



Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday May 27, 2026 6:00 pm

The Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors met in regular session, at 6:00 PM, on Wednesday May 27, 2026, 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, Vice-chair Mark Hedstrom, Treasurer Kenneth Warneke, Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Deputy Clerk Debbie Workman, Deputy Treasurer Becky Guthrie, Chief Sam Olson – City of Big Lake Police Department, Chief Seth Hansen – Big Lake Fire Department, Raeanne Danielowski, County Commissioner, and Judy Ewing – township resident, were in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to accept the presented meeting agenda by: Hedstrom/Brenteson. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried. The meeting proceeded in accordance with the agenda presented.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The Consent Agenda consisted of: A) Minutes; Regular meeting of 05/13/2026. B) Town and Big Lake Fire Department claims paid between 05/13/2026 and 05/27/2026.

Motion/Second to approve the minutes of regular town board meeting held on May 13, 2026; Town claims and payroll submitted since the May 13, 2026, meeting; fire department claims since the May 13, 2026, meeting by: Hayes/Alfords. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

Fire Department update

Chief Seth Hansen gave updates for the months of April and May monthly fire department update to the Board. Chief Hansen reported the department has responded to a total of 130 calls for service this year. Eighty-nine (89) in the City of Big Lake, 34 in Big Lake Township, 6 in Orrock Township, and one (1) mutual aid call. In the months of April and May the department responded to nine (9) fires, four (4) motor vehicle accidents, six (6) hazardous conditions, and seventeen (17) smoke or carbon monoxide detector alarms. The firefighters participated in wildland and grass pump training, learned about fire streams and fire hose, a technical training on Tower 1 usage, and their annual ethics and harassment in the workplace training. Chief Hansen informed the group that the area is currently three inches (3") below normal in rainfall totals and even though the DNR has lifted spring burning restrictions, grass/wildfires are still a threat. He said that residents can check the DNR website for current local restrictions before activating burning permits. Annual permits are available through the DNR's website and 1-3 day permits can be obtained at the Township's Office, during normal business hours. Some general department updates included the completion of building out of the new grass rig - Grass 2 (G2), which has been placed into service; the department is taking

applications for paid-on-call firefighters; landscaping plans to rejuvenate the fire station grounds are being prepared; SCBA models have been reviewed and he is working with the finance to get them ordered at the end of 2026; and a property in Orrock Township, which is in violation of State fire codes are being addressed.

Supervisor Brenteson inquired about what circumstances would initiate a call for mutual aid and if Big Lake is called upon by any other department more than others. Chief Hansen said there isn't any department which is in need of mutual aid more often. And calls to assist generally are when there is a large fire where additional personnel are needed to rotate with the responding department's personnel. Or for coverage for an area when the responding department is active on another situation and personnel are unavailable to respond to calls.

Town Business

Xcel owned early warning system sirens – decommissioned

As a result of FEMA granting Xcel's request to move to an all-digital early warning system, the company decided to offer the 49 sirens it owned and operated in Sherburne County, to local jurisdictions. Sherburne County has also decided to offer to transfer the 31 sirens owned and operated by the County, to local jurisdictions. To allow local governing bodies time to make a decision on whether to take or decline the sirens; the Sherburne County Board accepted the Xcel sirens into their inventory. The county will be operating and maintaining all the EWS sirens located in the county, through 2026.

The county has asked that each local governing body make its decision on bringing the sirens in their boundaries into their capital inventory, by July 1, 2026. Sirens declined by the local governing agencies will be decommissioned by the County beginning in January 2027.

There are 13 sirens in Big Lake Township – all were Xcel owned. Originally there were 14 sirens in the township. However, siren 10 was removed for the County Road 73 reconfiguration project. Xcel hired a vendor to do a sound study after it's removal and found the area in which S-10 was located had ample coverage from S-6, S-9, S-12, and S-38. Likely because new heads/horns were installed which produce more sound and project the sound further than the original horns. Xcel maintained sirens according to standards required for nuclear power generation stations, including a complete inspection every 5-8 years.

Estimated costs to keep the sirens were gathered including repairs, electricity, preventive maintenance agreement, and insurance. The annual cost per siren is estimated at \$1,356 or \$17,628 annually, for all 13 sirens in the township. Replacement parts are hard to find and if a new horn is needed, they can cost \$33,000-\$37,000 a piece.

If accepted, the sirens would continue to be activated by the Sherburne County Emergency Management/Dispatch and would sound regardless of where in the county the emergency/weather event is occurring.

There are a number of other methods for emergency/weather notifications available to residents at varied costs. FEMA's iPAWS is free and already on cell phones. The notifications are based on the location of the cell device and is active, unless the cell owner opts out of the notifications. Hyper-reach is an opt-in application which residents can install through a link on Sherburne County's website. The Hyper-reach system can be set up for notifications on a landline or cell phone. NOAA radios are available at costs from \$20-\$200+ depending on the manufacturer and adaptation needs of the purchaser. NOAA also has an application available, for cellular devices.

Adjacent townships and the City of Big Lake were contacted to see if their governing bodies had decided. Orrock Town Board declined transfer of ALL outdoor sirens located in Orrock township, at their April 22, 2026, meeting. Becker Town Board discussed sirens at their May 18, 2026, meeting. The Board requested a pop-up survey be added to their website to get feedback from residents and will revisit the topic at an upcoming meeting.

There are nine sirens within the township's boundaries which if removed, would affect City of Big Lake residents. City Police Chief, Sam Olson, was in attendance to learn more about the decommissioning of sirens and the Town Board's decision. He told the Board that the City of Big Lake was unaware that Xcel moved to an all-digital system and the one siren within city limits was being considered for decommissioning, before Clerk Maas reached out the Friday ahead of this meeting. He will be meeting with Sherburne County Emergency Manager, Kyle Breffle to gather additional information and will use all he learns to inform the City Council and get their decision on the one EWS siren located within city limits.

Chair Aubol asked each Supervisor their thoughts on accepting or rejecting any or all of the outdoor warning sirens into the Town's inventory.

Supervisor Brenteson stated he preferred to decline all sirens due to financial and other unknown liabilities, such as mechanical/electrical failure during an emergency. Supervisor Hayes noted the sirens served a purpose at one time, but there are other methods to get the same information and would decline all the sirens. She would like to send notices to township residents of the alternative notifications available, should the Board decide to reject the outdoor warning sirens. Supervisor Alfords said he also would prefer the sirens to be rejected by the Board. Supervisor Hedstrom agreed with rejecting the sirens, as did Chair Aubol.

Motion/second to reject transfer of ownership of all outdoor early warning system sirens located in Big Lake Township by: Aubol/Alfords. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion carried.

Motion/second to send a mailed notice to township residents informing them of the decommissioning of the outdoor emergency warning system sirens and alternative methods for notification and list this information on the town's official website by: Hayes/Hedstrom. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion carried.

Clerk Maas asked if the Board would reconsider their decision if residents reached out with their opposition to the decision. Supervisor Hayes stated if 51% of the population contacted the clerk's office stating they wanted to keep the sirens before the end of the year, she would revisit the discussion.

Roads

Supervisor Brenteson reported the Road Committee, town engineer, and the project manager for Capital Paving will conduct the preconstruction meeting Thursday June 28th at 1:30PM in the town hall. Work has begun on miscellaneous items identified for correction, during the spring road tour. Supervisor Alfords reminded everyone that right-of-way mowing is unable to begin until July 1st.

Business from the Board – Committee Reports/Updates

Supervisor Hedstrom would like to attend the next Board meeting via telecommunications. Clerk Maas will reactivate Zoom for the month of June to accommodate his request.

Supervisor Hayes expressed her gratitude to the Road Committee and vendor for making the repairs to the Bailey Station Cemetery gate and marquee before Memorial Day. She said everything looked as good as before the plow incident.

Chair Aubol attended the May Board of Adjustment meeting where a variance application for a solar array in Santiago Township to use existing conifer trees as shielding was denied. A new concrete plant in Livonia Township was approved. An amendment to the County Comprehensive Use Map to allow for large animal veterinary clinics on platted parcels between five and ten (5-10) acres was approved, in a split vote. These items will be before the

County Board at their next meeting. Chair Aubol also attended the Memorial Day ceremony at the Big Lake cemetery. Bob Blake, a 100-year-old veteran, and Delli Stine, 97-year-old veteran, were honored. Commissioner Danielowski offered there were eight new names added to the veteran's memorial, and they were revealed earlier the same day.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Warneke informed the board that all the town funds were positive, and balances were where he expected at this time of the year. Balances are at their low point for the year, but the first tax collections should be received by the end of June or beginning of July – about the same time the road construction bills are expected. There were some small variations in the general fund. The audit bill and recycling bill had yet to be received and paid, and no election costs have been incurred. In the road fund, the gas tax received was a bit higher than projected for the year, but still much less than previous years. Mowing is a bit over budget, snow removal is well under budget, and sweeping was \$5,000 over budget. There was little activity in the other funds.

Treasurer Warneke reported, after paying claims in the meeting's consent agenda balances in the general fund \$402,760.99 and \$1,408,985.11 in the road fund.

May 20, 2026, cash balance report ending balances (less escrows) after payment of approved claims, town funds: \$ 2,825,997.37; escrow funds balance: \$ 124,946.28; total town treasury balance: \$ 2,950,943.65.

Motion/Second to approve the Treasurer's report by: Brenteson/Hayes. Approved by: Alfords, 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

Resident Judy Ewing was present to address the Board with a concern and a request. Her concern was regarding noise from semi-trucks using jake braking to slow down ahead of curves on County Road 14. She wanted to have "NO JAKE BRAKING" signs installed on the road. She had been instructed to contact Sherburne County Public Works with the request since the Town has no authority to install signs on a county road. The department informed her that because the road is in Big Lake Township, the Board would have to enact an ordinance, before they could install signs. Supervisor Brenteson thought a noise ordinance would be needed for the situation. Supervisor Alfords said since the drivers may be downshifting not using jake braking, ahead of the curves.

Clerk Maas was directed to confirm with the county their need for a town ordinance to install signage and contact Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) to find out what kind of an ordinance would be used address the concern and if the town is able to enact such an ordinance. A follow-up conversation with Judy will be done and the Board will be informed if an ordinance can be enacted for the situation.

Announcements

- Next Town Board Meeting Wednesday June 10, 2026, commencing at 6:00PM
- Big Lake Area Food Shelf produce distribution – Monday June 15th 3:30PM- 5:30PM

Adjournment:

Motion/Second to adjourn Regular Board Meeting at 6:50PM by: Hayes/Alfords. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None Opposed. Motion carried.

Approved this 10th day of June 2026, by the Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors.

Bruce Aubol, Chairman

Recorded by Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Town Clerk