

**City of Bigfork**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**December 9, 2021**  
**5:30 p.m.**

Members Present: Bryan Boone, David Mann, Andrew Francisco, Ben Maxa,  
Members Absent: Paul Gustafson, Junior Council Member Lilly Danielson  
Also Present: Gary Erickson, Scarlett Maxa, Rogue Maxa, Sally Sedgwick, Jillian Haataja

Mayor Boone called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

The pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the Public Forum was opened.

Gary Erickson addressed the council to request considering an opportunity to put in a charging station in Bigfork. He stated that there is grant money available and would love the Council to investigate it. Looking to add a shuttle bus as well to move people from the charging station to town if they need to go anywhere while their vehicles charge. He thought talking with Terry Snyder to discuss the idea in Itasca County and any available funding he may have knowledge of. He was also willing to investigate the project in more detail.

Jillian Haataja addressed the Council regarding Stoke Township's Clerk that has retired. They have been looking for a new clerk. And she has been filling the position herself, temporarily. She asked to see if Melissa would take over some of the duties until the position is filled. She puts in approximately 5 hours a month.

As no one else wished to address the Council, the public forum was closed.

Addition of A Letter from the Bigfork Boosters Club holding Wilderness Days in 2022, Cedar Street- Division Ave Water Main, and Hwy 38 project, were made to the agenda. **Motion by Boone to approve agenda as amended, seconded by Mann, motion carried unanimously (MCU).**

**Consent Agenda: Motion by Mann, seconded by Francisco and MCU to approve the consent agenda including:**

1. Minutes of the October 14, 2021, Regular City Council meeting
2. City Clerk's office report for October & November 2021,
3. Financial report for October & November 2021,
4. Public Works Department Report for October & November 2021,
5. Payroll and timecards for October 15 and October 29, 2021, regular payrolls, and November 12 and November 26 regular payrolls in the amount of \$6,365.43 & \$5,9655.09.
6. Annual Payroll for Fire Department, City Council Members & Cemetery Maintenance in the amount of \$18,169.13

7. Claims paid in October in the amount of \$57,931.71 and paid in November in the amount of \$33,314.73.
8. 2022 Liquor License for Bigfork Wilderness Bar and Kocian's IGA for 2022
9. 2022 Liability Coverage Waiver Form- Do NOT Waive

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Water Tower Project:** David Mann addressed the project to discuss possibility of moving forward on the process. He reminded the Council that in September Curt Meyer, Widseth Engineering noted that the expected cost is about \$520,000.00 if done in 2024.

A new tower would cost approximately \$800,000.00 versus approximately \$500,000.00 for the cost of maintenance on the tower we currently have. Francisco questioned if it would be a possibility to fix the tower in stages versus all at once to prolong the costs being thrown at the city all at once. Mayor Boone asked Melissa to reach out to Widseth Engineering about being able to divide the project up in stages, rather than fixing it all at once. Maxa stated the city should plan to start the project in 2023 so that we avoid the cost going up \$20,000.00. Mann said that with the amount we have in our investment bond, shooting for the project in 2023 is not too far out of reach.

#### **Bigfork Community and School Project: Resolution 2021-19: Resolution Authorizing Application to and Accepting Funds from the State of Minnesota Through the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Agency:**

Tim Johnson sent a proposed layout for the Bigfork Community and School Project. The original cost was \$1.9 million the current estimate is \$2.872 million, more funds were available for renovations versus new build. He has asked the City to sign the resolution to accept the funds as the City for the Project. The community committed to \$700,000.00 and have surpassed that amount to \$965,000.00. Additional funding be sought \$35,000.00 to bring them up to \$1 million. The IRRRB has determined that grant funds of \$250,000.00 for the Bigfork Community and School Project have been approved, and the City of Bigfork has been sought as the Agency to accept the funds to complete the Project. Be if further resolved that the Applicant's Mayor and City Clerk/Treasurer are authorized to sign and submit applications for grant monies from IRRRB.

*Motion to approve resolution: Motion made by Mann, Seconded by Maxa, and MCU.*

#### NEW BUSINESS

**Tim Johnson- Blandin Foundation Grant:** Tim Johnson sent a letter to the City of Bigfork Regarding a Blanding Foundation Small Communities Development Grant. Per invitation by the Blandin Foundation Tim, applied for \$100,000.00 Small Communities Development Grant for the City of Bigfork. The Bigfork Valley Community Foundation will be the grantee and fiscal agent for the grant. Specific towards culture and tourism. The City of Bigfork will use the funds for intended community development categories and objectives that may include community centers, City of Bigfork Parks and Trails, benches, lights & flags, other community beautification/improvement projects, community engagement activities, and professional services such as grant writing, feasibility studies, or planning activities.

**Memorandum of Understanding for City Clerk Wages:** A breakdown of hourly pay has been required since City Clerk/Treasurer position was included in the Union. The Union requires there to be an hourly wage. The position is a salaried position, the hourly pay is just a reference for the union. The position was made salary because whomever holds the position is being paid for work completed versus how long it took to be completed. This is how the position was paid while Angie was the Clerk, and the city intends to keep this the same for Melissa. *Motion by Maxa, seconded by Mann, to accept the City Clerk Wages as stated, MCU.*

**Year-Round Public Works Part Time Position:** The Council discussed the idea of having someone available to call in to help with snow removal or any other duties that may need to be completed should our Public Works department be unavailable. The pay would come out of the Gambling Fund versus the General Fund for snow removal of the Ice Rink. Part time status would not be available for benefits. Mann discussed that he was not in favor reason being we are in debt and have upcoming projects that need to be funded. He stated agrees with using the Gambling Tax to pay someone to clean the ice rink as those monies are to be directed towards the city providing for the youth. Boone clarified that this would be on an on-call basis versus having set part time hours. Boone suggested that he and Melissa discuss with Joe Zimmer the Public Works manager to define the position more and go over how much it would cost to have someone in place. *Motion by Boone, seconded by Mann, to use the Gambling Tax to pay someone to clean the ice rink, MCU.*

**Community Businesses and City of Bigfork Pooling Funds for more Coverage from the Itasca County Sheriff's Department:** Andrew Francisco addressed the council and stated that he was approached from different community members about having more coverage from Itasca County Sheriff's Department in the City of Bigfork. He mentioned that reaching out to local businesses about pooling together funds may be a solution to pay the sheriff's department. Gary Erickson addressed the Council stating that he hears from community members that it is an issue, and we need more coverage in the City. Boone addressed having a community meeting to address the issue and to discuss ways to pay for their presence. He would like to have a discussion with members of the Edge of the Wilderness in the end of February before opening a community forum. Whether we hire a city police officer, ask for more coverage, and raise taxes to pay for either. Mann discussed the idea of addressing the County to push for more coverage as we are a part of the County, and the coverage should be provided in our city already.

**Selling of City Clerk's Office Old Desk to Angie Storlie- Amount Offered: \$200.00:**  
*Motion by Maxa, seconded by Francisco, to accept \$200 for the Old Clerks Office Desk, MCU.*

**Policy for Airport Snow Removal in the Event of an Emergency:** Boone stated that he got contacted by the Hospital in November. There was miscommunication regarding the Airport being cleared of snow to land a fixed wing plane in the event of an emergency. Public Works had cleared it, it snowed and was windy overnight, and the next day the plane could not land. Boone would like to discuss with Joe and a member of the Hospital discussing what all they need cleared for safe landing. Boone would like to create a policy stating that the city would pay the

regular wage for the public works personnel that is on call to come check that it is cleared if the airport is needed for use in the event of an emergency.

**Notice of Statutes for Virtual Attendance for City Council Meetings:** Boone summarized the expectations from the League of Minnesota, if the Council needs to meet virtually regarding a local state of emergency. The statute states that the community must be made aware 24 hours before the meeting that the member is present virtually, there needs to be visual and audio capabilities. He also explained that as Mayor he can call for a state of emergency for 72 hours to meet virtually to meet quorum.

**2021 Audit- City of Bigfork Engagement Letter:** *Motion by Mann, seconded by Francisco, to approve the updated City of Engagement Letter, MCU.*

**Resolution 2021-17: Executing MN Dot Agreement for Airport Maintenance and Operation:** Boone explained that this is the standard grant that the City Receives for yearly maintenance and operation costs for the airport. Resolution 2021-17 is so that the Mayor and City Clerk/Treasurer are authorized to execute the contract with MN Dot Aeronautics on behalf of the City of Bigfork. *Motion to approve resolution made by Maxa, seconded by Mann, and MCU.*

**Resolution 2021-18: Executing MN Dot Agreement for Airport Improvement Excluding Land Acquisition- Logging Around Weather Station to be Executed by Scheff Logging:** MN Aeronautics stated that the weather station needs a cleared in our yearly audit and inspection. This is a project that has been needed to be done for years but MN Dot aeronautics had not informed the city that it needs to be done. MN Dot aeronautics has accepted the project to fit into Airport Improvement and that the Mayor and City Clerk are authorized to execute this agreement and any amendments on behalf of the city. The logging and clearing of 500 yards surrounding the weather station is to be executed by Scheff Logging in 2022. *Motion to approve resolution made by Mann, seconded by Maxa, and MCU.*

**Extension and Waiving of Administrative Blight Fine for Bigfork Auto Parts:** A Blight Inspection was completed by Joe Zimmer in Public Works on Bigfork Auto Parts on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. It was stated that they have excessive amounts of unlicensed vehicles, automobile bodies, wood and trimmings, and junk piled up everywhere. A letter was sent to Bigfork Auto Parts on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, to let them know that the property was in Violation of Title IX 91.16 E & Title IX 91.17 P. An Administrative Fine letter was sent on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, as the property was not cleaned up and still in violation. A second Administrative Fine letter was sent on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, as they were still in violation. On Monday December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Bigfork Auto parts called Melissa and requested more time to clean up their property. Joe Zimmer suggested keeping the fines that have already been charged in the amount of \$840.00 and giving them until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, to clean up the property. Boone suggested that we give them until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, to clean up the property and cut the fines in half. If they do not have the property cleaned up the administrative accrual will not be split in half and accrual would pick back up on Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. *Motion by Boone, seconded Mann, to extend the date for cleanup to January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and split fines in half should the property be back in ordinance, MCU.*

**Wilderness Days:** A letter received from Allison Weddle of the Bigfork Boosters Club, looking for permission to keep moving forward with planning of Wilderness Days 2022. They would like to extend Wilderness days to both Friday evening and Saturday on the second weekend of June. We have some ideas for Friday including a teen dance, karaoke, as well as allowing vendors to set up. Saturday would be like past years with a parade, vendors, live music, etc. We would like to hold the Teen dance outside but have the city hall as a back-up if possible. We would provide adult chaperones. Like would like to be able to reach out to the public works department for any help with electrical hookups for vendors. They would also like assistance with trashcans and trash removal. They now would just like permission to move forward with planning and should the city have any questions they would be willing to attend a future Council meeting. ***Motion to approve Planning of Wilderness Days by Maxa, Seconded by Francisco, MCU.***

**Cedar Street- Division Ave Water Main:** Maxa addressed the Council in regards that there have been five water main breaks in the last year surrounding cedar street and division ave. The city would like to address possibility of replacing pipes versus patching them. Francisco stated the city should consult with an engineer from Widseth to see what all needs to be done to replace them, and the costs that would accompany the replacement. Boone suggested meeting with an engineer, Joe Zimmer and Andrew Francisco, Ben Maxa, and Paul Gustafson about what a plan for replacement would entail. ***Motion made by Boone, seconded by Maxa, to authorize a meeting with Widseth, MCU.***

**RAISING OF WATER/SEWER RATES 2022:** Mann brought up raising the water and sewer rates for the new year by 1.5% above the base rate to keep our water and sewer funds out of debt and in the black. This would accommodate for funds needed in the future for projects such as water main breaks and replacement, and the water tower project. ***Motion by Mann, seconded by Maxa, made to raise rate on usage above 1,000 gallons by 1.5% MCU.***

**HWY 38 PROJECT:** MN Dot does not need municipal support or approval for the project and construction of HWY 38, as it is not in our authority. They would like to have a meeting with the community stakeholders regarding the project via. Microsoft Teams. A list of stakeholders would be Pam Lepinski, Jeff Fisher, Mike Kocian, Dar Westermann, Brad Dolinski, Tim Johnson, Amy Pifher, Paul Gustafson, and Joe Zimmer.

#### **OTHER/ ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Possible Hiring of Temp City Clerk While Melissa is on Maternity Leave:** Melissa addressed the council regarding her upcoming due date of April 2022. The League of Minnesota stated it was a conflict of interest for Angie to fill in during Melissa's time off. Jilian Haataja said she would be willing to fill in should the city need. Melissa is willing to work from home during the time she is away should her health allow it. A temp would be need on an as needed basis should the arrive of the baby fall during a time that would require assistance such as a council meeting.

**2022 City Council & Planning Commission Meeting Schedules:** January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 5:30 p.m. has been determined as the next meeting date. The council would like to address the possibility of changing the meeting day and time to accommodate to everyone. This is to be determined at the January Council meeting. *Motion made by Boone, seconded by Maxa to approve the January Council meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 5:30 p.m., MCU.*

Motion to adjourn at 7:33 p.m. by Mann, seconded by Francisco, and MCU.

Melissa J. Grover

*City Clerk/Treasurer*

Approved at the regular meeting held on  
January 13th, 2022

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Mayor