

SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

The Regular Meeting of the Lake Benton City Council was held on Monday, September 15, 2025 at 5:30 PM in the Lake Benton Area Community and Event Center. Mayor Patrick Haynes presided. Trustees Rosie DeZeeuw, Karen Lichtsinn, Jon Olson and Scott Christensen were present. City Attorney Mike Cable was absent. City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen, Sheriff Bob Bushman, and Vince Robinson with DSI were also present.

Mayor Patrick Haynes called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Mayor Patrick Haynes then asked if anyone in attendance had an item, not on the agenda, to bring up during the Open Forum part of the meeting. If so, they had two minutes to state their concern. No items were brought forward at this time.

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 2, 2025 were reviewed. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Karen Lichtsinn to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 2, 2025. Motion carried.

CLAIMS PRESENTED AGAINST THE CITY OF LAKE BENTON:

LEAGUE OF MN CITIES	\$ 17,998.00	L-P RURAL WATER	\$ 4,911.39
RETHWISCH & SON	\$ 377.05	GOPHER STATE	\$ 8.10
CITY OF LAKE BENTON	\$ 177.96	POSTMASTER	\$ 203.74
LINCOLN CTY RECORDER	\$ 10.00	MN RURAL WATER	\$ 300.00
STAPLES	\$ 44.15	LINCOLN CTY EVIRON	\$ 35.00
MN DEPT OF HEALTH	\$ 789.00	SW SANITATION	\$ 4,070.99
CARDMEMBER SRVCS	\$ 1,697.04	M & T FIRE/SAFETY	\$ 107.50
ONE OFFICE SOLUTION	\$ 50.74	BUFFALO RIDGE NEWS	\$ 302.80
THOMAS PLUMBING	\$ 308.72		

MOTION by Jon Olson, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to approve payment of the claims presented against the City of Lake Benton. Motion carried and the Mayor authorized the Administrator/Clerk to make payment.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Sheriff Bob Bushman reviewed the August calls for service with the Council, which was 56 calls, which is higher than normal. The Sheriff's Office is averaging 46 calls per month. The Sheriff's Office installed the speed trailer on the south side of town on Highway 75. Sheriff Bob Bushman has been monitoring it and drivers are slowing down sooner, and it has had a good effect on speed, and they will plan to move the speed trailer to Highway 14 coming into town from the east. The Lake Benton Public Safety Committee met with Sheriff Bushman and has completed the agreement for approval in November. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to approve the law enforcement update. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on the SCDP Preliminary Application for Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation for the City of Lake Benton. Vince Robinson was in attendance to present information to the Council on the Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Preliminary Application for Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation for the City of Lake Benton.

DSI provided a budget for the Council to review, which includes owner-occupied rehabilitation for the City of Lake Benton. DSI recommends that the City proceed with owner-occupied projects only, as 41 owner-occupied interest statements were returned, and 34 appear to be eligible. Regarding the infrastructure project, DSI received 34 returned income surveys and still require an additional 21 to be returned.

As the City has discussed before, to qualify for infrastructure funding, such as water and sewer lines, the target area must be at least 51% low- to moderate-income (LMI), as defined by HUD guidelines. The most recent HUD LMI Summary Data, based on census averages, indicates that Lake Benton has 46.90% LMI, just shy of 51%. Therefore, it is essential that income surveys are completed for households on Fremont Street so the City can document that the community meets the 51% LMI requirement for the SCDP application. The DSI team is actively working on following up with the households that have not returned the income survey.

As part of the preliminary application process, the following items need to be acted upon:

- Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure form (each Council member is required to fill out a form)
- Approval of the Citizen Participation Plan
- Authorize the Commitment of the Local Match
- Authorize the Mayor to sign the application.
- Authorize a public hearing for the final grant application in February 2026.

Vince requested the Council members complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure. If any of the Council members or their immediate family are planning to apply for the program, then they have a conflict of interest.

Vince then reviewed the Citizen Participation Plan and recommended the Council approve it. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Jon Olson to approve the Citizen Participation Plan. Motion carried.

Vince then informed the Council that DSI sent out 306 interest statements for owner-occupied homes and 41 were returned. Of the 41 returned, 34 are eligible based on their income. The maximum grant request is \$600,000.00 and can complete 21 houses at \$25,000.00 per house, and 15% will go towards administration fees. This is to assist those individuals during the Highway 75 infrastructure in 2027. The community at large must account for 51% LMI (low- to moderate income) and the community is at 46%. DSI sent out 58 surveys and of those 58, three (3) addresses are inhabitable which leaves 55 households and 21 surveys are still needed. Of the 34 returned, 14 are low- to moderate income and 14 more are needed. Vince recommended the Council move forward with this to assist with the infrastructure and assessments. The maximum amount to be authorized is \$1,199,886.00. The City's local match out of their revolving fund would total \$20,000.00.

MOTION by Scott Christensen, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to authorize the commitment of the local match of \$20,000.00 out of the City's revolving fund. Motion carried. **MOTION** by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Jon Olson to authorize the Mayor to sign the application. Motion carried.

Vince then stated the City will look forward to moving through the final application if the application is deemed competitive. Since the City has applied in prior years, the outlook is good. Vince then stated a public hearing will need to be at the first meeting in February 2026. If the City is deemed non-competitive, then there will be no need for a public hearing. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Karen Lichtsinn to authorize a public hearing for the final grant application at the first meeting in February 2026. Motion carried. The City should know if they have been approved a year from now.

The next item of business was to review/act on a building permit for Ryan Miller to install a pole structure. Ryan would like to install a 30' x 40' pole structure on the southeast corner of 104 E. Bluff Street (empty lot located by his home at 106 E. Bluff Street). Ryan was given the setbacks in which to install a pole structure and the \$25.00 application fee has been paid. There are no setback concerns and everything is in compliance with the Ordinance. **MOTION** by Rosie DeZeeuw, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the building permit for Ryan Miller to install a 30' x 40' pole structure on the southeast corner of 104 E. Bluff Street (empty lot located by his home at 106 E. Bluff Street). Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on Voting Operations, Technology and Election Resources (VOTER) Account Agreement with Lincoln County. City staff received an email from the Lincoln County Auditor's office requesting each City and Township consider passing the Election Agreement once a year beginning in 2023. The Office of the Secretary of State completed the electronic transfer of \$1.25 million in electronic payments to counties, of which Lincoln County's share is \$3,845.07, for the Voting Operations, Technology and Election Resources (VOTER) account in accordance with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes 5.305.

The Lincoln County Auditor's office currently administers the absentee and mail balloting for all precincts and pays for all the maintenance for the election equipment utilized by the local units of government. After the Auditor's calculations, each entity will receive approximately \$46.00 if they choose to receive their share of the funds. However, if these funds are disbursed out, the County may have to begin charging the entity for equipment and ballots. The Agreement states that the City of Lake Benton does hereby agree to allow Lincoln County to retain all Voting Operations, Technology and Election Resources (VOTER) account funds received. **MOTION** by Rosie DeZeeuw, seconded by Karen Lichtsinn to approve the Voting Operations, Technology and Election Resources (VOTER) Account Agreement with Lincoln County. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to certify the proposed property tax levy and announce the time and place of the public meeting. Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen requested the Council review and then discuss any changes. Mayor Patrick Haynes then reminded the Council that they are approving the proposed budget this evening and it will not get certified until December and noted that these amounts can be lowered but not raised at the Truth-in-Taxation Hearing. Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen informed the Council that a 2% increase is \$3,892.00, a 3% increase is \$5,839.00, and a 4% increase is \$7,785.00. **MOTION** by Jon Olson, seconded by Scott Christensen to approve the total proposed 2026 tax levy with a 10% increase. The total levy to be raised by taxes is \$214,115.00 of which \$137,115.00 is allocated to the General Fund and \$77,000.00 is allocated to the USDA-RUS Improvement Fund. The proposed budget amounts are as follows: **GENERAL FUND:** Income - \$578,114.00, Expenses - \$555,223.00; **FIRE FUND:** Income - \$90,300.00, Expenses - \$96,000.00; **LIBRARY FUND:** Income - \$56,029.00, Expenses - \$57,496.00; **UTILITY FUND:** (Water, Sewer and Garbage) Income - \$416,050.00, Expenses - \$442,186.00; **USDA-RUS:** Income - \$77,000.00, Expense - \$77,000. Motion carried. The Council then needed to announce the date and time of the public meeting for the Truth-In-Taxation. **MOTION** by Scott Christensen, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to hold the Truth-In Taxation public meeting on Monday, December 1, 2025 at 6:00 PM at the Lake Benton Area Community and Event Center. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK REPORT:

Appliance pickup is scheduled for Tuesday, October 7, 2025. The proficiency test for the archery hunt was a success. There were six (6) shooters that needed to test and passed with a score of 70 or higher.

MAYORAL REPORT:

No report.

The next regular meeting is Monday, October 6, 2025 at 5:30 PM.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, a **MOTION** was made by Karen Lichtsinn, seconded by Jon Olson and carried, the meeting adjourned.

MAYOR

ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK