

**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**

Committee of the Whole members present (9 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), Alderman Rob Norton (Seventh District) and Alderman Tim Meehean (Eighth District).

Other attendees included: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Transit Director Rich Grenfell, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Street Commissioner Richard Lupton, Police Chief Ken Neff, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Duane Pfister, Jeremy Ratliff 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 6:00 P.M.

Public Comment

None.

City Administrator request to eliminate hiring freeze for budgeted positions

City Administrator Johnson had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. Information was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson reported that, since the hiring freeze policy has been in effect, it has been lifted in the majority of cases when a vacancy occurs. The need to lift the hiring freeze delays the beginning of the hiring process, which can result in overtime and/or short-staffing in a department. Therefore, City Administrator Johnson is requesting that the hiring freeze be eliminated, and that the City Administrator be responsible for evaluating and approving hiring for budgeted vacancies in City positions. Newly created positions would continue to be approved by Common Council action only.

141291

Motion (Meehean/Norton) 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. Motion carried 8-0 on a requested roll call vote.

Consider bids on sale of former Fire Station #1 @ 701 East First Street

City Administrator Johnson had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. Information was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson reported that an individual had expressed an interest in purchasing the former Fire Station #1 (701 East First Street) and converting it into a firehouse-themed restaurant. Based on this request, the City has decided to offer the property for sale by sealed bid.

Two bids have been received, one for \$10,000 and one for \$350,000. City Administrator Johnson recommends approving the \$350,000 bid from the City of Merrill Housing Authority.

City Administrator Johnson is also requesting that, if the sale to the City of Merrill Housing Authority is approved, a maximum of \$150,000 of the sale receipts be used to erect a Parks and Recreation Department maintenance building at the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC). This is the estimated maximum amount necessary to renovate the former fire station into a Parks and Recreation Department maintenance building.

It was noted that the City of Merrill Housing Authority would agree to a Payment of Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement for this property.

141292

Motion (Norton/Sukow) to approve the bid of \$350,000 from the City of Merrill Housing Authority, with the stipulation that a maximum of \$150,000 of the sale receipts be used to erect a Parks and Recreation Department maintenance building at the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC). Carried.

Ordinance re: Building inspection procedures in unsafe building cases

Mayor Bialecki had placed this item on the agenda. A copy of the proposed ordinance was in the meeting packet. The ordinance designates the City staff responsible for building inspection procedures and orders to raze in cases of unsafe buildings.

City Attorney Hayden distributed copies of a revised ordinance. He explained that he drafted a revised version to ensure that the ordinance concurs with Wisconsin State Statutes.

Motion (Schwartzman/Burgener) to recommend adoption of the ordinance.
Carried.

The ordinance is on the December 9th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Update and discussion on downtown redevelopment vision ideas

City Administrator Johnson had requested that this item be placed on the agenda.

City Administrator Johnson reported that the meeting packet contained a list of “initial impressions” of the downtown area. The list was generated as a result of a “walking tour” by several people on October 21st, 2014. City staff is now seeking input, reaction, questions and potential additions related to the list.

Alderman Sukow stated that he has concerns with the potential to create additional green space downtown.

Alderman Meehean suggested that something needs to be done to improve the downtown area. He suggested moving forward and addressing/assessing each particular situation as they occur.

Mayor Bialecki observed that this is a long-term endeavor, and that at this time City staff is seeking input from the public and the Common Council. Anyone with any suggestions and/or ideas for the downtown area is to contact either Mayor Bialecki or City Administrator Johnson.

No action was taken at this time.

Adjournment

Motion (Burgener/Schwartzman) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:43 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC
City Clerk