

**City of Merrill
Redevelopment Authority (RDA)**

**Tuesday, January 7th, 2014 at 8:00 A.M.
City Hall Council Chambers**

RDA Present: Bill Bialecki, Ryan Schwartzman, Wally Smith, David Hayes,
Ralph Sturm, and Jill Laufenberg

RDA Absent: Karen Karow

Others: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Susan Ryman from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp (LCEDC), Kristen Fish, Mike Morrissey, and Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources, City Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel from Northwinds Inspection, Community Development Program Administrator Shari Wicke, Dean Fenske from AECOM, and Collin Lueck from FotoNews

Call to Order: Chair Bialecki called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of meeting minutes from October 1st, 2013:

Motion (Schwartzman/Smith) to approve the meeting minutes. Carried.

Update on Lincoln House demolition schedule and site redevelopment marketing plans:

Bialecki advised that it was too cold to operate the demolition equipment. As weather conditions allow, demolition by C&D Excavating will continue. There will be expanded marketing once the site is vacant.

If there is going to be future ground floor commercial space, Morrissey noted the need to identify and secure a tenant with long-term lease. This will be key factor to attracting a potential developer to build multi-story apartment building.

Consider resolution and TIF No. 6 development incentives to facilitate new business at 808 East First Street:

LCEDC Director Susan Ryman provided an overview of the Studio 808 plans for purchasing and remodeling the building at 808 East 1st Street. This will be ceramic, mosaics, and glass fusing studio, as well as wholesale distribution business. Pizza, ice cream, candy, and other food treats will be sold. Schwartzman added that game store activities are also likely.

Laufenberg asked about façade plans. Ryman noted some limited improvements would be made; however, Schwartzman advised that the brick front face was redone several years ago. Ryman emphasized that the majority of the remodeling will be the building interior into 1950's diner model.

The Dzwonkowski's are co-owners of the Cosmo Theater. They have secured bank financing for the building purchase. They are also purchasing the wholesale ceramic distribution business now based in Marshfield.

Motion (Hayes/Sturm) to recommend a resolution authorizing a development agreement by and between the City of Merrill, Wisconsin and Studio 808 LLC. Carried with Schwartzman abstaining since he owns the 808 E. 1st Street property.

Update and discussion on economic development activities and planning:

Unertl provided a multi-page summary of activities on East Side, Downtown, and West Side with the agenda packet. City contractors and staff will continue discussions with property owners/representatives on the East Side.

Bialecki emphasized that in reviewing the City's Comprehensive Plan, that it was becoming time to update that plan. Coordinating a property-owner/public planning process for downtown might be appropriate given interest from some business owners to improve the appearance of the back sides of their buildings along the Wisconsin River linking the new access way/parking between East Main Street and the alley north of the railroad tracks, with potential public parking lot improvements, and access to the future River Bend Trail.

Stacy Ness' (Kye Studio) rendering for the 1892 Building next to Ballyhoo's was reviewed. Morrissey and Ness will be meeting with Mike Fick to finalize façade plans and facilitate obtaining construction estimates.

Positive news on 201 S. Prospect St. (former Hurd Windows & Doors) property now owned by Merrill Area Development Corp. (MADC). The Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. has awarded a \$120,000 Site Assessment Grant (SAG). Work is currently underway on getting HVAC and sprinkler systems functioning in the buildings that will be sold/occupied by manufacture relocating from Tomahawk in February 2014. Ryman reported that there are several potential additional tenants in discussions with MADC. Ryman and Bialecki reported that one of the major labor force issues is lack of trained machining and welding employees. Ryman is working with others in the region related to this training gap and employment opportunities.

Next RDA meeting: Tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 4th at 8:00 a.m.

Public Comment: None.

Closed Session:

Chair Bialecki read the following: The RDA may convene in closed session per Wis. Stats. Sec. 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 consider potential development incentives for proposed redevelopment in Tax Increment District No. 3 (East Side) or No. 4 (N. Pine Ridge Ave./Thielman St.).

Motion (Schwartzman/Laufenberg) to convene in closed session. Carried on roll call vote.

During the closed session, there was discussion on potential TIF development incentives. City staff will continue negotiations with the developer.

Adjournment From Closed Session:

Motion (Schwartzman/Smith to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 a.m. Carried.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl