



Fire Board Meeting
Tuesday November 4, 2025, 5:00PM

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

The Big Lake Fire Board met on Tuesday November 4, 2025, 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 Bruce Aubol, Paul Knier, and Kim Noding. Additional attendees included Dalton Keiderling and Paul Ellinger – Orrock Township Supervisors, Chief Seth Hansen, Assistant Chief Mark Hedstrom, Town Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, Town Treasurer Ken Warneke, City Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, and three firefighters. Board member Dean Brenteson was absent.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to approve the presented agenda by: Noding/Knier. Approved by Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of Regular Meeting Minutes from 09/02/2025; ratification of claims and payroll paid between 08/28/2025 – 10/31/2025 (*claims and payroll were reviewed by the Big Lake Town Board, reviewed and approved by Chief Hansen prior to payment. And were sent to the JPB for review prior to the meeting*), not waiving the statutory tort limits for liability insurance coverage – an individual claimant would be able to recover no more than \$500,000 on any claim to which the statutory tort limits apply. The total all claimants would be able to recover for a single occurrence to which the statutory tort limits apply would be limited to \$1,500,00.00, adoption of Resolution 2025-06 Accepting Specified Donations totaling \$1,589.14, of which \$1000.00 is specified for a bulletproof vest and \$589.14 are general donations.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Open Forum:

None.

Regular Business

Marco IT cyber-security proposal – tabled in September

At the September 2, 2025, Fire Board meeting, staff was directed to contact Marco Technologies to obtain a quote for IT services if the Big Lake Fire Department (BLFD) were to be added under the City of Big Lake's existing contract. Staff received a proposal from Marco to provide IT services and equipment deemed necessary to support secure and reliable operations. The proposed Services and Costs include a monthly recurring IT services cost of \$1,758.56 per month for a 31-month term, which coincides with the City's current contract. This equates to approximately

\$21,600 annually. A 5% annual increase to the budget would be recommended. To obtain email service for the fire department officers would require licenses for the government edition of Microsoft Office 365, the cost of licensure is \$6,024 to billed annually. There are two one-time costs. Initial onboarding for the department for \$2,500. New equipment would be needed including a Meraki Security gateway, a switch and wireless access point. These items have an estimated 6-year lifespan. Cost of the equipment and labor to install it is \$12,803. Total one-time costs would be \$15,303. Ongoing IT services and licensing would increase the annual operating budget by \$27,624.

Board members reviewed the information and requested additional estimates be obtained for the same services. Clerk Kimberly-Maas will contact other local governing agencies to find out who performs IT and cybersecurity for them. She will use the scope of the Marco proposal as the specifications for additional estimates. Those estimates will be presented to the Board at the January 6, 2026 meeting.

Fire Chief's Annual Evaluation process

One of the annual matters of business conducted during the JPBs January meeting, is the review of the Fire Chief. It is at this review, the Board determines whether to reappoint or not reappoint the existing Fire Chief for another 1-year term. Deb Wegeleben asked if the Board wanted to use the same evaluation form as was used for the previous evaluation and if she should again send out a "360° leadership review" to all fire staff. The 360° leadership review is used to gather feedback specific to the Chief's leadership performance. The questions on the 360° review are ranked on a scale of 1-10 and include subjects such as decision making, valuing members, encourages growth/learning in others, communication skills, and effective leadership/team building. All responses are confidential.

Deb informed the Board, formal job descriptions are anticipated for all the fire officer and member positions, by the end of the year. The current job descriptions only pertain to stipend duties. Once the job descriptions are finalized, the Chief's job description will be attached to the evaluation forms.

The Chief's evaluation process begins with the Board receiving their evaluation forms, which are to be brought with them to the January meeting, distribution of the Fire Chief's 360° review to all fire department personnel. The 360° review forms will need to be returned by the due date given and the results will be compiled and emailed to the Fire Board ahead of the January meeting. A closed session will be held during the January meeting, to conduct the Chief's evaluation. It is during the closed session when each Board member will review and discuss their individual evaluation directly with the Chief. At the end of the closed session, all completed evaluations will be returned to the City's HR director (Deb Wegeleben) for secure recordkeeping and inclusion with the Chief's prior annual evaluations. Once the evaluation session is complete, the Board will reopen the meeting to the public and act to either reappoint or not reappoint the existing Fire Chief for a 1-year term, beginning with the passing of reappointment.

Board members reviewed the information presented and decided to use the evaluation and review forms and utilize the evaluation process as it was laid out.

Motion/second to utilize the 360° review and Board evaluation forms, as well as utilize the evaluation process as was presented by: Knier/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Knier, Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

ECHO Data Software

Chief Hansen reminded the Board of one of the concerns noted in the staffing study conducted for the Big Lake Fire Department, was the inability to collect and effectively use comprehensive fire department data. Chief Hansen has been searching for different software to address this issue. ECHO software is a tool developed by a Golden Valley firefighter, to address the same issues as were brought to attention by the staffing study. Such as fire call response times, call locations, call

responders. As well as the ability to inventory and log maintenance of the department's equipment, tools, and gear. The software will transfer the past two years-worth of data from ImageTrend software. Information from IAMResponding and run sheets will continue to be manually entered for future data collection. Each fire fighter will have their own sign on profile to be able to track their call and training percentages. The This software will allow for the identification of call trends in fire district #5 - areas assigned to Big Lake Fire Department, as well as mutual services calls. The data and resulting reports will assist command staff, the fire board, city and township governing bodies in in determining what kind of equipment, training and other resources are needed. And will provide valuable metrics such as response times, overall call statistics, personnel response data, detailed incident records, and more. The software makes accessing this information quickly and accurately allowing the command staff, fire board, city and township officials to make informed, data-driven, objective decisions. The ECHO software requires an initial implementation and annual subscription. The first-year subscription and implementation cost is \$9,240. The annual subscription fee is \$6,120 beginning the year after implementation, which would need to be added to the annual budget.

Board members discussed the benefits of ECHO versus ImageTrend, the software currently used by the department, which is provided by the State of Minnesota, free of charge. Assistant Chief Hedstrom was asked by member Knier, if he thought the ECHO software would be a valuable tool and responded he hadn't reviewed the software. Therefore, he was unable to give his opinion or input. Board member Knier inquired whether there was money available for the purchase, to which Treasurer Warneke confirmed the department has the funding to allow for the software's purchase and implementation. The 2026 budget includes the software as a budgeted item.

Motion/second to purchase and implement the ECHO software program in the amount of \$9,240.00 and maintain the annual subscription in the amount of \$6,120.00, with the annual subscription fee to begin the year after the software has been implemented by: Knier/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Grass/Brush Rig

At the last JPB meeting, it was decided to revisit the discussion regarding the replacement of Grass 16. Grass 16 is currently a 2001 F-350. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), front-line apparatus should remain in service for no more than 15 years and then serve up to 5 additional years in reserve status. Once an apparatus reaches 25 years of age, it should be retired for safety reasons. Since becoming part of the fire department's fleet, Grass 16 has consistently operated at its maximum payload capacity of 3,670 lbs. Combined with its age, aging pump, and outdated equipment, this poses a potential liability risk. In the event of an injury or fatality, an attorney could argue that the department failed to meet the accepted standard of care by continuing to operate an apparatus beyond its recommended service life and capacity.

The proposed replacement is a new F-350. This truck offers an approximate payload capacity of 4,400 lbs., which aligns with the specifications of the new skid unit (dry weight of 1,050 lbs.) and a 250-gallon water tank adding roughly 2,000 lbs. This increased capacity, along with modern anti-roll and sway control technology, will help mitigate the liability concerns previously identified and enhance overall safety and performance.

In addition to the Ford F-350 bid, which was obtained through Sourcewell, the proposal presented included having the truck outfitted with all the necessary equipment to convert the truck to a fully operational, firefighting grass rig by Guardian Fleet Safety, out of Clear Lake, MN. Assistant Chief Hedstrom obtained all the information for the purchase of the F-350 and outfitting the truck. If the purchase is approved by the City Council and Town Board, Grass 16 will be converted to a command vehicle, which will be used by the Assistant Chief.

Chair Aubol noted the Joint Powers Board had recommended the replacement of Grass 16 in 2023, but the City Council decided against the replacement. Deb Wegeleben, City Finance Director, noted the CIP budget has included the replacement of Grass 16, since 2023. Board member Noding asked how many grass rigs the department has in the fleet. Chief Hansen stated there are two (2)

trucks outfitted as grass rigs and one (1) outfitted as a brush rig. Knier questioned the need for another grass rig but had concerns of liability issues with Grass 16.

Motion/second to recommend the purchase and outfitting of a Ford F-350 as presented in the proposal by: Aubol/Knier. Approved by: Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Brenda Maas, Town Clerk, inquired what will become of the current command 2 vehicle, if the purchase is approved. Chief Hansen stated the current command 2 vehicle would be sold.

Orrock Fire Contract

At the October JPB Finance Committee meeting, committee members discussed the Orrock fire contract and whether the annual contract amount is sufficient to cover the costs to provide services to Orrock residents. It was noted the method of calculating the cost of coverage in the current contract is resulting in reductions of the annual amount paid by Orrock. The contract calculation takes into consideration the department's operating budget, as well as capital depreciation.

Committee members requested payroll information calls of service to Orrock Township – on-scene firefighters only, and bring the data to the Joint Powers Board, for discussion and possible contract revision conversation with Orrock Township.

Town staff compiled information for the calls which they had run sheets and call details. As of 10/14/2025 they had information for 12 of the 18 dispatched calls to Orrock Township - 2 of those calls were cancelled enroute. Payroll costs for the six calls for which runsheets were missing was calculated by using the average cost for on-scene calls, for which data was available. The estimated total payroll cost to serve Orrock Township through 09/30/2025 was \$2,377.51.

Deb Wegeleben, City Finance Director, presented information regarding Orrock's contract payment versus cost for service. Orrock's current 2026 annual payment is around \$68,000.00. Based on FY2025 actuals, the total cost to provide service, including depreciation, was approximately \$29,000 across 18 calls. This equates to the collection of \$3,778 per call ($\$68,000 \div 18 \approx \$3,778$). The cost per call to Orrock – including depreciation is \$1,611.00 ($\$29,000 \div 18 \approx \$1,611$). Creating an annual surplus to the Department of \$39,000.00 ($\$68,000 - \$29,000 = \$39,000$) or \$2,167.00 per call ($\$3,778 - \$1,611 \approx \$2,167$). She noted at current call volumes, Orrock is paying well above the Fire Departments full cost to provide service (including payroll, operations, and equipment depreciation). The Fire Department is not subsidizing Orrock under the 2026 contract terms. She added there would need to be more than 48 calls annually to Orrock, before the contract amount paid to the fire department (\$68,000) would be less than the cost to provide service.

Some contract options to review with Orrock officials at the annual contract review, done in March: Keep current contract calculations as they are written; Maintain a flat \$68,000 annual contract to preserve a cushion for call fluctuations; Consider a base fee + per-call structure with an annual true-up based on actual activity and cost; Include a review clause to adjust the contract if call volume changes by $\pm 20\%$ from the three-year average.

Orrock Supervisors Dalton Keiderling and Paul Ellinger were in attendance and will also be present at the annual review.

Na action required or taken.

SVF-PERA Benefit Level Increase

Chief Hansen was sent the PERA SVF annual report to review and informed the Board the department has a funding percentage of 102.54% at \$7000.00 per year of service. When the Department was using a private firm for their pension, the funding balance required was which is an over funding. The relief association

is requesting an increase of \$200 dollars per year of service raising it to \$7,200.00 per year. This increase will still leave the Big Lake Fire Departments SVF PERA plan at a funding ration of 100.06%. This is still above 100%.

The following benefit levels for area departments, is provided for comparison.

- City of Albertville Volunteer Fire Department Membership date 1/1/2024 Benefit level \$5,400
- City of Cambridge Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2015 Benefit level \$6,000
- City of Princeton Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2018 Benefit Level \$5,000
- City of Rockford Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2023 Benefit Level \$4,600
- City of Rogers Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2025 Benefit Level \$6,200
- City of St Francis Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2017 Benefit Level \$4,800
- City of St Joseph Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2025 Benefit Level \$3,600
- Township of Baldwin Volunteer Fire Department Membership Date 1/1/2019 Benefit Level \$4,500

***NOTE: (Baldwin has since become a City (2025) but joined prior to incorporating.

Should the Board decide to increase the benefit level, it cannot be reduced. If something were to happen with investments made at the state level and a shortfall were to occur; the Big Lake Fire Joint Powers would be required to contribute to make up the shortage.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Potential for financial impact unknown. Dependent on investments made at the state level.

RECOMMENDATION

Consider increase of \$200 per year of service from \$7,000 to \$7,200. Adopt Resolution 2025-07 if Increase is approved.

AGENDA ITEM

Big Lake Fire Department
Joint Powers Board

ATTACHMENTS

PERA SVF Increase considerations
2025 BLFD PERA SVF Actuarial report
2025 PERA SVF statewide data compilation
RES 2025-07 - Resolution to Increase PERA SVF Benefit
PERA SVF Webinar slides

Lighting upgrades

Chief Hansen reported he had contacted multiple commercial electrical companies, but only one was interested in the lighting project. The estimate received was from Hometown Electrical Services, LLC. The quote specifications had two options for lighting. Option #1 - converting the existing fixtures and adding sensors and option #2 – installing new LED drop-in lights and sensors. A third optional item was to add a sensor to the grass rig bay. The estimates he received were option#1 – fixture conversion in the amount of \$15,769.20 and option#2 – new fixtures in the amount of \$29,376.80. The additional option to install a sensor in the grass rig would cost \$850.

Motion/second to award contract to convert the existing light fixtures and add a sensor to the grass rig bay by: Knier/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Personnel policy update – MN PFMLA

City Finance Director, Deb Wegeleben presented a revision to the Personnel Policy reflecting the addition of language related to the new Minnesota Paid Leave requirements, which take effect January 1, 2026. The key provisions include the Minnesota Paid Leave benefits will be funded through premium contributions payable to the State of Minnesota. The Fire Department will pay 50% of the premium and the employees will pay 50% of the premium. This benefit will run concurrently with other leave benefits that employees are eligible for 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.

Motion/second to amend the personnel policy to reflect Minnesota Paid Leave benefits by: Knier/Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion carried.

Furnace replacement

Chief Hansen reported the furnace which heats the turnout gear room is malfunctioning as is the one in the northernmost truck bay. These furnaces were installed many years ago and the turnout room furnace is oversized for the area. Currently, to keep the room above freezing, the doors to the truck bays are left open. This is to ensure the water pipes in the room don't freeze. Chief Hansen has been told that parts for the outdated equipment are expensive and difficult to find. He believes installing a newer, smaller furnace may be the best option but will call some commercial HVAC companies to evaluate the situation before purchasing a new unit. The Board will address new equipment at a future meeting, if it is deemed necessary.

Fiscal Update

The financial reports were emailed to Board members in advance of the meeting. Treasurer Warneke reviewed the interim financial report through 10/31/2025. Treasurer Warneke noted payroll continues to be over budget. The ending balances: general fund \$ 325,571.62; donation fund \$38,404.25. *Financial Reports are retained as part of the Official Minutes and available in the Clerk's Office.*

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

Adjournment

Motion/second to adjourn by: Knier/Noding. All present Board Members Approved. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Recorded by: Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Town Clerk

Accepted this 6th day of January 2026, by the Big Lake Fire Board.

Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk