

**City of Merrill
Committee of the Whole
(including joint meeting with Redevelopment Authority)
Saturday, May 3, 2014 at 8:00 A.M.
Eagles Club
1205 North Lake Street**

Committee of the Whole members present (9 of 9): Mayor Bill Bialecki, Alderman Chris Malm (First District – left at 11:40), Alderman Peter Lokemoen (Second District – left at 12:00), Alderman Ryan Schwartzman (Third District), Alderwoman Kandy Peterson (Fourth District), Alderman John Burgener (Fifth District), Alderman Dave Sukow (Sixth District), Alderman Rob Norton (Seventh District) and Alderman Tim Meehean (Eighth District).

Other attendees included: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Community Enrichment Center Director Jane Deau, Transit Director Rich Grenfell, City Attorney Tom Hayden, City Clerk Bill Heideman, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Hall Maintenance Supervisor Ramona Vanderkam, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Lincoln County Economic Development Director Jack Sroka, Susan Ryman, Jon Malm, Gene Bebel and Eric Malm. Street Commissioner Richard Lupton had an excused absence.

Redevelopment Authority meeting members attending joint portion of meeting: Mayor Bialecki, Alderman Schwartzman, Karen Karow, David Hayes and Jill Laufenberg.

Call to order

Mayor Bialecki called the joint meeting to order at 8:02 A.M.

Resolution accepting property @ 401 South Kyes Street from D & L

A resolution accepting property at 401 South Kyes Street, from the Development and Leasing Corporation was e-mailed the day before the meeting, and copies were distributed at the meeting. The property would be owned by the City of Merrill, with a portion of it to be used by the River District Development Foundation.

City Administrator Johnson answered questions and provided clarification related to responsibilities if the property is acquired by the City. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has “signed off” on all environmental issues related to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the proposed project.

City clean-up of the property, in the event it is acquired, was discussed.

Gene Bebel noted that the City would acquire, not purchase, the property.

Motion (Lokemoen/Schwartzman) to adopt the resolution. Carried.

The resolution will be on the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Resolve Zastrow incentive and City loan to Merrill Area Development Corp.

A resolution was e-mailed the day prior to the meeting, and copies were distributed at the meeting. The resolution sets forth and authorizes loan repayment provisions pertaining to the Zastrow Development and the 201 South Prospect Street property.

Karen Karow mentioned that one figure is not listed in the resolution, and that figure should be included. She was told that, at this time, that figure is undetermined.

Alderman Meehean and Alderman Lokemoen both stated that all financial data related to the resolution should be determined and included in the resolution prior to final consideration of the resolution.

Motion (Lokemoen/Schwartzman) to adopt the resolution. Carried.

The resolution will be on the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Powers of a Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

City Administrator Johnson reported that a Redevelopment Authority (RDA) is a stand-alone entity that can do certain things without approval from other governmental entities. An RDA has exclusive power of blight elimination. City Administrator Johnson stated that, in his opinion, there needs to be more separation between the Redevelopment Authority and the City.

Alderman Meehean speculated that the RDA can be a powerful tool in the future. Alderman Sukow stated his opinion that, in the past, Common Council members were not always provided adequate information related to the RDA.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Tax Increment Districts (TIDs)

Mayor Bialecki referred to a sheet in the meeting packet which related to the Walmart development. Control of Tax Increment Financing funds was then discussed.

Alderman Meehean stated that, regardless of what happened in the past, the goal should be to move forward using TIF funds as wisely as possible.

Alderman Lokemoen suggested that a clear TIF and TID policy agreeable to all City staff and Common Council members is needed, as it appears there are currently several different opinions.

Adjourn Redevelopment Authority portion of joint meeting & recess

Without objection, Mayor Bialecki adjourned the Redevelopment Authority portion of the joint meeting at 9:53 A.M. Without objection, he also announced a recess.

Continue Committee of the Whole meeting

At 10:06 A.M., Mayor Bialecki called the Committee of the Whole meeting back to order.

Debt Service

Information was in the meeting packet.

Finance Director Unertl reported on debt service related to the Water Utility, Sewer Utility, Tax Increment Districts and the General Fund.

Alderman Meehean questioned why the annual debt repayment amounts vary so dramatically. Finance Director Unertl responded that "it is what it is". She will contact Ehlers and Associates to discuss the possibility of creating more level annual debt service payments in the future.

Capital Budget

Information was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson stated that it would be premature to discuss specific projects at this time. He will be discussing capital projects at the next Department Head meeting. He noted that there are numerous capital projects that need attention.

A five-year capital plan is being prepared. City Administrator Johnson provided examples of several capital projects that are time-sensitive.

Potential capital project collaboration with other governmental entities was discussed.

The Committee of the Whole made no 2015 capital budget recommendation(s) to the Common Council.

Robert's Rules of Order

City Attorney Hayden reported that all City meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order, unless otherwise specified by City Ordinances and State Statutes.

The public comment portion of meetings was discussed. There was agreement that the City should continue to include a public comment period on all meeting agendas.

Lunch

Without objection, Mayor Bialecki announced a recess for lunch at 11:40 A.M.

At 12:01 P.M., Mayor Bialecki called the meeting back to order.

Behavior to avoid

A list of behaviors to avoid was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson emphasized that Common Council “ambushes” of department heads, without first addressing the issue with the department head, would not be tolerated.

No action was taken.

Nine tools and 25 Rules of Civility & related resolution

Resolutions #1996, adopted by the Common Council on July 11th, 2006, accepted nine tools of civility. Resolution #1997, also adopted by the Common Council on July 11th, 2006, incorporated those nine tools into the Personnel Policies Manual.

City Administrator Johnson requested that Resolution #1996 be reaffirmed.

No action was taken.

What is a public record?

City Attorney Hayden provided information related to public records. He issued a reminder that all records produced when conducting City business are potentially public records, even if they are produced on a “private” instrument.

What constitutes a meeting?

City Attorney Hayden provided information on laws related to public meetings. He urged caution and vigilance in observing the opening meetings law, because “appearance is everything”.

Powers and duties of Boards, Commissions and Committees

Information related to the various City boards, commissions and committees was in the meeting packet. It was noted that the City of Merrill does not have a fully-empowered Police and Fire Commission.

Stress the positive

Common Council members were urged to stress the positive aspects of Merrill. These include blight elimination, redevelopment projects and the quality of City services. It was noted that emphasis will continue on obtaining grants.

One-on-one Alderperson visits to Departments

City Administrator Johnson urged the Common Council members to schedule one-on-one visits to various City facilities and departments.

Social Media

City Attorney Hayden stated that he was not in favor of the City becoming involved in social media. Alderman Meehean agreed with City Attorney Hayden, noting that the primary purpose of social media is to have a conversation, not provide information.

It was noted that two Alderpersons already have Facebook pages in their capacity as Alderpersons.

At this time, the City will not be creating and maintaining a Facebook page.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Motion (Burgener/Meehean) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 12:53 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC
City Clerk