

**BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES**

FEBRUARY 18, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Knier called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Ken Geroux, Ken Halverson, Paul Knier, Kim Noding, and Paul Seefeld. Also present: City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, Community Development Director Marie Popp, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Acting Police Chief Sam Olson, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, Streets/Parks/Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Dan Childs, and Big Lake Student Liaison Adelyn Gosewisch.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda as presented. Seconded by Council Member Noding, unanimous ayes, Agenda adopted.

4. BUSINESS

4A. Wastewater Treatment Facility Expansion Project – 30% Design Update

Dan Childs reviewed, at the October 9, 2024 Council meeting, the City Council approved a Professional Services Contract with SEH, Inc. for 30% Design Services for the Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Expansion project. Childs introduced staff from SEH who provided information on the delivery of the 30% Design.

Jessica Hedin and Eric Miller, from SEH, Inc. provided a high-level overview of the 30% design and plans, and reviewed the funding progress and estimated project costs. Hedin discussed the City's option to move forward with the project delivery method, which would be through a design-bid-build process or a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) process. Hedin discuss next steps which will include final design and bidding documents, MPCA review, approval, and certification of project documents, and continued pursuit of funding opportunities.

Council Member Noding discussed the projections for doubling capacity over the next 20 years and asked what manner of growth expectations they used. Miller responded the facility plan includes population projections that considers domestic growth, existing significant industrial users, and future industrial capacity.

Council Member Halverson asked if SEH can guarantee their work will ensure the project will pass the MPCA and EPA requirements. Halverson discussed we hear about these types of projects and when they get to completion they don't pass, and more money is needed to comply with MPCA requirements. Miller discussed between now and final design, the project manual will become more complete. There will be commissioning requirements and performance guarantees required from the contractor. Miller stressed things can come up that weren't known before that will have to be addressed. Halverson acknowledged the EPA could change their rules, but his concern is with the possibility of the project not passing, thus costing more in the end. Miller discussed they will pass the requirements as they are established in the project manual. He also noted if it is a change in the condition that no one knew about, it would be hard to hold someone's feet to the fire. Miller stated they perform the design calculations as best they can and the MPCA reviews as best they can, but there could be things in the future people do not know now. This is a big project with a big scope, and not everything is going to be perfect.

Hedin discussed funding for the project, noting likely funding sources include the Point Source Implementation Grant, the EPA Community Grant, and the Green Project Reserve Grant. The remaining balance would be a Clean Water Revolving Fund Loan. Hedin noted there are other funding sources they are pursuing through the bonding bill and the water infrastructure fund. Hedin reviewed the planning cost estimate is \$52.8M which is based off the 2024 Facility Plan. Hedin noted Miller had talked about some things that have changed since doing that Facility Plan, noting when we prepare a construction cost estimate that will be different from the planning cost estimate. Hedin reviewed the City's current water and sewer rates and how they compare to other cities, as well as how debt for the project could affect those rates. Hedin noted we have been operating off the planning costs from the Facility Plan that was submitted in early 2024 so that estimate of \$52.8M is over two years old already. Hedin asked if the City wants to move forward with preparing a 30% Cost Estimate now, which wasn't included in the scope of the 30% Design deliverable contract as the City wasn't sure if they would be going with a CMAR delivery method or a design-bid-build. Hedin asked for Council feedback on getting a 30% Cost Estimate at this time, or if Council wishes to continue using the Facility Plan cost projections.

Mayor Knier suggested we digest information from tonight's meeting and bring it to the finance committee and ultimately back to Council for further review. Miller noted, however we proceed, if we use a CMAR, there will be a dollar value tied to their proposals, but it is really the percent that is important because one of the first things they are going to do is a cost estimate and it will adjust either up or down. Knier asked what the cost would be to get the 30% Cost Estimate deliverable. Miller reviewed if they are doing a Facility Plan level cost estimate, they will look at similar buildings they have done in the past. On a construction estimate, the plans are not assumed; they are more defined to the construction plans. Hedin estimated an engineer's estimate done by SEH would probably be in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,000. Hiring an outside firm would be more than double that amount.

Knier asked what the advantage is for going the CMAR route on this project. Miller discussed the advantage is the collaborative piece of it, noting the benefits of having the designer and contractor working together to make cost effective decisions for the City, as well as planning for phasing and work sequence.

Council Member Geroux stated we hired SEH to do the 30% design, noting they should already know what will be needed. Miller discussed their role is a system engineer. The CMAR will get us further along in the equipment selection. In a design-bid-build method, they are just using their best judgement.

The Council acknowledged delivery of the 30% Design and directed further discussion with the Finance Committee on the 30% Cost Estimate contract prior to this item coming back to a Council Workshop.

4B. Discuss Development of a Full Water Distribution Model

Dan Childs introduced Dana Brissett from SEH, Inc. who discussed the proposed development of a Full Water Distribution Model, noting this type of water model would improve system understanding and would aid in long-term planning. Brissett explained a water model is a digital simulation of the water system, which would illustrate how water moves through the network and how pressures respond under different conditions. Having this information available to the City would help to evaluate fire flows, identify low-pressure areas, would aid in testing future growth scenarios, sizing infrastructure, and support capital-planning efforts. Childs reviewed staff's recommendation is to move forward with developing a Full Water Distribution Model, which was concurred by City Engineer Layne Otteson.

Mayor Knier noted this \$30,000 expense will save us money in managing the City's water infrastructure.

Council directed Staff to move forward with bringing back the low quote to develop a Full Water Distribution Model.

4C. Discuss 2026 AIS Lake Treatment Plan

Layne Otteson reviewed that in 2025, the City treated the lakes for Curly-leaf Pondweed (63 acres) and Eurasian Water Milfoil (2 acres). Previously the City had not treated Curly-leaf Pondweed since 2016 but significant proliferation was observed over recent summers. In 2024, the City's fishing dock area was matted with Curly-leaf Pondweed and was not usable. The plant density was found to significantly impact the use of the lake for swimming, boating and fishing in many areas. Discussions with the area DNR AIS Coordinator led to developing a 2025 treatment plan to target significant acreage of Curly-leaf Pondweed. After the lake was treated last year, a small area of the Lakeside Park beach swimming area was found to have a dense population of Curly-leaf Pondweed and should be targeted for treatment.

Otteson noted the DNR has indicated it typically takes back-to-back treatment years to eradicate the Curly-leaf Pondweed due to residual seeds that germinate after treatment. The DNR requires a lake survey for permitting and the survey can be used to confirm germination in the spring. It is expected the same areas of 2025 will be recommended for treatment in 2026 by the DNR. However, if the survey shows something different, then the treatment plan will be adjusted to effectively treat the lake upon DNR approval. The eradication of Curly-leaf Pondweed in these areas will hopefully allow native plants to self-establish post treatment. There are no plans to treat Eurasian Water Milfoil this year unless budget and DNR allow for it. Otteson discussed the cost for a lake survey is \$1,500 and AIS treatment is

estimated to be \$20,000. In the past, the City has partnered with the Big Lake Community Lakes Association (BLCLA) to receive limited funding support. At this time, no additional funding has been committed but is requested for consideration. Any additional funding will help maintain the Lake Maintenance fund balance. Otteson stated staff recommends a lake survey be ordered, and a treatment plan be developed. Staff will then bring back a plan with contractor quotes for approval.

Council directed staff to move forward with a lake survey and development of a treatment plan.

4D. Discuss Soliciting Grading Quotes for Street and Pond Areas on Minnesota Avenue in the BLIPE Phase II Project Area

Layne Otteson reviewed an area contractor working in the Industrial Park inquired about excess granular material available in the City. Currently, the only area under consideration that requires export of soil would be the future street segment of Minnesota Avenue and a required pond. Staff has prepared a grading plan for the street and the pond in the event an opportunity may present itself. The estimated cost to grade the street corridor and pond is approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000 with no benefitting adjacent property to assess for the work. Otteson stated this request could be a significant savings opportunity for the City, and staff's recommendation is to solicit quotes from contractors and developers operating in the area who may need to purchase fill for their projects.

Council directed Staff to solicit quotes for the sale of graded soil materials from the future Minnesota Avenue street segment, and to bring back a low quote if over \$2,500.

5. OTHER

Hanna Klimmek discussed the City received two requests for Letters of Support for funding through the 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Application. The BUILD Grant applications are due on February 24, 2026, which is why these requests are being brought forward at this time rather than waiting until the next meeting. One request is from Sherburne County for the TH10/CSAH 11 interchange project, and the other one is from Wright County for the CMRP EIS study and preliminary design for a future Mississippi River bridge crossing. Council consensus was to move forward with submitting Mayor executed Letters of Support for both requests.

Kim Noding discussed theft issues at the Community Garden area during last year's season. Noding suggested Council direct staff to place anti-theft signage at the site. Council directed staff to look at anti-theft signage to be placed at the Community Garden Plot site to alleviate confusion with what a Community Garden means.

6. ADJOURN

Council Member Seefeld motioned to adjourn at 6:19 p.m. Seconded by Council Member Noding unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Gina Wolbeck
City Clerk

03.18.26
Date Approved by Council