

**CITY OF MERRILL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Tuesday, December 9, 2014 at 6:00 P.M.
City Hall Common Council Chambers
1004 East First Street**

AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Public Comment
3. Consider request from City Administrator Johnson to eliminate the hiring freeze and task the City Administrator with evaluating and approving hiring for budgeted vacancies in City positions. Newly created positions would continue to be approved by Common Council action only.
4. Consider bids received on the potential City sale of the former Fire Station #1 at 701 East First Street (agenda item requested by City Administrator Johnson)
5. Consider ordinance amending Chapter 105, Article I, Division 2, Section 52, related to building inspection procedures in cases of unsafe buildings (agenda item from Mayor Bialecki)
6. Update and discussion on downtown redevelopment vision ideas (agenda item requested by City Administrator Johnson)
7. Adjournment

NOTE: It is possible that a quorum of the Common Council will be present at this meeting. However, no Common Council action will be taken.

Agenda prepared by City Clerk Bill Heideman
Agenda reviewed by City Administrator Johnson

The Merrill City Hall is accessible to the physically disadvantaged. If special accommodations are needed, please contact the Merrill City Hall at 536-5594.

Date and time agenda was posted: _____ *Posted by:* _____



CITY OF MERRILL
City Administrator

David Johnson, City Administrator
1004 East First Street
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
Phone (715) 536-5594
FAX (715) 539-2668
e-mail: David.Johnson@ci.merrill.wi.us

To: Committee of the Whole
From: David Johnson
Subject: Hiring Freeze
Date: 12/2/14

The City of Merrill is currently operating under a self-imposed hiring freeze that can be lifted on a case-by-case basis by Common Council action to fill vacant positions. This means that when a position becomes vacant due to retirement, resignation, termination, or death, even though budgeted, it can only be filled by Council action. The original purpose was to potentially cut expenditures from unneeded positions and prevent new positions from being created with Council approval. We have been filling vacancies as they occur, all the hiring freeze does is slow down the process by which we re-hire for a vacant position.

When we fill a newly vacant position we are doing so at a lower wage than was paid to the person who vacated the position. Therefore, the City sees a savings from the amount budgeted, and previously paid, for this position when re-filled.

The approval for filling a vacant budgeted position must be obtained by Common Council action prior to advertising to fill the vacancy. This adds time to the process of filling the position, meaning that work either isn't getting done in a timely manner or is getting done on overtime. If a position becomes vacant closely following a Council Meeting we could wait almost 30 days before being able to obtain approval for lifting the hiring freeze, then we have to advertise the position, schedule and hold interviews, and in many cases wait a minimum of two weeks for the candidate's notice to their employer before we can actually have the position filled.

What would provide for the most efficient and effective means of filling vacancies would be for the City Administrator, acting in his capacity as Personnel Director, to review each vacancy to determine its necessity, and if so determined, to post the position for re-hire as soon as possible. Any new positions would still need to have Common Council approval prior to filling. The Common Council's concern should be that the City operates within the approved budget and adheres to established policies and procedures, the City Administrator's responsibility is the daily and long-term operations of the City as a whole, with the Department Heads' responsibility being the same for their departments.

Therefore, in the interest of efficient and effective operations, I am recommending that the Committee of the Whole recommend to the Common Council to eliminate the hiring freeze and task the City Administrator with evaluating and approving hiring for budgeted vacancies. Further, any newly created position should continue to be approved by Common Council action only.



CITY OF MERRILL
City Administrator

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Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
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To: Committee of the Whole
From: David Johnson
Subject: Old Fire Station Bids
Date: 12/2/14

After an individual expressed interest in purchasing the old fire station for a fire station themed restaurant the Common Council approved advertising the property for sale by sealed bid.

Two bids were received on December 1, one in the amount of \$10,000 from Mike Savini for the purpose of turning the property into a restaurant and banquet hall, and one in the amount of \$350,000 from the Merrill Housing Authority for the purpose of turning the building into a the Housing Authority offices and maintenance facility. This would also secure the entire block for the Housing Authority.

It is my recommendation that the Committee of the Whole recommend approval by the Common Council of the sale of the old fire station to the Merrill Housing Authority for \$350,000, as bid and that a maximum of \$150,000 of this amount be set aside for the construction of a new maintenance building at the MARC.

CITY of MERRILL REAL ESTATE BID SHEET

Bid for the City of Merrill owned property at 701 E. 1st St. consisting of the former Merrill Fire Department Station No. 1 and accompanying parcel.

Name of bidder: City of Merrill Housing Authority

Amount of bid: \$350,000.00 (contingent on HUD approval and reasonable remediation cost estimates based on environmental testing.)

Proposed use of property:

Property would be used to create a centralized office and maintenance facility for the Merrill Housing Authority which seems to be a natural fit as it adjoins our Jenny Towers property. This acquisition and property continuity would allow for much needed storage, better, centralized maintenance facilities, and central office expansion while eliminating potential parking issues between MHA tenants and any private business operation. The additional parcel at the South end of the block would also provide options for MHA in the future. The benefits to the City of Merrill would be realized in working with a known entity; a government affiliated, well-established business with a history of longevity and financial stability in the community. Our intent would be to maintain the historical façade of the original fire house which would be an added benefit to the community of Merrill because it will preserve a part of our history. Any potential PILOT arrangement that might be made between MHA and the City of Merrill could provide additional tax revenue to the City by MHA. And while an additional PILOT payment may not be as attractive as the potential tax revenues a private investor may generate, the risk is not as great either. The Merrill Housing Authority has been providing an important service to many families in Merrill since 1966, our business is financially sound and well established. We have been and will always be an asset to the community.

Date by which proposed use will be implemented: Planned improvements would begin mid 2015.

Signature of bidder: Ladonna Fesmancek

Date: 12/1/14

Bidding closes at 2 pm on Monday December 1, 2014. Bids must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office no later than the specified date and time.

CITY of MERRILL REAL ESTATE BID SHEET

Bid for the City of Merrill owned property at 701 E. 1st St. consisting of the former Merrill Fire Department Station No. 1 and accompanying parcel.

Name of bidder: MIKE Soderi

Amount of bid: 10,000⁰⁰

Proposed use of property:

RESTAURANT offering Lunch, Dinner, MEETING
Space, weddings etc.

Date by which proposed use will be implemented: May 2015

Signature of bidder: Michael Soderi

Date: 12/1/14

Bidding closes at 2 pm on Monday December 1, 2014. Bids must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office no later than the specified date and time.

<<ENTER YR>><<ENTER MONTH>><<ENTER AGENDA NO.>>

CITY OF MERRILL
1004 EAST FIRST STREET
MERRILL, WI 54452-2586

AN ORDINANCE: By Committee of the Whole
Re: Amending Chapter 105, Article I, Division 2,
Section 52 Unsafe Buildings relating to Building
Inspection Procedures

ORDINANCE NO. 2014-
Introduced: _____
1st Reading: _____
2nd Reading: _____
3rd Reading: _____
Committee/Commission Action: _____

AN ORDINANCE

The Common Council of the City of Merrill, Wisconsin, does ordain as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 105, Article I, Division 2, Section 52 of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Merrill is amended as follows:

Whenever the ~~common council, upon the inspection and report of the~~ building inspector, finds any building or part thereof within the city to be, in ~~the~~ **Building Inspector's** judgment, so old, dilapidated, out of repair as to be dangerous, unsafe, unsanitary or otherwise unfit for human occupancy or use and so that it would be unreasonable to repair the same, the ~~Building Inspector-common council~~ **Building Inspector** may order the owner to raze and remove such building or part thereof or, if it can be made safe by repairs, to repair and make safe and sanitary, or to raze and remove at the owner's option. ~~The common council shall give specific reasons for its determination.~~ Such order and proceedings shall be as provided in Wis. Stats. § 66.0413

Section 2. Severability. In the event any section, subsection, clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason held illegal, invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed a separate, distinct and independent provision, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this ordinance. It is the legislative intent of the Common Council that this ordinance would have been adopted if such illegal provision had not been included or any illegal application had not been made.

Section 3. Repeal and Effective Date. All ordinances or parts of ordinances and resolutions in conflict herewith are hereby repealed. This ordinance shall take effect from and after its passage and publication.

Moved by: _____

Adopted: _____

Approved: _____

Published: _____

Approved:

William R. Bialecki,
Mayor

Attest:

William N. Heideman, City Clerk

Merrill – Downtown Walking Tour: ‘Initial Impressions’

October 21, 2014 (Bialecki, Johnson, Speener, Rajek, Ness & Morrissey)

1. Create a downtown ‘Gateway’ or entry feature at Stuyvesant St.
2. Acquisition of 1319 E. Main Street
3. Install signage – Downtown Welcome (and wayfinding)
4. Install ornamental Lighting
5. Develop angled parking in selected areas on Main Street
6. Construct Main Street intersection ‘Bump-outs’
7. Streetscape sidewalks (w/paver accents)
8. Install lighting, landscaping, painting/directions to Bicycle Trailhead
9. Enhancement of River St. and Park St. intersection then south on Park
10. Improve River Street (from Park) leading east
11. Remove outdated & deteriorating fences, retaining walls, etc
12. Provide lighting under bridge (and along upper railing as entry accent)
13. Convert unused rear parking lot into green space
14. Overhaul of entire riverside alley and parking lot areas (pavement, lighting, landscaping, etc)
15. Improve rear of E. Main Street building aesthetics
16. Enhance building porches, decks, painting, windows, gardens, etc
17. Centralize trash receptacles/stations
18. Consider trenching overhead utilities (to extent financially feasible)
19. Acquire former Guys Shop and create green space
20. Main Street hardscape, lighting, seating, signage
21. Main Street amenities: landscaping, benches, banners, bike racks, etc
22. Enhance Courthouse block as focal point; lighting, landscaping, etc.
23. Create public art in downtown & on Law Enforcement Center walls
24. Install ornamental lighting on 1st Street/Main St. to Cleveland St.
25. Clean-up and landscape southeast corner of Main & Center Street
26. Create pedestrian friendly Main St. from Stuyvesant west to Center St.
27. Reconfigure to combine alley drive and parking into one area between back of Main St. buildings and RR tracks.

These are all ideas that came about as a result of our walking tour. There is some duplication and overlap in these initial ideas. Please review and be ready to comment.