



Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday October 22, 2025, 6:00 pm

The Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors met in regular session, at 6:00 PM, on Wednesday October 22, 2025, 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, Supervisor Dean Brenteson, Supervisor Laura Hayes, Supervisor Mark Hedstrom, Treasurer Kenneth Warneke, Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Deputy Clerk Debbie Workman, Deputy Treasurer Becky Guthrie. In attendance from the Fire Department were Chief Hansen, Captain Tim Davis, Captain Sam Hanson, Lieutenant Eric Rosa, fire fighters Jacob Cihlar, Jacob Dietsch, Andrew Hawkes, Jesse Keller, and Collin Maki and their family members, Mitch Glines, County Senior Planner and Jillian Carlson, Environmental Specialist from Sherburne County Planning & Zoning, Sam Meersman from Minnesota Municipal Power Agency Luke Gildemeister and Tena Munson, from US Solar, and one resident were in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Supervisor Hayes requested the removal of agenda item 5B – Fire Department updates, from the agenda. Noting Chief Hansen will be present during the November meeting to give a 2-month update to the Board.

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

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda consisted of approval of 10/08/2025 Town Board regular meeting minutes, claims and payroll submitted for payment since 10/08/2025 and review of the Big Lake Fire Department claims presented.

Motion/Second to approve the consent agenda as presented by: Hedstrom/Hayes.
Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

Pinning of Fire Fighters

Chief Hansen presented fire fighters Jacob Cihlar, Jacob Dietsch, Andrew Hawkes, Jesse Keller, and Collin Maki to the Board. Chief Hansen reported these men had fulfilled all the obligations of probationary membership, had been serving with the department for one year, and were ready to be pinned as full-fledged fire fighters. Chair Aubol led the men in reciting their Fire Fighter's Oath, after which the member's spouse and parents were invited to pin their badges to their dress uniforms. Town officials and meeting attendees congratulated and applauded the new fire fighters.

Regular Business

Snow and Ice Control resolution

Each year the Town Board considers a resolution to enter into an agreement with the City of Big Lake to provide snow and ice control on certain roads. The roads identified in the resolution are shared roads which were reviewed by the Road Committee and staff. Recent discussions between Township and City officials and staff resulted in revising the agreement from an annually considered one to an ongoing agreement, until such a time a change in responsibility becomes necessary. If a change is needed in the future, the Road Committee will work with city staff to draft a new agreement for snow and ice control on specific roads. Proposed revisions would be brought to both Boards for their consideration. The Road Committee recommends the presented resolution for snow and ice control be approved. The Big Lake City Council will be considering the language of the resolution at their October 22 meeting, as well.

Motion/Second to adopt Resolution 2025-17 Snow and Ice Control Resolution with the City of Big Lake by: Alford/Brenteson. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

Sherburne County Planning & Zoning and Solid Waste department updates

Mitch Glines and Jillian Carlson were in attendance and gave a presentation regarding county wetlands, platting regulations, ordinance rewrite to reflect changes made to the county's comprehensive plan and land use map, zoning and solid waste violations and various programs available to the public. The zoning department is a zero-levy department which receives around 30,000 calls and processes roughly 2000 building, septic, zoning, shoreland, and wetland permits annually. Items highlighted during the presentation included: The new online permit application system. The county entered into contract with Bolten & Menk for assistance in rewriting the zoning and subdivision ordinances in 2025. Town Boards are being asked for comments and thoughts on each section of the ordinances. County staff are attending board meetings to keep town officials up to date on language changes throughout the process. The County Board of Commissioners has determined a permanent hazardous waste facility would serve the county residents well. The location has yet to be determined. Residents who need to update or replace their septic systems can reach out to the solid waste department to learn about low-income grants and low-interest loans.

Solar on PID# 10-00113-1300

The County received an application from Minnesota Municipal Power Agency and US Solar, to allow for a 4-megawatt solar farm to be established on parcel 10-00113-1300 in Big Lake Township.

In 2023, the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan established a new land use category called "private energy production" which is intended to capture all existing and new energy production facilities, in Sherburne County. The County requires all new solar farms to amend the County's Comprehensive Land Use Map to review the project's impact on natural resources and the living environment. The area is zoned for general rural, agricultural use and requires an IUP. Full perimeter screening is required for all solar facilities in Sherburne County. The subject parcel is adjacent to CR 94 (209th Ave. NW) on its southern border and Meadowbrook on its eastern border – just inside the Elk River city limits. The Town Board was requested to give comment on three applications. Amendment to the County's Comprehensive Land Use Map; 40-year IUP to construct and operate a solar farm; variance to solar screening requirements.

Questions posed to the representatives from MMPA and US Solar were regarding: the construction materials, methods, and location of the panels; where the generated power

would be used; who will operate the facility; how much revenue might the township receive from the energy produced (energy production tax); are surrounding property values negatively impacted by solar; do solar farms create heat islands, due to the black panels; what are the current and future environmental impacts of the construction/generation materials used and actual energy generation, on the parcel and surrounding lands, wetlands, and waterways; and would the PUC be involved in granting the application.

Representatives from MMPA and US Salar stated all the materials used are non-hazardous and would be properly recycled and disposed of when solar production ceased. No negative environmental impacts would be realized, including heat islands. There are solar gardens where food is produced and livestock grazes, within the solar garden, known as agrivoltaics. All transmission lines will be run underground to cement pads where collection equipment will be located. The plan is to use most of the parcel but being mindful of the existing wetlands and trees. The plan includes using the existing trees on the south side and north side of the parcel as screening. Energy production from the 4-megawatt farm will serve customers of MMPA. The application would not be reviewed by the PUC because the threshold when a solar project becomes the responsibility of the PUC 5-megawatts or greater. Energy production tax is currently at \$1.20/megawatt. The estimated generation will be 75,000 megawatts annually resulting in approximately \$9,200 in annual taxes. The Town would receive a portion of this money.

Supervisor Hedstrom voiced his opposition to the solar project, noting the energy produced will not benefit township residents and the financial gain the town will realize is minimal. Supervisor Alford commented that the land is borderline for agricultural production, and he saw no financial gain or loss should the land stay as agricultural production or move into solar production. Chair Aubol said that based on the historical use of the land, solar would be a good use for it. Supervisor Brenteson noted County Road 94 will be reconstructed soon and trees and vegetation on the south side of the parcel will likely be lost during the process. Supervisor Hayes noted many of the other tree species on the parcel are short-lived they are nearing their lifespan. The consensus of the Board was, the variance for planting vegetation should be denied.

Board comments for the applications to amend the County's Land Use Map and for a 40-year IUP, and the recommendation to deny the required solar screening variance application, will be sent to Marc Schneider, Sherburne County Assistant Zoning Administrator. The information will be used during upcoming Board of Adjustment Public Hearings for these applications.

Land Closing - Jabro Big Lake/ M&M Precision Machining, LLC

The Town of Big Lake and City of Big Lake jointly own Lot 2, Block 1, BLIPE Plat Seven. The Town and City approved a Contract for Private Development and land sale to Jabro Big Lake, LLC and M&M Precision Machining, Inc. at the July 23, 2025 Joint Powers Board meeting. The project consists of the construction of an approximately 60,000 square foot manufacturing facility. The business is finalizing the project's financing with the First Bank Elk River. The Bank has requested the City and Township execute three subordination agreements to accommodate the Construction mortgage, which utilizes the property as collateral.

The Town and City agreed to a subordinate position in the approved development contract, but formal approval by both bodies is required.

From the approved Contract for Private Development executed on July 23, 2025: "Section 8.3. Modification; Subordination. If required by the Developer's construction lender, the Owners agree to subordinate this Agreement to the construction mortgage to provide that mortgage with a first lien priority, in a form reasonably acceptable to the Owners and approved by the Owners by formal action."

Approving the subordinate agreement has no immediate financial impact. However, the risk is that if the project fails to meet the conditions outlined in the development agreement and the buyers default on their mortgage payments, the Town and City will have limited ability to recover payment for the land. **Note:** The land is sold for \$1, but a mortgage for the full land value is placed on the property. The mortgage is released/forgiven upon completion of the proposed development.

The town's attorney, Peter Tiede, reviewed the subordination agreements and reiterated the effect of the subordination is to let the bank exercise all of its rights, including foreclosure and taking the title, ahead of the Town's, if there would be a default on the bank loan.

Motion/Second to approve closing documents necessary for the sale of Big Lake Industrial Park Lot 2, Block 1, Big Lake Industrial Park East Plat Seven to Jabro Big Lake, LLC and M&M Precision Machining, Inc. project by: Hedstrom/Hayes. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

*NOTE: Raeanne Danielowski, Sherburne County Commissioner and Bruce Messelt, Sherburne County Administrator joined the meeting at 7:00PM.

Roads

Road committee members have met a couple of times since road tour to prioritize upcoming fall maintenance and will be meeting again to determinate and define 2026 overlay projects. They have been looking at alternative shouldering materials and are considering using pulverized, reclaimed bituminous, that the County Public Works Department uses. When packed properly, it looks like asphalt and holds up better than the product the Town uses. A meeting with Tanner Anderson, County Public Works Maintenance Superintendent, to discuss the material and it specifications is scheduled.

The committee had a survey done for 172nd St. NW, south of the railroad tracks to get the accurate legal description of the right-of-way in preparation of widening the shouldering material and reshaping the ditches.

The committee is also researching and reviewing data regarding mill & overlay versus just overlay processes, to determine which process is beneficial when looking at road conditions and restorations.

Business from the Board – Committee Reports/Updates

Supervisor Hedstrom inquired if E911 signs were reviewed during the road tour, if a plan and budget to replace them is being considered. He reported there are many in the township which are unreadable and can cause delays in responding to emergency medical events. Something he experienced earlier in the day. He addressed

Supervisor Hayes attended the SCAT (Sherburne County Association of Townships) meeting the previous Wednesday, along with Chair Aubol and Supervisor Hedstrom. She noted the meetings are routinely attended by County Staff and 4-5 County Commissioners, who give presentations and update the attendees on matters which affect the township's and their residents. She expressed her appreciation for their attendance and the information shared.

Chair Aubol noted the October Planning and Zoning Advisory Board meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2025.

Sherburne County Administrator Report

Bruce Messelt, County Administrator was present and updated the group with

information pertaining to the Northstar Rail line, industries being sought to replace lost revenues from Becker power plant closure, and county road project updates.

State legislature has pulled the plug on the Northstar rail line. The last time the train will run from Big Lake to Minneapolis will be in January 2026. The County approached various agencies looking for alternatives for riders who use the train to get to Minneapolis. The County Board of Commissioners approved a 2-year pilot program between MNDOT and Sherburne County which will start on January 5, 2026. Busses will run 255 working days/year – no weekend service. The projected cost of the program is \$ \$232.68 per in-service hour in 2026 and \$282.00 per in-service hour in 2027. The program will use Metro Transit fares and passes for easy transition from Northstar - \$3.25 Express Bus fare, starting Jan 5, 2026. The Metropass, multi-day passes and all fare and discount programs will be available, including mobility fares, and Transit Assistance Program (TAP) and free transfers within 2 ½ hours. Three to four busses will be required (operating buses + spare). The program will begin by using Metropolitan Council regional fleet coaches. Replacement coach buses may be needed. This cost is outside of contract with Metro Transit. Total service cost estimates for the 2-year range from \$720,000 - \$1,077,00 depending on 2 or 3 daily round trips. Fare revenue will be used to offset partial operating cost and the cost estimate will be refined in the contract.

At one point, there were 4 data centers considering the Becker area as locations which would have helped off-set the financial losses that will result from the closure of the Becker power plant. All of them decided to locate elsewhere. There are some legislative possibilities to entice data centers back to the area. The County is also lobbying to have the 30-year-old moratorium on nuclear power overturned. Current nuclear technology is much more advanced. Getting the moratorium overturned would ensure reliable energy for Minnesotans and may create an opportunity to have the Becker coal plant converted to a nuclear generation station.

Most 2025 county road projects are or will soon be completed. The Zimmerman overpass will be completed, and the HWY 10/Co. Rd 11 project will be worked on in 2026.

The County Board of Commissioners approved a 2026 levy increase of 6.94%. Roughly 1.3% of the levy increase will be used to pay for State unfunded mandates.

Treasurer's Business & Report

Treasurer Warneke reviewed the interim financial report with the Board. He noted the all funds are in good shape with little overall variation in the general fund. The Treasurer's department will be reviewing the legal costs billed to the general fund for legal counsel on matters in Big Lake Industrial Park – East. Those costs may be reallocated to the economic development fund, instead.

The beginning balance of town funds was \$3,781,569.05. The town received \$2,083,517.51 and has approved claims in the amount of \$3,305,808.43. The town funds ending balance (less escrows) was \$2,559,278.13. The escrow funds balance was \$151,170.00. The total town treasury balance equaled \$2,710,448.13.

Motion/Second to approve the treasurer's report by: Hayes/Brenteson. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion carried.
Financial Reports are retained as part of the Official Minutes, which are available in the Clerk's Office.

Open Forum

None.

Announcements

- Big Lake Fire Board meeting Tuesday November 4, 2025, 5:00PM at the fire station.
- One Town Board Regular Meeting in November on Wednesday November 12, 2025, 6:00PM at the town hall.

Adjournment:

Motion/Second to adjourn Regular Board meeting at 8:07OPM by: Hayes/Hedstrom.
Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Accepted this 12th day of November 2025, by the Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors.

Recorded by: Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Town Clerk

Bruce Aubol, Chairman

Attested by: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk