



Regular Board Meeting
Wednesday July 17, 2024 6:00 pm

The Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors met in special session, at 6:00 PM, on Wednesday July 17, 2024, 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 Chairman Bruce Aubol and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Supervisor Larry Alford, Supervisor Dean Brenteson, Supervisor Laura Hayes, Supervisor Mark Hedstrom, Treasurer Kenneth Warneke, Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Deputy Clerk Debbie Workman, and Fire Lieutenant Eric Rosa were in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Motion/Second to approve the presented agenda by: Hayes/Brenteson. Approved by: Alford, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. Motion prevailed. The meeting proceeded in accordance with the presented agenda.

Business

Review of Big Lake Fire Department Staffing Study

The Town Board attended the presentation of the DRAFT Big Lake Fire Department Staffing Study prepared by McGrath Consulting Group, Inc. on Thursday June 20, 2024, in the City of Big Lake's council chambers. The Study was ordered by the Big Lake Fire Board to identify current and future staffing and operational needs of the fire department. The Big Lake Fire Department's Joint Powers Board received and adopted the final Staffing Study during their regular meeting on Tuesday July 2, 2024.

As 50% owners and because some of the recommendations will affect the town's levy, the town board of supervisors has been requested to review the recommendations made in the Study, determine what if any of the recommendations they feel are appropriate, and consider timing of any changes they see are needed.

Board members received a printed copy of the Study, electronic copies of the Fire Department's personnel policy, social media policy, financial policy, SOGs, approved BLFD 2025 budget & worksheets, area wage comparisons, and information on lift assists performed in preparation for this meeting.

Chair Aubol proposed the Board review the summary statement recommendations listed in the Study. All Board members concurred with this proposal. The summary statement recommendations are attached to the minutes, for reference.

The following recommendations and comments were made for the recommendations:

1.1 The Board does not agree with implementing a strict no alcohol policy. Their concern is if implemented, the department membership will decrease or there will be fewer members responding to calls. The addition of cannabis to Alcohol and Drugs section of the Personnel Policy (page 31), and reminders to members throughout the year – possibility to address during a training session or meeting setting, of the current alcohol policy is recommended.

1.2 The cameras which were in the common meeting areas have been removed. There are six cameras remaining. Two covering the exterior, two in the turnout room, and two in the bays. A monitor is in the bays to help members know if additional members are responding, before leaving.

Board members have no concerns with the cameras currently installed and recommend they remain.

1.3 The current number of officers is to ensure proper span of control. This is 5:1 per FEMA. The lieutenant positions were created in part for succession planning.

Board members recommend revisiting if there is an increase in general membership, to ensure proper span of control remains. They also have no issues with the lieutenant positions assisting with succession planning.

- 1.4 & 2.22 Board disagrees that a full-time Chief is required at present. They recommended local departments of similar coverage area, residential, commercial and industry, of the BLFD fire district who have a full-time chief. And ask what prompted the decision to hire someone for the position. Regarding the proposed OSHA Emergency Responders policy update, they felt a consulting firm, may be a solution, depending on the final ruling.
- 1.5 – 1.9 & 2.5 Board recommends investigating FLSA rules. Thorough officer job descriptions are needed. Monthly stipends should cover officer duties. Hourly pay for incident responses and training. Determine if stipend amounts need to be adjusted.
- 1.10 Board agrees.
- 1.11, 2.12-2.14 & 3.9 The Deputy Chief position is currently responsible for training. It was reported that recruitment is being considered for addition to the job description. Social media is currently being used by the department. City staff has access to the department's Facebook account and could assist with updating their page with information and recruitment campaigns. Board disagrees with incentivizing the recruitment process.
- 1.12 – 1.13 Inquire with the city to see if their grant writer is able to assist.
- 1.14 – 1.15 Board agrees with study.
- 2.1 Has been implemented.
- 2.2 – 2.3 Board recommends the paid-on-call Chief should touch base with the City Administrator, Town Treasurer, City Finance Director, and Town Clerk as needed, and continue to be accountable to the Joint Powers Board.
- 2.4 Board recommends defining what documents should be included in complete personnel files. And recommends complete personnel files should be held by the City. The Township will continue to keep information pertinent to payroll activities. If implemented, the Members Files and Records section of the Personnel Policy will need to be revised (page 13).
- 2.6 Board agrees lift assists need to be addressed.
- 2.7 – 2.8 The data collection software being used is ImageTrend and an upgrade is upcoming. Utilization of all its functionality is a work in progress.
- 2.9 & 3.8 The pay scale is reviewed annually, the BLFD 2025 budget includes a \$1.00/hour increase in pay steps. The Board disagrees with incentivizing call response.
- 2.10 Board recommends research on this to see if it is worthwhile.
- 2.11 Currently utilizing as needed.
- 2.15 2.17 Board agrees with recommendations.
- 2.18 2.20 Already being addressed or considered.
- 2.21 Agreement already in place with the City, for performance of routine vehicle maintenance and repairs.
- 2.22 Board agrees.
- 3.1 Board feels this is done through the Joint Powers Board meetings.
- 3.2 Direct Deposit is in the beginning stages of implementation.
- 3.3 – 3.4 Board was informed these are already being addressed.
- 3.5 & 4.1 Sherburne County may have the ability to generate information to assist with collection of data.
- 3.6 Board agrees.
- 3.7 It was reported that officer training options are available. Board recommends Deputy Chief promote the availability of the officer training.
- 3.10 & 3.11 Are already implemented and planned to continue.
- 3.12 & 3.13 Not applicable
- 3.14 Board agrees the NFPA and OSHA standards should not be adopted by the department.
- 4.2 Town and City staff currently assist in clerical duties. Board recommends this be revisited when a fulltime chief is hired, or as future needs are greater than town and city staff availability.
- 5.1 – 5.3 Board agrees.

No formal action was taken. The Board recommendations will be compiled. Board members expressed the information should be presented to the BLFD Joint Powers Board rather than hold another special joint meeting with city council.

Adjournment:

Motion/Second to adjourn Regular Board Meeting at 7:18PM by: Hayes/Hedstrom. Approved by: Alfords, Aubol, Brenteson, Hayes, and Hedstrom. None opposed. Motion prevailed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk

Accepted this 24th day of July 2024, by the Town of Big Lake Board of Supervisors.

Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: _____
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Town Clerk

July 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes - Attachment A

Big Lake Fire Department – Staffing Study Recommendation Priority List

Priority. Item #	Topic	Study Recommendation
1.1	SOG's	The Joint Fire Board should adopt a Strict No Alcohol Policy for the Big Lake Fire Department members effective immediately.
1.2	SOG's	The Big Lake Fire Department and Fire Board should adopt a policy that security cameras shall not be used within the fire stations without prior approval from the Fire Board.
1.3	Officers	As department Paid-On-Call officer positions become vacant in the future the need to fill any vacant officer positions and the current number of officers in the department should be evaluated by the department and the Fire Board to assure the appropriate and correct number officer positions are adjusted if necessary.
1.4	Officers	The Big Lake Fire Department should hire a full-time Fire Chief at this time.
1.5	POC Salaries	The Big Lake Fire Board should discontinue the practice of paying Department members receiving monthly stipends any additional wages for hours submitted by the individual members for work beyond their monthly stipend pay in order to avoid the possibility of losing their volunteer status resulting in FLSA requirements for minimum wage and overtime under the FLSA becoming a requirement.
1.6	POC Salaries	The Big Lake Fire Board should increase the monthly stipend paid to Department Officers and the SCBA Coordinator thereby eliminating their expectation to be paid additional compensation for any hours of above what the expectation is to be paid above the monthly stipend.
1.7	POC Salaries	The Big Lake Fire Board should approve and implement the newly recommended stipend pay schedule with the clear understanding that Department Officers in addition to the stipend will only receive pay for responding to calls and attending training sessions.
1.8	POC Salaries	If the newly recommended stipend pay schedule is approved by the Board all officers need to accept the duties and responsibilities assigned to them by the Department without extra pay beyond the stipend payment.
1.9	POC Salaries	In addition to the increased monthly stipend the members receiving the monthly stipend would continue to be paid for responding to calls and for training as they currently are paid.
1.10	Staffing	The Big Lake Fire Department should not move towards hiring full-time daytime hour employees at this time primarily due to the costs associated with salaries and benefits.
1.11	Recruitment	The Big Lake Fire Department should increase their social media presence by enlisting the help of current members with experience to share the story and events of the fire department, but more importantly to use as a method of recruitment for new members.
1.12	CIP Budget Grants	The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to develop a five-year Capital Improvement Plan and submit it to the Big Lake Fire Board for approval and assure that the plan is updated on an annual basis.
1.13	Budget Grants	The Big Lake Fire Department should consider applying for the Assistance to Firefighter Grants to help with funding future capital equipment and vehicle purchases.
1.14	Districts	The idea of creating or joining a Special Taxing District by the Big Lake Fire Department and the Fire Board should not move forward at this time until more information is known and can be considered.
1.15	Districts	Careful consideration should be given in the future to the Big Lake Fire Department becoming a member of a Fire District and the positive and negatives should be clearly identified. The most important question to be answered when considering joining a Fire District will be how will it benefit the taxpayers and citizens of the City of Big Lake and the
2.1	Fire Board	The Big Lake Fire Department and the Board should consider posting Fire Board meeting agendas and minutes in order to provide more information and support from the communities and citizens they serve.

Big Lake Fire Department – Recommendation Priority

Priority	Topic	Recommendation
2.2	Administration	<i>The Fire Board and the two communities need to address the need of the fulltime Fire Chief being recommended in this study to report on a daily basis to a higher level of leadership and the recommendation is the newly hired fulltime Fire Chief report to the City of Big Lake Administrator on daily operations.</i>
2.3	Administration	<i>The language in the current Joint Powers Agreement as to who the Fire Chief/Department Administrator reports to would need to be adjusted to include the recommendation that the Fire Chief/Department Administrator report to the City of Big Lake Administrator on a daily basis.</i>
2.4	Administration	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department personnel files of department members should be maintained at the City of Big Lake City Hall with the Human Resources Department.</i>
2.5	SOG's	<i>The Fire Board, upon approval of the newly recommended monthly stipend amounts for the Officers will need to adjust the descriptions of the stipend duties and approximate hours per month for each position contained within the Standard Operating Guidelines.</i>
2.6	EMS Response	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should adopt the policy of only responding to lift assist calls if requested by the Police Department and/or Law Enforcement to respond.</i>
2.7	Data	<i>Big Lake Fire Department should work to improve their data quality control program to ensure the data retrieved serves a purpose in the management of the department.</i>
2.8	Data	<i>Big Lake Fire Department and the Board should consider investing in new data software that tracks various types of data required to operate and manage a fire department.</i>
2.9	POC Salaries	<i>Consideration should be given by the Big Lake Fire Board of raising the salaries for the Paid-on-Call members. Even though an increase of a \$1.00 per hourly salary rate the total number of hours paid for all hours in 2023 by all members was 9,189 hours. The additional costs would be \$9,189 plus an additional \$703.00 for FICA.</i>
2.10	Staffing	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department and the Fire Board should consider implementing a part-time staffing program to provide on-duty part-time personnel in the station Monday through Friday for at least 40 hours per week as soon as it is fiscally possible.</i>
2.11	Staffing	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department and the Fire Board should consider implementing a duty crew staffing program to provide on-duty crew of at least two members to be available to respond to calls during the evening hours during the week and a separate duty crew for weekend standby. The duty crew members would be paid a stipend for standby as well as the POC salary rate for any calls they responded to as soon as it is fiscally possible.</i>
2.12	Recruitment	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to develop an ongoing recruitment program to provide enough Paid-on-Call members to meet the needs of the community.</i>
2.13	Recruitment	<i>Current members should be encouraged to participate in developing new ideas and plans for actively recruiting new Paid on Call members</i>
2.14	Recruitment	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should have a discussion with the Big Lake School District about the possibility of creating a recruitment partnership to benefit the fire department, the community, and the students.</i>
2.15	Budget	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to be conservative in the development of their operating budget as the department continues to grow to meet the needs of both communities they serve.</i>
2.16	Training	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to conduct training as they have been doing with the goal of all members receiving in department and outside training required by the Standard Operating Guidelines</i>
2.17	Training	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to develop and conduct training to meet the requirements of the Minnesota Fire Service including the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.</i>

Big Lake Fire Department – Recommendation Priority

Priority	Topic	Recommendation
2.18	Apparatus	<i>The consultants have developed an apparatus replacement plan (outlined in this section) and recommend adoption by the Big Lake Fire Department and Fire Board.</i>
2.19	Apparatus	<i>The cost to replace fire apparatus will most likely increase significantly and the Big Lake Fire Department should monitor future apparatus costs in order to update the Capital Improvement Fund to assure the future funding will be adequate when the purchase of each new apparatus becomes necessary.</i>
2.20	Apparatus	<i>The replacement of the 2000 Freightliner Tender and the 2002 Ford Grass Rig should both be addressed in the near future and replacements ordered as soon as both communities believe it is affordable.</i>
2.21	Apparatus	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department and the Big Lake Fire Department Board should make every effort to work with the City of Big Lake Fleet Maintenance Department to have routine maintenance and repairs completed at the City facility, which should result in cost savings.</i>
2.22	OSHA Update	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should monitor the progress and adoption of the proposed OSHA Fire Brigade Standard and adjust the future budget needs as required.</i>
3.1	Fire Board	<i>The Big Lake Fire Board and the Big Lake Fire Department members should focus on improving communications with each other in order to being able to continue providing quality emergency fire & EMS services.</i>
3.2	Administration	<i>The payment of Big Lake Fire Department members should be converted from hard copy checks to electronic payroll with online bank deposits for the employees if at all possible. If the Township of Big Lake doesn't have the capabilities perhaps payroll responsibilities could be transferred to the City of Big Lake as Payroll does usually come under the responsibility of Human Resources.</i>
3.3	False Alarms	<i>Reduction of false fire alarms can be reduced by regular maintenance, public education, fire inspections, immediate follow-up on all false alarms by the FD. The department should implement these steps, as necessary.</i>
3.4	Overlapping Incidents	<i>Although infrequent the department should record when more than two (e.g., three, ≥ four) incidents are occurring simultaneously.</i>
3.5	Calls By Jurisdiction	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should start tracking the location of calls within the jurisdictions they serve by map coordinates or assigned districts in order to develop data for future department needs. The use of call tracking with the use of GIS may be available with the 9-1-1 Communications Center and the CAD System.</i>
3.6	FD & Ambulance Service	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to work with the area fire departments and the private ambulance to meet the needs of the communities they serve.</i>
3.7	Succession Planning	<i>In the future the Big Lake Fire Department leadership should develop and implement a plan to encourage every member of the fire department to attend training and education courses and provide mentors for all members that have an interest in being promoted.</i>
3.8	POC Salaries	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department Board should continue to review the Paid-on-Call salaries on a regular basis to assure they are established to maintain an adequate number of Paid-on-Call members and an incentive for responding to calls.</i>
3.9	Recruitment	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department and the Board should discuss the possibility of using incentives for the recruitment of new department members.</i>
3.10	Inspections & Pub Ed.	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should review site plans for new commercial construction if at all possible as it allows a perfect opportunity to pre-plan for future responses to the occupancies.</i>
3.11	Inspections & Pub Ed.	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue to conduct public fire safety education programs within the community specially to school age children. Open House during Fire Prevention Week should be continued as it allows the citizens to be educated on Fire Safety but also allows an opportunity to display the services provided by the Fire Department.</i>

Big Lake Fire Department – Recommendation Priority

Priority	Topic	Recommendation
3.12	Facilities	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should develop plans to construct an addition or to modify the current facility in order to provide sleeping quarters and living quarters for at least six crew members to be prepared for the time when the station can be staffed 24 hours/day.</i>
3.13	Facilities	<i>Once tentative plans for any future sleeping and living arrangements are completed the funding sources will need to be determined and a financing plan will be necessary.</i>
3.14	NFPA	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should not adopt NFPA 1720. Adoption would include the adoption of all OSHA and NFPA standards by reference. However, a plan should be developed to meet as many standards as possible in the future.</i>
4.1	Facilities	<i>Any plans to construct future fire stations in the service area need to be supported with accurate response data reflecting the actual need for a fire station and staffing. The costs and benefits would need to be carefully analyzed to assure the taxpayers would receive a return on the costs.</i>
4.2	Officers	<i>The Big Lake Fire Board should consider future funding for a part-time Administrative Assistant in the Fire Department with a weekly schedule of 12 to 15 hours per week as adjustments can be made, as necessary.</i>
5.1	OSHA	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should continue its efforts in ensuring they meet the OSHA “two-in/two-out” rule, including all references to respiratory protection.</i>
5.2	ISO	<i>An ISO classification of Class 04 and Class 05 are excellent rating for the Big Lake Fire Department. However, the consultants do not believe any additional resources or fiscal commitment should be made to reduce the classification to Class 03 or Class 04. Rather, the Big Lake Fire Department should attempt to maintain the current PPC ratings in the future.</i>
5.3	Accreditation	<i>The Big Lake Fire Department should not seek international accreditation (CFAI) at this juncture; rather, the CFAI performance indicators and core competencies should be utilized as a model for quality and a benchmark for examining and evaluating current practices.</i>