

**City of Merrill
Redevelopment Authority/Committee of Whole
(joint meeting)
Tuesday, April 21, 2015 at 6:00 P.M.
City Hall Common Council Chambers
1004 East First Street**

Redevelopment Authority members present: Bill Bialecki, Ryan Schwartzman, Wally Smith, Jill Laufenberg, and Amanda Kostman (Karen Karow excused)

Committee of the Whole members present (5 of 9): Mayor Bill Bialecki, Alderman Ryan Schwartzman (Third District), Alderwoman Kandy Peterson (Fourth District), Alderman John Burgener (Fifth District), and Alderman Tim Meehean (Eighth District).

Other attendees: City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Clerk Bill Heideman, Street Commissioner Dick Lupton, Lincoln County Clerk Chris Marlowe, Ken Maule from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp., Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources, Gene Bebel from River Bend Foundation, Jerry Ratliff from Merrill Courier/FotoNews, and about fifty to sixty interested individuals

Call to order

Mayor Bialecki called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. Bialecki advised that public comment would be held at the end of the meeting.

Review and discuss Downtown Vision Plan

Information was in the meeting packet. Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources highlighted the vision plan via a power point presentation.

The plan is a conceptual vision for the downtown, not a formal redevelopment plan. Rajek noted potential small scale, impact level, and transformative impacts. There are over one hundred taxable properties in the downtown area with a good business mix and with several hundred individuals employed.

The intersection of Stuyvesant St. and East Main St. has about 13,000 vehicles a day. This heavily traffic intersection is the key gateway into the historical downtown area. Besides the Gateway District, three additional areas were identified - Riverfront Alley D District, Main Street District, and First Street District. Several sketches of potential

Review and discuss Downtown Vision Plan (Continued)

parking and other improvements were featured. Other key recommendations include blight elimination and commercial façade rehabilitation. A conceptual new building on the Lincoln House site was shown, as well as drawing of potential pocket park on the former Guy's Shop vacant parcel. Increased pedestrian and bicycle access to the downtown is anticipated from the River Bend Trail. Rajek recommended making an investment in the City's historical downtown.

Bialecki commented on City/RDA redevelopment efforts throughout the City of Merrill. Every effort is made to rehabilitate buildings; however, that is not always feasible which results in demolition. Almost all of these razed buildings have had delinquent property taxes so the City/RDA objective is to transfer to owners whom will pay property taxes.

Since RDA Commissioners, Alderpersons, and City staff could not respond to public comment, Schwartzman requested that floor privileges be granted to deal with two dark clouds in the room. In response to questions about B&D Auto and Trophy Bar, Mayor Bialecki, City Administrator David Johnson, and RDA Commissioners emphasized that the City of Merrill would not be using eminent domain to condemn and raze buildings. Johnson advised that properties need to be maintained in compliance with City ordinances.

Trina Johnson strongly encouraged traffic and parking analysis of the Riverfront-Alley District. With former Thelma's building currently vacant, there are far less vehicles parking than in previous years. Safety concerns related to 3 – 6 p.m. drop off/pickup of kids at Dorinda's Dance Studio were also expressed.

No action taken at this time. Redevelopment Authority will continue to discuss the vision plan and potential implementation strategies.

Public Comment

Michael Caylor, Jr. read from a written statement regarding expenditures for Redevelopment Resources/Morrissey Consulting, City management staff, debt service, and non-union compensation study.

Adjournment

Motion (Schwartzman /Smith) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl