



Fire Board Meeting
Tuesday March 20, 2024 5:00PM

Big Lake Fire Department • 20243 County Road 43 NW • Big Lake, MN 55309

The Big Lake Fire Board met on Wednesday March 20, 2024, at the Big Lake Fire Department, located at 20243 County Road 43, Big Lake, Sherburne County, State of Minnesota. The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Bruce Aubol at 5:00PM and the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America was recited.

Joint Powers Board Officials present were Chair Bruce Aubol, Dean Brenteson, Paul Knier, and Kim Noding. Additional attendees: Fire Chief Seth Hansen, Assistant Fire Chief Mark Hedstrom, Town Treasurer Ken Warneke, City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, and City Finance Director Deb Wegeleben. Lieutenant Eric Rosa was also in attendance. Member Paul Knier excused himself at 5:45 to attend a previously committed engagement.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Member Knier requested the addition of an update on the staffing study to regular business. Matter was added as item I under regular business. Motion/Second to approve the agenda with the addition of item I – staffing study update by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of Regular Meeting Minutes 01/02/2024, Special Meeting Minutes 02/28/2024; Claims and payroll paid between 01/02/2024 – 03/20/2024 (*claims and payroll were reviewed in electronic format, prior to the meeting*); adoption of Resolution 2024-02 Accepting donations totaling \$16,200 - \$4,000.00 General Donation, \$200 Fire Prevention, \$12,000.00 Cardiac Compression Machine.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented by: Brenteson/Knier. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.

Open Forum:

None.

Regular Business

In-house Fleet Service Contract with City of Big Lake

The in-house fleet service program provides maintenance and repairs to the fire department's fleet of vehicles. Service includes routine maintenance and repairs for the vehicles by the city's fleet staff within the public works department. Specialty equipment maintenance and repairs are not provided as part of the contract.

The program offers the following:

- Parts are purchased with the City's discount – potential savings of 15% - 28%.

- Labor rate of \$42.78 an hour.
- Quality workmanship provided by city fleet staff.
 - Department vehicles transported for repairs to City's Public Works facility by City Fleet staff.

The program provided service to the department's fleet in 2023 and was deemed successful. For that reason, the presented contract is a 4-year term contract for the 2024-2024 calendar years. If approved, city staff will bring the contract to the City Council for their approval at the Council meeting on April 10, 2024.

Motion/Second to approve of the presented contract and enter into 4-year term In-house Fleet Service Contract with the City of Big Lake, for the calendar years of 2024 - 2028 by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Updated Fire Department Personnel Policy

Staff made some updates to the personnel policy. Draft policy presented had the modifications highlighted in yellow.

The following are the changes proposed in the draft policy presented for Board approval.

- Page 11 – Residency: The original information stated a member had to live within six miles from the station. It was corrected to reflect the member must live within seven miles from the station.
- Page 12 – Probationary Period: Added Hazmat training completion as a requirement.
 - Page 13 and 14 – Added Deputy Chief – training officer position.
- Page 18: Change the starting time for training and requirements.
- Page 19 and 20: Add Deputy Chief as the training officer and remove Assistance Chief
- Page 27: Add a clarification to vacation time pay.
- Page 28: Change the verbiage of firefighter to employee (also on page 30) and add scheduled event and remove call/training.
- Page 31: Change the Business meeting time from 19:00 to 18:00.
- Page 33: Add Deputy Chief - the training officer position.
- Page 38 and page 39: Remove SOG and replace with Policy. Change 6 miles to 7 miles.
- Page 42: Change Mayor to Fire Board.
- Page 45: Verbiage corrections.

Motion/Second to adopt the Personnel Policy with revisions presented by: Knier/Brenteson. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Finance Policy

Over the past year, the finance committee and staff worked to create a DRAFT Financial Policy. The committee started with the City of Big Lake Financial Policy and modified it to reflect the Big Lake Fire Department. The presented policy was reviewed by the Board for discrepancies. One correction was recommended for the "Useful lives for assets" heading, on page 13. Language to be added shall indicate the useful lifespan is only to be used for the calculation of depreciation, not the replacement of the item.

Motion/Second to adopt the Financial Policy contingent on the change to language on page 13 to indicate the useful lifespan is only for the purpose of depreciation not as the replacement schedule of an item or piece of equipment, as discussed by: Noding/Brenteson. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Reschedule April Personnel Committee Meeting

Due to a conflict with another city meeting, the April Personnel Committee meeting was requested to be rescheduled. Committee members determined to move their meeting to Tuesday, April 9, 2024. The meeting will be held at the Big Lake Town Hall and will commence at 5PM.

Donations via ACH transactions

Tricia Hedstrom participates in a volunteer program through her workplace, United Healthcare. As part of the program, United Healthcare will donate up to \$500 to her designated non-profit organization. She has selected the Big Lake Fire Department as her beneficiary of funds. However, there is a reduction to the donation of \$40 if the recipient requires analog payment – paper check. The Finance Committee discussed whether the department should allow ACH donations and determined they did not wish to allow donations to the department's bank account. Board members suggested opening a separate account, for the sole purpose of accepting the United Healthcare donations made through United Online Giving. This would minimize risks of financial loss through cyber-theft.

Motion/second to have the township set up a separate banking account for the sole purpose of accepting ACH donations from United Online Giving by: Knier/Brenteson. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

New Exercise Equipment

During the November 2023 meeting, Chief Hansen mentioned that some of the fitness equipment needs replacement and that there is a desire to add some additional equipment. The fitness room is available to department members, city staff, township staff, and their families. Chief Hansen told the board the new equipment will be beneficial to have as he will be working on creating a fitness regimen to comply with the new OSHA fitness standards, recently released. The equipment requested includes new weight benches, lift equipment, and weights. A quote was obtained from Johnson Fitness & Wellness. The total amount for the items is \$17,625.26. Chief Hansen would like to purchase the equipment from general donation funds. The current balance in the general donation fund is \$48,473.27. Several board members had toured the fitness room to see the condition of the existing equipment and concluded that the items listed as replacements were needed. They also felt the additional equipment requested will benefit the users of the fitness room, specifically the department members. Because the equipment is considered a capital expense, it needs the approval of the board. The equipment which is purchased and disposed will need to have the proper forms filled out and sent to Deb Wegeleben, so she can update the capital assets list.

Motion/second to authorize the purchase of fitness equipment in the amount of \$17,625.26 to be paid out of the general donation funds by: Knier/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

CSAH 4 Construction - Assisting Zimmerman/Livonia Fire Department

The bridge that crosses over the St. Francis River, on County State Aid Highway 4 (CSAH4) will be removed and replaced this summer. Construction is scheduled to start in June or July and will continue through September. During this time, Big Lake will be assisting with coverage of fire district #4 – ZLFD coverage area of Orrock Township. Both departments will be called out at the same time to ensure response times are as quick as possible.

Department Updates

~ Chief Hansen informed the Board of new OSHA and NFPA rules being considered regarding skills, mental wellness, and physical fitness of fire department/emergency services personnel. OSHA is currently taking comments on the proposed changes. If the rules are implemented, the department will need to put together a formal policy to address the annual evaluation of the members' physical

fitness and a mental wellness program to ensure members – as an all-encompassing, annual “fit for duty” evaluation. OSHA has been performing “courtesy visits” to stations and note expired gear found during the visit. Future visits could result in fines of \$1,500 per expired article found. The department’s bunker gear is in good shape and their back-up gear is getting older. These clothing items are on the CIP for replacement. However, all the wildland helmets are expired and should be replaced. Wildland gear hasn’t been updated since 2005. All the wildland helmets need to be replaced and will cost a total of \$3198 to do so. Replacing a set of wildland gear – coat, pants, gloves, and boots, will cost approximately \$2,150 - \$2,175 per set. The department is authorized for 36 members. The Chief plans to start a 10-year rotation replacement schedule and replace 4 wildland gear sets each year. The cost per year for four sets will be approximately \$8,700.

~ The CIP calls for the snowmachine to be replaced this year. The department is planning on replacing the snowmobile with a side by side onto which tracks will be installed. There is a return to duty side by side available that the Chief has placed his name on since the equipment is inspected prior to delivery, and it would be less expensive. If the return to duty machine is awarded to the department, the acceptance of it would need to be approved by the City Council and Town Board, since it will be a capital purchase. The Board felt it was appropriate to move ahead with trying to obtain the return to duty machine.

~ There are three CIP projects that have been in a holding pattern and it would be good to get them accomplished.

- Refinishing of the truck bay floors was placed on hold due to water seepage from the old roof. The new roof continues to be watertight and refinishing of the floors can proceed. The scope of the project and bids will be let by Layne Otteson, City Engineer.
- Supervisor Brenteson and Layne Otteson will design the parking lot specifications and bid letting will be done by the City.
- Several electrical issues have been identified at the station. Captain Maxson is soliciting bids to retrofit offices, training room, and second level lights to LED. As well as replacing some malfunctioning motion-sensing switches. Three bids have been received ranging from \$5,343 - \$25,000.

These projects’ bids will need to be approved by the City Council and Town Board.

~ Assistant Chief Hedstrom told the Board that his wife, Tricia, has been helping him digitize personnel files. Tricia has had a background check performed for her regular job, due to the nature of confidentiality required. This has taken a significant amount of time and he would like the Board to consider financial compensation for her, moving forward. Deb Wegeleben there hasn’t been a position created by the fire board for this work and recommended the board consider allowing Lisa Miller, the city’s Deputy Clerk to assist. She has been scanning similar documents for the City and could be available to help with fire department records. If City Council approves this, Lisa will work with Mark to learn the scope of the work and will move forward with the project.

~ Chief Hansen has heard from several firefighters who would like to have their payroll checks directly deposited into their bank accounts, for convenience and to eliminate uncashed & misplaced checks. Clerk Maas noted that most banking institutions offer online deposits through the taking of a photo of endorsed checks and uploading them through the banks app. She offered this as a solution to those who don’t want to go to their bank and make a physical deposit. The township’s software – CTAS, doesn’t have the capability of automatic clearing house (ACH) deposits. Member Noding asked if the city’s software allows for ACH – direct deposits of payroll. It does. But to allow the city to process payroll, the Joint Powers Agreement would need to be modified and approved by the City Council and Town Board. Joint Powers Board members felt it would be appropriate to have the township research the ability to provide payroll direct deposit either through a different software or other means. This will be researched, and an update will be presented to the Board.

Paul Knier excused himself from the meeting. He had a previously scheduled engagement, which he needed to attend.

~ Still no inquiries about purchasing Engine 12 (1996 model), listed at \$20,000 or best offer. The Chief thinks it may be due to the enclosed pump panel, which many departments do not prefer. He recommended it be placed on a government online auction site. The Board approved Engine 12's placement for sale on a government online auction site. Keil Ruberg will get the contact information for government online auction site.

~ Currently when new firefighters are interviewed a written test is administered. There is a national testing platform which is more thorough as it reveals areas where the applicant is strong and areas of weakness. The test(s) would be tailored for the department. Testing would be done at the fire station. The platform will even make recommendation if the applicant is psychologically fit to serve as a firefighter. There is an annual fee associated with the platform. Chief calculated that the annual subscription of the platform would more than offset the cost of having a psych eval performed of 4 recruits. Deb mentioned that the new rules being discussed may require a more robust intake testing platform and this one may fulfill any new requirements. The Board directed Chief to get additional information on the testing platform and bring it back to the May 2024 meeting.

~ The department is now required to offer hepatitis B inoculations to members. A survey monkey was sent to all members to find out if they have had the shot, if they haven't would they desire it be given by the department. The department has also been required to keep records of members status of HepB vaccination. The City is looking into having the HepB shot available at their August Health Fair.

~ Chief Hansen, Assistant Chief Hedstrom, Deputy Chief Novak, and Captain Hanson will be traveling to Wisconsin April 21-22 for the new ladder's pre-construction meeting.

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Premier Pontoon has offered the old Petersen home to be used for a live burn training. The home is in good condition and would work well for a live burn training. There are several permits which need to be obtained from various agencies – MPCA, DNR, MNDot, etc. The Chief will keep the board updated on this opportunity.

Staffing Study Update

City Administrator, Hanna Klimmek updated that the staffing study is progressing. Chief Stedman was out a couple weeks ago. He has begun to write his findings. It will be a few weeks before he will be giving his preliminary presentation.

Fiscal Update

Audit Engagement Letter

Bergan KDV is the firm which has audited the department's books, prepared financial statements, and filed required reports with the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), since the Joint Powers Board was established. During a request for the 2023 audit engagement letter, town staff was informed that Bergan KDV has become part of Creative Planning and was sent the link for the 2023 audit engagement agreement letter. Per the letter, the cost to audit the department's 2023 books, prepare financial statements, and submit reports to MN OSA will cost \$8,900. 2023 audit field work has yet to be scheduled. To confirm having BerganKDV/Creative Planning perform the audit of the department's 2023 books, the Joint Powers Board must accept and execute the engagement letter.

Motion/second to approve the BerganKDV/Creative Planning engagement letter to have the firm perform the 2023 Big Lake Fire Department audit, prepare financial statements, and submit reports to MN OSA at a cost of \$8,900 by: Brenteson/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Treasury Report

The financial reports were emailed to Board members in advance of the meeting. The cash balance statement was also provided to the board for review. Treasurer Warneke reviewed the interim financial report ending on 03/17/2024. The balance in the general fund balance of \$ 165,403.21; donation fund balance of \$ 48,473.27. Breakdown of the donations: undedicated/general donations = \$ 35,273.27, fire Prevention = \$ 200, ladder truck = \$1,000, cardiac compression device = \$ 12,000. The total treasury ending balance was \$ 213,876.48 *Financial Reports are retained as part of the Official Minutes and available in the Clerk’s Office.*

Motion/Second to approve Financial Reports by: Noding/Brenteson. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Adjournment

Motion/second to adjourn by: Noding/Brenteson. All present Board Members Approved. Motion prevailed. Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brenda Kimberly-Maas
Town Clerk

Accepted this 7^h day of May 2024, by the Big Lake Fire Board.

Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk