



Regular Board Meeting  
Wednesday November 12, 2025, 6:00 pm

The Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors met in regular session, at 6:00 PM, on Wednesday November 12, 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, Sergeant Derek Barret – Sherburne County Sheriff's Department, Chief Seth Hansen – Big Lake Fire Department, County Commissioner Raeann Danielowski – Sherburne County, residents Jim Sanford and Scott Sanford, and Mike Braun – Nokomis Energy were in attendance.

#### Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to accept the presented 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 10/22/2025 Town Board regular meeting minutes, claims and payroll submitted for payment since 10/22/2025 and review of the Big Lake Fire Department claims presented.

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

#### Sheriff's Report

Sergeant Derek Barret reported there were 232 calls in the township in the month of October. Slightly lower than the same month in 2024. Calls of interest were a theft of tools in the 18000 block of 198<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW which is still under investigation. Requests for extra patrols and security checks are down from 2024. The department continues to stop in at the town hall and park which are documented as security checks. Supervisor Hedstrom asked about 911 hang-up calls to dispatch. Sgt. Barret reported the possible reason for these are due to the caller's phone provider – cell and/or landline.

#### Fire Department Report

Chief Hansen gave a report for the months of September and October. He reported the fire department had responded to a total of 351 calls through the month of October. The breakout of the calls was 235 in the City of Big Lake, 79 in Big Lake Township, 22 in Orrock Township, and 15 mutual aid responses. Calls of interest included six (6) fires – including 1 building and 1 RV, eight (8) motor vehicle accidents – six (6) of those had injured persons,

eight (8) hazardous conditions – 5 gas leaks and 2 carbon monoxide (CO), twelve (12) smoke/CO alarms – six (6) were false alarms. Firefighters trained on pump operations in September and auto extrication in October. Chief Hansen learned that Northern Metals, in Becker, will allow the department to have additional auto extrication training at their facility, upon request. Five firefighters were given their badges, during a pinning ceremony held at the previous Town Board meeting. The department went to Big Lake schools during fire prevention week which ended with the Annual Open House. The Open House was very well attended by residents who were treated to various fire prevention and rescue demonstrations, visiting with other emergency response departments, inspecting various emergency response vehicles, free pop and pizza, fire truck rides, and children who completed their "pumpkin pass" were given a pumpkin. Pumpkins were provided by Beck's Greenhouse and paid for by 24 Restore. At the November Joint Powers Board meeting, the Board authorized a PERA SVF (retirement) increase of \$100 per year of service (from \$7,000 to \$7,100), for the firefighters. With this increase the Big Lake Fire Department's PERA fund will be 102% funded. Chair Aubol asked if any additional quotes for the maintenance work needed at the station were ever received – replacing/converting fluorescent fixtures to LED and fixing or replacing HVAC units which are not functioning. Chief Hansen said no additional quotes for light conversion were received and he was waiting for quotes for the HVAC issues.

#### Regular Business

##### Zoning ordinance amendment comment request – Towing & Wrecking in Industrial zoned areas

Sherburne County Planning and Zoning Department serves as the zoning authority for Big Lake Township. The Planning and Zoning Department received a public request to amend the zoning ordinance section 11 – Industrial District, subdivision 4: Interim Uses and section 16.2, subdivision 4, to include "Wrecker and Towing Service" as a listed interim use within the Industrial District. This use is not currently defined or permitted under the existing ordinance.

The request was submitted by Nick Christenson, owner of Bob's Towing and Recovery, who is seeking to establish this use formally within the County's zoning framework. According to the applicant, this amendment would support a commonly needed service that is currently unaddressed in the ordinance.

The Planning and Zoning Department is looking for public comments ahead of the public hearing scheduled for the Planning Advisory meeting on December 18, 2026. Following the hearing, planning & zoning staff will present the Planning Advisory Commission's recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners in January 2026.

Board supervisors were supplied with a draft ordinance containing the proposed change and a comment form. The Board discussed the proposed amendment. The consensus of the Board was the amendment made sense and requested Clerk Kimberly-Maas to send their comment using the form provided, to Marc Schneider, Sherburne County Assistant Zoning Administrator.

##### Zoning ordinance amendment comment request – Solar in prohibited areas

The Planning and Zoning Department received a public request to amend the zoning ordinance to allow solar to be installed on certain parcels located in the areas where solar is not permitted. Specifically, Section 16.2 – Interim Use Permits, Subdivision 5: Condition 22 – Solar, A. Prohibited areas, 3. Big Lake Township.

The request was submitted by James and Susan Sanford, owner of parcels which are adjacent to a solar garden which was installed prior to 2019 when new solar installations became prohibited as Conditional Use on certain sections in Big Lake Township. The prohibition of new solar in these areas of Big Lake Township was put in place to allow studies to

be conducted relating to transportation and infrastructure improvements to the HWY 25, HWY 10, and CSAH 11 traffic corridors. Some of these traffic studies have been completed. Findings for a new crossing over the Mississippi River have indicated this area is not viable. Other expansion or major transportation infrastructure changes in these sections are still unknown, including a possible rail park.

The underlined is the proposed language for Section 16.2, Subd.5, Condition 22(A)(3):

“A. A Solar Farm shall be prohibited in the following areas:

3. Big Lake Township: areas within 1/2 mile of TH 10 and in all sections 23, 24, 25, 26, 35 and 36 Township 33, Range 28 and Section 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34 Township 33, Range 27, north of CSAH 14, except for those parcels that have an existing Solar Farm constructed prior to October 1, 2025 or share a boundary line with a parcel that has an existing Solar Farm constructed prior to October 1, 2025.”

Smaller solar gardens (<5-Megawatts) would be affected by this change.

Solar gardens 5-Megawatts or larger are governed by PUC and unaffected by County ordinances.

Although Jim Sanford made the request so he could develop the rest of his parcel 80 acre where solar was installed prior to the prohibition and the his parcels to the south (80 acres), northeast (4.89 acres), and east (78 acres) of this parcel; additional parcels will also be affected by the proposed language. A total of approximately 510 acres would be affected by this proposed language.

The Planning and Zoning Department is looking for public comments ahead of the public hearing scheduled for the Planning Advisory meeting on December 18, 2026. Following the hearing, staff will present the Planning Advisory Commission's recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners in January 2026. Board members were supplied with a draft ordinance containing the proposed change and a comment form. The Board discussed the proposed amendment.

The Board decided to send their individual comments Marc Schneider, Sherburne County Assistant Zoning Administrator.

#### Public Inquiry – Trapping in township ROWs

Township staff received an inquiry from a resident pertaining to trapping in township rights of way. The resident would use dog-proof traps and small conibear traps to trap small mammals like skunks, possum, raccoons, coyotes, and other small vermin – excluding gophers and moles, in and around culverts.

After light discussion, the Board stated, due to concerns to public safety and maintenance equipment damage, trapping will not be allowed within the township's rights of way.

Motion/second no trapping allowed within township rights-of-way by: Alford/Hayes. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion carried.

#### Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave Act

PFMLA takes effect on January 1, 2026. The law applies to all employers in Minnesota, regardless of size, and covers all employees working in "covered employment," defined as those who worked 50% or more of their hours in Minnesota or lived in Minnesota for 50% or more of the calendar year. The only exclusions to the law are self-employed individuals and independent contractors. Application for these benefits is done through the State. Minnesota Paid Leave benefits will be funded through premium contributions payable to the State of Minnesota. Standard deduction is .88% for employers with 30 or more employees. Premium

rates are adjusted annually and capped at 1.2% of taxable wages. The Town is considered a small employer (< 30 employees) and qualifies for a 75% reduction of the standard deduction. To begin, the total deduction to be taken from payroll checks is 0.66%

The Board had two items which they needed to decide regarding Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave Act. Premium cost sharing percentages and if the State FMLA will run concurrently or consecutively with other benefits for which employees are eligible under local, state, or federal law, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Minnesota Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) pregnancy and parenting leave. If the Board pays more than 50% of the premium cost, it becomes a taxable benefit. For this reason staff's recommendation is for the premium shared equally between the Town (50% Town/50% employee). It was also recommended to have the FMLA benefit run currently with other leave benefits.

Motion/Second to share Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave Act premiums 50% to be paid by the Town and 50% to be paid by town employees and for Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave benefits to run concurrently with other benefits, for which employees are eligible under local, state, or federal law, including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Minnesota Women's Economic Security Act (WESA) pregnancy and parenting leave by: Hayes/Aubol. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

### Roads

Road committee members have been busy identifying 2026 overlay projects and prioritizing fall brushing areas. They anticipate having the 2026 projects identified and possibly getting the engineer's cost estimate by the end of November or early December. One of the town's summer maintenance vendors will be reducing their workload. TW Hauling has been contacted to see if they are equipped to take on additional work and has indicated they will be able to perform additional work for the township, as needed.

### Business from the Board – Committee Reports/Updates

None.

### Treasurer's Business & Report

Treasurer Warneke reviewed the interim financial report with the Board. He noted all funds are in good shape with little overall variation in the general fund. The legal costs billed to the general fund for legal counsel on matters in Big Lake Industrial Park – East have been reallocated to the economic development fund. The Town has yet to receive a bill from Sherburne County for the town's cost-share portion of the County Road 43 reconstruction and sidewalk installation – projected to be \$126,000. The Town received more gas tax money and interest was higher than expected. He anticipates the final tax settlement at the beginning of December.

2025 beginning balance of town funds was \$ 3,781,569.05. The town received \$2,098,540.94 and has approved claims in the amount of \$ 3,344,375.72. The town funds ending balance (less escrows) was \$ 2,535,734.27. The escrow funds balance was \$ 150,685.87. The total town treasury balance equaled \$ 2,686,420.14.

Motion/Second to approve the treasurer's report by: Aubol/Hayes. 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

- Town offices are closed Thanksgiving and the Friday following – Thursday 11/27/2025 and Friday 11/28/2025
- One Town Board Regular Meeting in December on Wednesday December 10, 2025, 6:00PM at the town hall.

Adjournment:

Motion/Second to adjourn Regular Board meeting at 7:13PM by: Hayes/Brenteson. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Accepted this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December 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