



Fire Board Meeting
Tuesday January 2, 2024 5:00PM

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

The Big Lake Fire Board met on Tuesday January 2, 2024, 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 Chair Bruce Aubol, Dean Brenteson, Paul Knier, and Kim Noding. Additional attendees: Fire Chief Seth Hansen, Assistant Fire Chief Mark Hedstrom, Town Treasurer Ken Warneke, City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, and City Finance Director Deb Wegeleben. Captain Clinton Maxson and Lieutenant Eric Rosa were also in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to approve presented agenda by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of Regular Meeting Minutes 11/07/2023; Claims and payroll paid between 11/07/2023 – 01/02/2024 (*claims and payroll were reviewed in electronic format, prior to the meeting*); adoption of Resolution 2024-01 Accepting \$460.00 General Donation. Assistant Chief Hedstrom stated the minutes didn't reflect permission for him to take Unit 14 home and to his personal work. He said the board gave him permission to do so, but it was not reflected in the minutes.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the observation of missing language in the November 7, 2023 meeting minutes, giving verbal consent to allow Unit 14 to be taken home by Assistant Chief Hedstrom by: Brenteson/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.

Open Forum:

None.

Regular Business

Adopt Computer and Social Media Use Policy

Staff along with the Personnel Committee members began the process of establishing policies to be approved by the entire board. The committee has completed the Computer Use, Social Media and Department Issued Devices policy. All firefighters will receive the policies and will have to return an acknowledgement form that they have received the policies. Staff will also post an electronic version on the fire department's page on the City's website. These policy outlines the policies and/or guidelines pertaining to the following:

•**Computer Use:** The policy serves to protect the security and integrity of the Big Lake Fire Department’s electronic communication and information systems by educating the staff about appropriate and safe use of available technology resources. **Social Media:** The policy serves to establish a positive and informative social media presence of the fire department in an efficient, effective, ethical and lawful manner. The policy serves to provide guidelines and standards for the fire department staff and/or representatives regarding the use of social media for communication with residents, colleagues and all other followers. The policy requires staff and/or agents of the fire department to act in a prudent manner with regards to the Big Lake Fire department on their own personal social media. **Data Ownership and Retention:** The policy acknowledges that all social media communications or messages composed, sent, or received on the fire department equipment in an official capacity of the Big Lake Fire Department are the property of the fire department and will be subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. **Department Issued Devices:** The policy serves to provide guidelines pertaining to the care and responsibility by staff for all devices purchased by the fire department.

Suggested revisions to change instances of “Big Lake Fire Department Chief”, “department head” and “department director” to “Big Lake Fire Department administrator” and per contract the Fire Chief is the administrator of the department.

Motion/Second to adopt the Computer and Social Media Use Policy with the revisions to change “Big Lake Fire Department Chief”, “department head” and “department director: by: Knier/Brenteson. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Unstipend Captain/Officer Position

This item had been tabled at the previous regular board meeting. Chief Hansen informed the board that the role may be unnecessary. As internal discussions on how the responses to officer only calls could be changed. Currently, all officers are getting paged out on duty/officer only calls. To reduce the number of officers responding; one solution being considered is to have a couple of officers sign up to be scheduled a week at a time for duty officer/officer call response. If there is a time when a member is unavailable, the current all officer call-out could be used. Chief said this will be a procedural change within the department. Calls like CO alarms and lift assists are considered duty/officer only calls.

Vacation Policy Changes

Chief Hansen and Assistant Chief Hedstrom presented a new vacation policy to the Board. They felt the enhanced vacation policy as a benefit would help with longevity/retention of members.

The current policy reads: All Fire Fighters receive two weeks of vacation per calendar year after successfully completing the probation period. Beginning **10 years** of service on the Fire Department, members receive 3 weeks of vacation and beginning **15 years** of service on the Fire Department, Members receive 4 weeks of vacation. **20+ years** of service on the Fire Department, Members receive 4 weeks of vacation with **one week** of calls paid. Members must note on their request the week they would like their calls paid and credited. The remaining 3 weeks are call credit only. Vacation time needs prior approval with no back dating. During the vacation period, the member receives no pay, but will receive credit for calls during their vacation period. Vacation must be taken in seven (7) day increments, no carryover allowed.

The proposal reads: All Fire Fighters receive two weeks of vacation per calendar year after successfully completing the probation period. Beginning **5 years** of service on the Fire Department, members receive 3 weeks of vacation. Beginning **10 years** of service on the Fire Department, members receive 4 weeks of vacation. Beginning **15 years** of service on the Fire Department, members receive 4 weeks of vacation with one week of calls paid. Members with **20+ years** of

service on the Fire Department will receive 4 weeks of vacation with **two weeks** of calls paid. Members must note on their request the week they would like their calls paid and credited. The remaining weeks are call credit only. Vacation time needs prior approval with no back dating. During the vacation period, the member receives no pay, but will receive credit for calls during their vacation period. Vacation must be taken in seven (7) day increments, no carry over allowed. Vacation time needs prior approval with no back dating. During the vacation period, the member receives no pay, but will receive credit for calls during their vacation period. Vacation must be taken in seven (7) day increments, no carryover allowed.

It was clarified that members who are on regular vacation (not paid vacation), received credit for calls missed. Deb noted vacation is addressed in the Personnel Policy and any modifications will need to be done in the policy and the vacation information should be removed from the SOGs.

Board members discussed the presented enhancements and determined the changes may help with fire fighter retention and longevity in the department.

Motion/Second to adopt the modified vacation policy as presented by: Noding/Brenteson. Approved by Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Department Updates

Chief Hansen informed the Board there have yet to be any offers on Engine 12 (1996 model), listed at \$20,000 or best offer. He felt after another month or two, it may be need to go on the government auction site.

Total calls for service in 2023 were 456 with 302 of them being responded to by the whole department. The other 154 were duty officer/officer only calls.

The Relief Association's Annual Santa Parade was successful. Retired firefighter Mike Bondhus and his wife Teresa filled in for Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Interviews for the captain and lieutenant positions which were open for application. The positions have been filled thus: captain positions were awarded to Sam Hanson, Clint Maxson, and Nock Christenson. Nic Dornbusch and Eric Rosa were appointed to lieutenant positions.

Chief presented an updated organizational chart to the board. He noted the recently created training officer position is being called Deputy Chief in the organizational chart, held by Jeff Novak, has both lieutenants reporting directly to him, as members in those positions are training for the move to captain positions. Chief Hansen will initially be helping Jeff in that part of his role. The Assistant Chief and Deputy Chief roles report to Chief and Captains report directly to the Assistant Chief. Members are assigned to crews which are then assigned to a specific Captain. Captain 1 is Tim Davis, Captain 2 is Nick Christenson, Captain 3 is Doug Novak, Captain 4 is Sam Hanson and Captain 5 is Clinton Maxson. Lieutenant 1 is Nic Dornbusch and Lieutenant 2 is Eric Rosa.

The staffing study is progressing. Chief Stedman has toured the fire district and performed interviews with staff. He will be returning end of January or beginning of February, to continue performing study operations and to interview other stakeholders.

Fiscal Update

The financial reports were emailed to Board members in advance of the meeting. Treasurer Warneke reviewed the interim financial report – for year ending 12/31/2023. Receipts in 2023 were over the budgeted amount by \$10,118.82 – mostly due to the higher than projected interest rates. The presented information had been updated with bills paid in 2024 for services provided in 2023. An accrual listing will be provided when all bills which occurred in 2023 have been paid. Usually, the beginning of February is when all 2023 bills are received and paid. The accruals will be used to give credit to Orrock in their 2024 bill. The ending balance of the general fund has a positive variance of \$50,111.70, from the budgeted amount. Payroll was \$12,000 under budget, training was about \$5000 under budget and no tires were purchased in 2023. Inspections and repairs went over by \$12,000.

The ending balance in the general fund was \$164,104.88 and \$33,933.73 in the donation fund. A question was posed on the reason for an increase to the fire budget since there have been surpluses at year's end. Finance Director Wegeleben said that when the upcoming budgets are discussed and approved, it is unknown what the final numbers will be for the current budget. The Finance Committee uses the current year's budget as a starting point and makes adjustments based on any mandated changes and projected increases in costs. The 2024 budget was set in July using the 2023 budget as a starting point. Market trends in prices, mandated ESST and the creation of the training officer were taken into consideration in the budget amounts. increased the budget *Financial Reports are retained as part of the Official Minutes and available in the Clerk's Office.*

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

Reorganization of Board

Board Chair

Paul Knier moved Bruce Aubol to remain as Board Chair. Bruce accepted the nomination. Seconded by Kim Noding. Approved by: Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. Aubol abstained. Motion prevailed.

Board Vice-Chair

Paul Knier moved Kim Noding to remain as Vice-chair. Kim accepted the nomination. Seconded by Dean Brenteson. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, and Knier. Noding abstained. Motion prevailed.

Committees

Paul Knier moved to keep committees with current members. Finance Committee: Paul Knier, Dean Brenteson, Deb Wegeleben, Ken Warneke, Hanna Klimmek, and Brenda Kimberly-Maas. Personnel Committee: Bruce Aubol, Kim Noding, Hanna Klimmek, Deb Wegeleben, and Brenda Kimberly-Maas. Motion seconded by Kim Noding. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, and Knier. Noding abstained. Motion prevailed.

CLOSED SESSION - Chief's Annual Review

MOTION TO CLOSE REGULAR SESSION TO GO TO CLOSED SESSION

Board Member Knier motioned to recess the regular meeting at 5:36 PM to go to Closed Session to review Chief Hansen Annual Job Performance Evaluations and make determination of appointment for 2023. Seconded by Board Member Noding, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

MOTION TO OPEN THE CLOSED SESSION

Board Member Knier motioned to open the Closed Session at 5:37 PM. Seconded by Board Member Brenteson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Board Members present: Bruce Aubol, Dean Brenteson, Paul Knier, and Kim Noding. Also present: Chief Seth Hansen City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, Town Treasurer Ken Warneke, and Finance Director Deb Wegeleben.

City Administrator Hanna Klimmek gave overview of Chief Hansen's annual job performance evaluations completed by fire department officers, Joint Powers Board officials, city and town support staff. The Board members reviewed the evaluation information and spoke with Chief Hansen about the results.

NO ACTION TAKEN DURING CLOSED SESSION.

MOTION TO CLOSE THE CLOSED SESSION

Board Member Noding motioned to close the Closed Session and reconvene the regular meeting at 5:49 PM. Seconded by Board Member Knier, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

MOTION TO OPEN THE REGULAR SESSION

Board Member Brenteson motioned to open the Regular Session at 5:49 PM. Seconded by Board Member Knier, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

ACTION DURING REGULAR MEETING

Motion by Board Member Brenteson to appoint Seth Hansen to the position of Chief of the Big Lake Fire Department for 2024. Seconded by Board Member Knier. Approved by: Aubol, Brenteson, Knier, and Noding. None Opposed. Motion prevailed.

Board member Brenteson asked if the board needed to take any action on the matter of allowing Utility 14 (U14) to be taken home and used for call response by Assistant Chief Hedstrom. Chief Hansen said the matter was taken care of when the board acknowledged the matter when approving the consent agenda.

Adjournment

Motion/second to adjourn by: Brenteson/Knier. All present Board Members Approved. Motion prevailed. Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brenda Kimberly-Maas
Town Clerk

Accepted this 20th day of March 2024, by the Big Lake Fire Board.

Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk