDOT issued Spring Load Limits (SLL) beginning on Monday February 26, 2024. Staff was contacted prior to SLL implementation, by Carr's Tree Service and WSB Engineering – on behalf of Xcel Energy and Tri-State Drilling. The township has issued overweight permits in the past after review and consideration by the Road Committee. Factors in determining the issuance of an overweight permit are maximum weight per axel, number of axels on the vehicles/trailers, type of work to be done by the company, and land upon which the requested route(s) travel – ie softer organic material bases (peat). The road committee will be evaluating the roads to determine if any damage has occurred by the applicants. Permits may be revoked by the Township. Carr's is performing routine tree trimming on Connexus power line maps within Big Lake Township. They requested and were granted an overweight permit by the Road Committee. Tri-State Drilling is contracted to install the high-power transmission line posts, for the Xcel project. One permit had been issued to allow for post delivery. Another permit application may be made for concrete delivery trucks. Supervisor Brenteson stated the roads are in good shape and most of the frost is out. He also noted that the overweight permit addresses any damage caused by the permittee, will be corrected or paid to be corrected by the permittee.

No action necessary.

Trimming on 211th Ave. has been completed and brushing and trimming continues as the weather and conditions are favorable to this activity.

Business from the Board – Committee Reports/Updates

Supervisor Hedstrom attended the community education advisory meeting. Community Ed has added several new programs or students in 6-12 grades. The high school has an “innovation center” for student use. \$200,000 was invested in the new weight room which may be offered for public use in the future. A trainer who specializes in weight training and weight use will be on staff, should the public use of the facility open in the future. Boys volleyball has been added as a club sport. Community Ed will kick off the summer on June 6th. At the direction of the school board, the community ed department has spent down its high fund balance and asked the advisory board on how to address the increases that will be needed to support the classes offered. The Chamber of Commerce’s Community Fair will be held Saturday March 16th.

Supervisor Aubol attended the Planning & Zoning Advisory Board meeting. He reported that a location change of a compost processing facility, in Livonia township, sparked a lot of debate.

Treasurer’s Report

2023 Audit – Schlenner, Wenner & Co. Audit Engagement Letter

Schlenner, Wenner & Associates is the firm which has audited the town’s, books, prepared financial statements and filed required reports with the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), since 2016. Per the 2023 engagement agreement letter cost to audit the town’s 2023 books and prepare financial statements will cost \$16,770. Per the 2021 engagement agreement signed by both parties in 2022, the cost to prepare and submit the required reports to the OSA will cost \$1,055. Estimated total cost will be \$17,825. Any additional work required will incur additional fees. The firm has tentatively scheduled 2023 audit field work for the week of May 13, 2024. To confirm Schlenner, Wenner & Co.’s performance of auditing the town’s 2023 books, the town must accept and execute the engagement letter. Treasurer Warneke noted he is uncomfortable with some of the language in the letter, as it puts the responsibility on the town to ensure the audit is conducted in accordance to GAS – with which staff are unfamiliar and or untrained. Chair Aubol stated that this type of language seems to be an industry standard. Treasurer Warneke informed the board that the State Auditor’s office also performs audits, but the cost would likely be significantly higher, and they may also defer liability to the town.

Motion/Second to approve Schlenner, Wenner & Co. engagement letter by: Aubol/Hayes. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.

Treasurer’s Report

Ken reviewed the Treasurer’s Report and financial statements with the Board. General fund balance = \$ 335,267.61, road fund balance = \$ 1,120,263.79, Big Lake fire fund balance = \$ 96,290.34, and escrow funds = \$ 80,620.

The town treasury ending balance (less escrows) after payment of approved claims was \$2,786,580.79. Motion/Second to approve the Treasurer’s report by: Hedstrom/Alfords. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.

Financial Reports are retained as part of the Official Minutes, which are available in the Clerk’s Office.

2023 Board of Audit

Treasurer Warneke reminded the board that many of the duties that must be performed at the annual board of audit under Minn. Stat. § 366.21 are a culmination of the activities performed by the board at each regular meeting. When the board examines each account or claim presented for payment, it is performing part of the duties of the board of audit. The board need not reexamine each claim in detail at the annual board of audit. However, the board of audit should randomly select claims to audit in detail. However, at least once a year the town board must sit as the board of audit to audit and settle all charges against the town. Minn. Stat. § 366.20. What follows is the list of items township officers should undertake when performing their yearly Board of Audit.

Accounting Professionals do not Displace the Board of Audit: If the board chooses or is required to have a CPA perform an audit of the town's financial affairs, it must still perform the duties of the annual board of audit. Of course, if a CPA has already completed an audit before the annual meeting, the board will find it much easier to complete its own duties.

Treasurer Warneke informed the board that Sherburne State bank issues a collateral statement for the town's investments held there. The bank's pledge exceeds the required amount, by over double. He noted the majority of the town's investments are held in 4M investments. The town has no CD's at present, but he is investigating them. And interest rates appear to be steady.

The Board selected the following receipts and disbursements for audit and found no discrepancies. Receipts: 984438, ACH230706, 984424, and 984471. Disbursements: 22826, 22876, 22935, and 23036. Having performed the audit functions with no discrepancies found, the board approved the Schedule 1 – Statement of Receipts, Disbursements and Balances. They also delegated the Finance Committee to make a recommendation to the Town Meeting of the amount necessary to be raised to meet the current and other authorized expenditures for the ensuing year. Board members requested a copy of the proposed levy be sent to them after the Finance Committee meeting and prior to the Annual Meeting.

Announcements

- ~ Public Accuracy Testing of Ballot Tabulators Wednesday February 28, 2024 @ 12:30PM, Sherburne County Gov't Center, Maple Rooms A & B
- ~ Presidential Nominating Primary Election Tuesday March 5, 2024 – polls open from 7AM – 8PM
 - o Precinct #1 – Lord of Glory Lutheran Church
 - o Precinct #2 – Big Lake Town Hall
 - o Precinct #3 – Big Lake Fire Station
- ~ Town Annual Meeting Tuesday March 12, 2024 @ 6PM at Town Hall
- ~ Next Regular Meeting Wednesday March 13, 2024 @ 6PM
- ~ Big Lake Lions Fish Fry Friday March 22, 2024 at Big Lake Town Hall – food service begins @ 4:30PM
- ~ Highway 25 Corridor Open House, Tuesday March 19, 2024 from 6-7PM at the Monticello Community Center

Supervisor Brenteson commented the Board should consider having representation at the County EDA meetings, to keep the Board up to date on the EDA planning. He would be interested in attending those meetings. All present supervisors agreed to the proposal.

Adjournment:

Motion/Second to adjourn Regular Board Meeting at 8:44PM by: Hayes/Aubol. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk

Accepted this 28th day of February 2024, by the Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors.

Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Town Clerk