

**City of Merrill
Committee of the Whole
Tuesday, June 10, 2014 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 Peter Lokemoen (Second District), Alderman Ryan Schwartzman (Third District), Alderwoman Kandy Peterson (Fourth District), Alderman John Burgener (Fifth District), Alderman Dave Sukow (Sixth District) and Alderman Rob Norton (Seventh District). Alderman Tim Meehean (Eighth District) had an excused absence.

Other attendees included: Transit Director Rich Grenfell, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Police Chief Ken Neff, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Hall Maintenance Supervisor Ramona Vanderkam, Mike Morrissey (Redevelopment Resources), Kathy Colclasure, Debbie Kinsey (Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce), Don Heyel, Melissa Schroeder, Bill Zeitz (Lincoln County Board), Sue Kunkel (Lincoln County Fair Board), Dale Christiansen (Lincoln County Fair Board), Stephanie Springborn (Winds and Paradox), Michael Caylor Jr., Duane Pfister 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.

Public Comment

None.

Consider lifting hiring freeze to replace retiring firefighter

Information was in the meeting packet.

The City has received notice that Captain Robert Akey will be retiring from the Merrill Fire Department on August 13th, 2014. Fire Chief Savone and City Administrator Johnson are requesting that the hiring freeze be lifting to allow for the hiring of a firefighter/paramedic to fill the pending vacancy.

Alderman Sukow suggested that consideration of this request be delayed until after the strategic planning sessions are completed.

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Motion (Sukow/Norton) to delay until the current strategic planning sessions are completed. Carried 4-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Schwartzman, Alderwoman Peterson and Alderman Burgener.

Consider future use(s) for former fire station @ 701 East First Street

Information was in the meeting packet. Mayor Bialecki had placed this item on the agenda.

Several options are being considered for use of the former fire station at 701 East First Street, including the possibility of “splitting” the building for multiple uses and/or users. The portion of the structure built in 1917 definitely needs a new roof. There are currently numerous community opinions on whether to spend money to rehab the facility. If the building is “split” for multiple users, the utility costs could be split as well. Mayor Bialecki stated that perhaps grant funding could be used to repair/replace the roof.

Motion (Norton/Sukow) to grant floor privileges to members of the Warming Center Committee, a subcommittee of the Lincoln County Homelessness Task Force. Carried.

Representing the Warming Center Committee, Melissa Schroeder and Don Heyel provided a verbal report on their effects to date in establishing a warming center in the City. Although at this time they are not asking the City for any financial assistance, they are looking for a “free home” to house the warming center. Among the locations being considered by the Warming Center Committee is a portion of the old fire station. The shelter would not be a place for the homeless to sleep, but recliners would be provided. Plans are to have the facility open from 7:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. during the cold weather time of the year. The shelter would be staffed by volunteers.

Meeting attendees were informed that the Warming Center Committee conducts their meetings at HAVEN on the third Thursday of each month, beginning at 11:30 A.M. If anyone desires to attend, they are to contact Melissa Schroeder, Don Heyel or Dee Olsen.

Mayor Bialecki stated that he will be forming an ad-hoc committee to conduct research on potential future uses of the old fire station facility.

Finance Director Unertl reported that, at this time, no funds are budgeted for any improvements to the building. Mayor Bialecki replied that budgeting for the building could be part of the research done by the ad-hoc committee he will be forming.

Finance Director Unertl noted that Transit Administrator Grenfell applied for and was awarded a grant for roof repair to the portion of the building planned for use by the Transit Department.

No action was taken.

Motion to convene in closed session

Motion (Schwartzman/Burgener) to convene in closed session per Wisconsin State Statutes Section 19.85(1)(e) - 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 to discuss potential modification of 2013 agreement with C&D Excavating, LLC for demolition and redevelopment of 413 & 419 West Main St. and potential acquisition, demolition, and redevelopment of other “blighted” properties within Tax Increment District No. 8 (West Side) and also to discuss possible property acquisition. Carried 6-1 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderman Norton.

Mayor Bialecki requested that the order of agenda items be changed and that closed session #2 be held before closed session #1. Without objection, it was so ordered.

Closed session #2 – Potential property acquisition

Convened in closed session at 6:10 P.M.

Attendees at this closed session: Bialecki, Malm, Lokemoen, Schwartzman, Peterson, Burgener, Sukow, Norton, Johnson, Hayden, Heideman, Unertl, Kinsey, Kunkel, Christiansen and Zeitz.

The minutes of this closed session will be filed separately and confidentially.

Closed session #1 - Potential demolition/development @ 413 & 419 W. Main St.

The second closed session began at 6:40 P.M.

Attendees at this closed session: Bialecki, Malm, Lokemoen, Schwartzman, Peterson, Burgener, Sukow, Norton, Johnson, Hayden, Heideman, Unertl, Morrissey and Springborn.

The minutes of this closed session will be filed separately and confidentially.

Adjournment

Motion (Burgener/Peterson) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned (from closed session) at 6:59 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC
City Clerk