



Fire Board Meeting  
Tuesday September 03, 2024 5:00PM

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

The Big Lake Fire Board met on Wednesday September 03, 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, Paul Knier, and Kim Noding. Additional attendees: Fire Chief Seth Hansen, Assistant Fire Chief Mark Hedstrom, Town Clerk Brenda Kimberly-Maas, City Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, and Town Deputy Treasurer Becky Guthrie. There was one member of the public in the audience. Board member Dean Brenteson Town Treasurer Ken Warneke, City Administrator Hanna Klimmek, and Chief Hansen were absent.

#### Approval of Meeting Agenda

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

#### Approval of Consent Agenda

The consent agenda consisted of July 02, 2024, Meeting Minutes; claims paid 07/02/2024 through 09/02/2024 (*claims and payroll were reviewed in electronic format, prior to the meeting*).

Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Noding, Knier, and Noding. None opposed. Motion Prevailed.

#### Open Forum:

None.

#### Regular Business

##### Personnel Policy - Revisions

Staff made some updates to the personnel policy based on the recommendation from the Board to implement payroll direct deposit. The proposed changes presented in the draft policy included the adding language pertaining to time reporting, direct deposit method for payroll payments, and requirement for members to notify the payroll processor (currently the Town staff) changes in member status, address, phone number, marital status, etc. The 15th of each month is the suggested disbursement date, which is a standard payroll date. If the 15th falls on a non-business day, payroll will be deposited the business day prior. This date will allow for the thorough review of time sheets by fire department administrative staff and payroll processing staff and takes into consideration the requirement of the payroll data file be transmitted as least 2 business days before the posting date.

In the section on take home vehicles; language pertaining to transporting passengers in need of non-emergency care was modified to state that no one is allowed to drive Code 3, this is to ensure the safety of the passengers.

The section pertaining to time keeping was tabled.

Since the personnel policy is a fluid document, office staff recommended the policy distributed to fire department members with the language which has been approved at the time of meeting adjournment. A receipt sign-off sheet will be required to be submitted by each fire department member. This will be kept in the member's personnel file.

Motion/Second to approve the presented updates to the Personnel Policy by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

#### BLFD Relief Association conversion to Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Retirement Plan

The Big Lake Relief Association requested information on joining the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter retirement fund, from the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA SVF). The reasons they requested the information were because the cost to have the required audit performed every other year, costs them roughly \$13,000; their current financial advisor is retiring – he gives the Association a significant discount for his services; PERA is offering a \$10,000 bonus to join the plan and \$10,000 for each member who joins; the Department may leave the plan if it doesn't perform to as well as the Association wants which is a change to the PERA policy.

To the request, PERA supplied two cost analyses to join PERA SVF. Both analyses were reviewed by Relief Association members and their current financial planner, at their meeting held on July 21, 2024. The analysis process indicated the Association was severely under invested.

There are 700 departments participating in a retirement/relief program in the state and 1/3 of them are administrated by PERA. Of those only 10 are participating at a level higher than \$5,000 per year of service. The State has indicated that once a benefit level has been established it cannot be decreased. Upcoming in 2026, departments participating in the PERA SVF, will be able to select to participate in the PERA DCP in lieu of the SVF plan. This would be a decision made by the governing agencies. Details of this will be forthcoming to the membership.

State aid is currently used to fund the BLFDRA with an additional donation of \$4,000 from each of the governing agencies. State aid would continue to fund the PERA SVF and the governing agencies can still contribute \$4,000 annually to the Statewide Volunteer Fire Fighter Plan on behalf of the Big Lake Fire Department, which will help alleviate any deficit in the plan.

With the recommendation of their financial planner, the membership of the Relief Association voted to join the membership voted to join the 5 to 20 years of service plan at \$7,000 benefit per year of service level. PERA has indicated the Big Lake Relief Association and the Joint Powers Board will need to adopt a resolution opting to join the statewide retirement program. Considering the City and the Town of Big Lake are equally responsible for any deficit in any pension plan offered to the firefighters, it was recommended that both the City and the Township approve a resolution opting to join the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan as proposed by the Relief Association. All four resolutions need to be adopted and returned to PERA by September 13, 2024, in order for the Relief Association to make the January 1, 2025 enrollment deadline.

The Board wants to hold the benefit level of \$7,000 for the next few years to verify that in fact the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan will perform as indicated in the cost analysis and to ensure that there will not be a deficit that would need to be covered by the Fire Department. The Joint Fire Board Finance group and Fire Chief will be responsible for performing an annual cost analysis and submitting it to PERA and the membership.

Town Clerk Kimberly-Maas asked if the BLFDRA was going to remain active for the purpose of receiving donations. City Finance Director Wegeleben noted the association would have to modify their by-laws and the Office of the State Auditor had documents that would help the relief association with modifications they would need to change to a non-profit organization. Lt. Eric Rosa said the association didn't have a vote to disband but was unsure if they would remain an organization and make the change to a non-profit.

Motion/Second to Adopt Resolution 2024-04 Option to Join the Voluntary Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Retirement Plan. The plan will be administered by PERA under the terms provided in the PERA cost analysis at \$7,000 per year of service with the vesting schedule beginning at 40% at 5 years of service and increasing 4% each year until 100% at 20 years. by: Knier/Noding. Approved by Aubol, Knier, and Noding. Opposed: None. Motion Prevailed.

Department Updates

Assistant Chief Hedstrom provided the final sketch of Tower 1 – the new ladder truck, he had received the day of the meeting. He said once the final sketch was approved, the truck would go into production. Currently the delivery is estimated to be in early 2025.

Fiscal Update

Treasury Report

The financial reports were emailed to Board members in advance of the meeting. Deputy Treasurer Guthrie reviewed the interim financial report ending on 08/31/2024. On the receipts side, all training reimbursement funds have been collected and on the expense side the administration account is over budget, mainly due to the unbudgeted cost of the staffing study, fire training is also over budget, but all other accounts are right in line. The donation fund balance includes the purchases of the extrication equipment for E22 and the new fitness equipment. The cash balance statement was also provided to the board for review. The general fund balance \$ 243,403.49 donation fund balance of \$ 32,423.01. The total treasury ending balance was \$ 275,826.50. *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 Prevailed.

Adjournment

Motion/second to adjourn by: Knier/Noding. All present Board Members Approved. Motion prevailed. Meeting adjourned at 6:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Brenda Kimberly-Maas  
Town Clerk

Accepted this 12<sup>th</sup> day of November 2024, by the Big Lake Fire Board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce Aubol, Chair

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Brenda Kimberly-Maas, Clerk