

**City of Merrill**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
**Tuesday, November 5, 2013 at 5:30 P.M.**  
**City Hall Common Council Chambers**  
**1004 East First Street**

Committee of the Whole members present (8 of 9): Mayor Bill Bialecki, Alderman Chris Malm (First District), Alderman Steve Hass (Second District), Alderwoman Kandy Peterson (Fourth District), Alderman John Burgener (Fifth District), Alderman Dave Sukow (Sixth District), Alderman Rob Norton (Seventh District) and Alderwoman Anne Caylor (Eighth District). Alderman Ryan Schwartzman (Third District) had an excused absence.

Other attendees included: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Enrichment Center Director Jane Deau, Transit Director Rich Grenfell, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Utility Superintendent Kim Kriewald, Street Commissioner Richard Lupton, Airport Manager/FBO John Miller (arr. 5:55), Police Chief Ken Neff, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Park and Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Duane Pfister, Roger Drewek, Kortney Pike, Collin Lueck, Kent Johnson, Brad Byer, Tom Wistein, Mike Drury, Michael Caylor Jr., Corey Bennett, Chris Marion (arr. 6:02) and City Clerk Bill Heideman. A student was in attendance to videotape the meeting for the Cable Access Channel.

**Call to order**

Mayor Bialecki called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

**Presentation on potential video opportunities via CGI Communications**

City Administrator Johnson had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. He gave a presentation on CGI, a company that creates promotional videos for municipalities at no cost to the municipality. He noted that CGI makes money through advertising.

The committee had a positive reaction to the creation of a video, and could not see any negative aspects at this time.

City Administrator Johnson will proceed to schedule creation of the video in the spring of 2014. The creation of the video could still be cancelled if the City later opts to not have a video produced.

**Review and consider proposed 2014 Landfill Fund Budget**

Finance Director Unertl reported. No action was taken.

### **Review and consider proposed 2014 Water Fund Budget**

It was noted that a water rate increase would take effect December 1<sup>st</sup>. Finance Director Unertl and Utility Superintendent Kriewald answered questions related to the water fund budget.

Alderman Sukow suggested that, if a decision is made to cut services, the funding for the part-time Water Utility Clerk position be removed from the budget.

Motion (Sukow/Caylor) to remove, from the 2014 budget, the funding for the part-time Water Utility Clerk position. Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Hass/Caylor) to remove, from the 2014 budget, the proposed \$2,010.40 wage increase for the full-time Water Utility Clerk position. Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Hass/Caylor) to remove, from the 2014 budget, the proposed \$4,151.68 wage increase for the Utility Superintendent position. Failed 3-4 on roll call vote. Voting Yes – Alderman Malm, Alderman Hass and Alderwoman Caylor.

Motion (Caylor/Hass) to reduce, from \$100,000 to \$84,934, the 2014 budget amount for the East Street Water Tower project. Carried 7-0 on roll call vote.

### **Review and consider Merrill/Tomahawk joint court agreement**

An agreement between the City of Merrill and the City of Tomahawk to establish a joint municipal court was distributed at the meeting. Discussions with the City of Tomahawk on this joint venture have been ongoing. The City of Tomahawk is considering the agreement this evening as well. City Attorney Hayden answered questions related to the agreement.

Motion (Hass/Sukow) to recommend approving, as presented, the agreement between the City of Merrill and the City of Tomahawk to establish a joint municipal court. Carried.

An ordinance related to the agreement will be on the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Common Council meeting agenda.

## **Consider 2014 budget adjustments**

Finance Director Unertl reported that the proposed 2014 budget includes an increase (and subsequent shortfall) of \$408,018 in Debt Service. This would result in a 7.2% increase in property taxes. There is currently no increase in the operational portion of the budget.

Motion (Hass/Caylor) to remove the \$250,000 for the “Acq/Demo Blighted” project in the Tax Increment District #8 budget (page T-17). Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Hass/Malm) to remove the \$100,000 for the “Acquisition/Demo – Potent” project in the Tax Increment District #7 budget (page T-15). Carried 7-0 on roll call vote.

Motion (Hass/Malm) to remove the \$50,000 for the “Blight/Demo Disposal” project in the Tax Increment District #6 budget (page T-11). Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Hass/Caylor) to remove the \$50,000 for the “Blight Demo/Disposal” project in the Tax Increment District #3 budget (page T-3). Carried 5-2 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Malm/Hass) to refer the proposed 2014 budget to a ½ day workshop. After discussion, Alderman Malm requested that he be allowed to withdraw his motion. Without objection, it was so ordered.

Motion (Hass/Malm) to remove the \$150,000 for the “Wire Products Project” in the Tax Increment District #8 budget (page T-17). Carried 6-1 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Norton.

Motion (Sukow/Caylor) to remove the \$50,000 for the “Streetlight Improvements” in the Tax Increment District #5 budget (page T-8). Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Caylor/Hass) to remove the \$150,000 for the “Contract Engineering/Surv” in the Tax Increment District #4 budget (page T-5). Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Hass/Caylor) to remove the \$550,000 for the “Site Acq/Demo-Redev.” In the Tax Increment District #3 budget (page T-4). Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Caylor/Hass) to cover the shortfall in the Debt Service portion of the proposed 2014 budget (\$408,018) from the General Fund, in order to ensure that there would be no tax increase. Carried 5-2 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Alderman Norton thanked Fire Chief Savone for his efforts in obtaining grants for the Fire Department.

### **Consider employee health insurance options for 2014**

Finance Director Unertl reported that several meetings related to employee health insurance options have been held with employees. Based on those meetings, she stated that it seems that most employees favor a Health Savings Account with a high deductible option. She speculated that \$73,000 could be saved if the City were to offer only a Health Savings Account option.

City Administrator Johnson stated that, based on the same meetings, there also seems to be interest in a “traditional” plan.

Kortney Pike then provided information on a plan that he has formulated.

Motion (Sukow/Norton) to approve, as presented, the Health Savings Account plan for City employees, including “seed” money for employees to begin the program in 2014. Carried 6-1 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Burgener.

### **Update on revised 2014 budget ordinance**

A “draft” copy of the ordinance had been distributed before the meeting. It will be discussed and considered at the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Committee of the Whole meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Michael Caylor Jr. commented that there are currently over 200 homes for sale within the 54452 zip code area. He also mentioned that, in his opinion, a 13% increase in water rates is a dramatic increase. He then stated that, in years past, tax increases were discussed in relation to the increase on a \$100,000 house rather than a \$75,000 house.

### **Motion to convene in closed session**

Motion (Caylor/Sukow) to convene in closed session pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes Section 19.85(1)(e) for deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session, for status report on union negotiations. Carried 5-2 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

### **Recess**

At 7:53 P.M., before discussion began in closed session, Mayor Bialecki announced that a short recess would be held. After the recess, he reconvened the meeting in closed session at 7:50 P.M.

The following were in attendance at the closed session: Malm, Hass, Peterson, Burgener, Sukow, Norton, Caylor, Bialecki, Johnson, Hayden, Savone, Neff, Unertl and Heideman.

### **Closed session for status report on union negotiations**

City Administrator Johnson gave a status report on the ongoing union contract negotiations with the International Association of Firefighters Local 847 and with the Merrill Professional Police Association.

After discussion, City Administrator Johnson and City Attorney Hayden stated that they had sufficient direction on proceeding with the union negotiations. No formal action was taken.

### **Adjournment**

Motion (Caylor/Peterson) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned (from closed session) at 8:10 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC  
City Clerk