

1405130

**City of Merrill
Health and Safety Committee
Monday, April 28, 2014 at 4:30 P.M.
City Hall Basement Conference Room, 1004 East First Street**

Voting Members Present (2 of 3): Alderman Dave Sukow (Chairperson) and Alderwoman Kandy Peterson.

Others Present Included: Mayor Bill Bialecki (arr. 5:03), City Administrator Dave Johnson (arr. 4:43), Deputy Health Officer Norbert Ashbeck, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Police Chief Ken Neff, Street Commissioner Richard Lupton, Alderman John Burgener, Dale Bacher, Ralph Sturm, Melissa Schroeder, Dee Olsen, Bill Fehrmann, Charles Novitch, Garth Swanson, Mark Gehring, Marilyn Schmidt, Michael Caylor Jr. and City Clerk Bill Heideman. A student was in attendance to videotape the meeting for the Cable Access Channel.

Call to order

Alderman Sukow called the meeting to order at 4:30 P.M.

Nuisance complaints and exterior maintenance report

The report was in the meeting packet. There were no questions related to the report.

Vouchers

The vouchers were in the meeting packet. Police Chief Neff and Fire Chief Savone answered questions related to the vouchers.

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to approve the vouchers, as presented. Carried.

“Picnic” Licenses (3) – Lincoln County Rodeo Assoc. for Rodeo

The Lincoln County Rodeo Association, Inc. has applied and paid the fee for three temporary Class “B” (picnic) licenses to sell fermented beverages from the Eagles Stand at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds during a Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo event on June 6-8, 2014. Information was in the meeting packet.

Police Chief Neff has no concerns with the applications.

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Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to approve the applications from the Lincoln County Rodeo Association Inc. for three temporary Class "B" (picnic) licenses to sell fermented beverages from the Eagles Stand at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds during a Wisconsin River Pro Rodeo event on June 6-8, 2014. Carried.

Other beer and/or license applications

None. City Clerk Heideman reported that the Merrill Baseball Boosters have submitted applications for several licenses. The applications were not received in time to be placed on the agenda for this meeting. Alderman Sukow has agreed to bring these applications directly to the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting for consideration.

Warming Center (agenda item requested by Don Heyel and Melissa Schroeder)

No information was in the meeting packet.

Melissa Schroeder reported that, for the last two years, several organizations in the community have been researching and addressing the issue of ensuring safety for the homeless in the area. These groups are now attempting to establish a warming center in the City, to be open from November to April annually.

Dee Olsen explained that these groups are exploring the possibility of using the old East Side Fire Station #1, 701 East First Street, as a warming center. She added that she realizes that liability is a concern and that some type of liability insurance would be required.

Alderwoman Peterson stated that she is favor of establishing a warming center, and in fact it is overdue.

City Administrator Johnson stated that there are several concerns to be addressed should the old Fire Station #1 ultimately be selected as the warming center site.

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to endorse the concept of creating a Warming Center in the City, and to refer this endorsement to the Board of Public Works. Carried.

Discuss concerns related to noise levels during training session at NTC facility

Alderman Burgener had requested that this item be placed on the agenda.

This has been an ongoing issue. People living in the vicinity of the NTC law enforcement training facility have concerns related to siren noise during training sessions.

Alderman Burgener issued a reminder that a petition on noise from the facility has already been submitted by several citizens living near the facility. A majority of those who signed the petition live in Alderman Burgener's Fifth Aldermanic District. Alderman Burgener stated that, in his opinion, the noise is excessive, and although NTC has made promises to address the noise issue, they have not done anything.

Charles Novitch and Bill Fehrmann are working on behalf of the neighborhood on this issue. Charles Novitch distributed a report entitled "Urban Noise: The Public Health Perspective".

Charles Novitch and Bill Fehrmann thanked Alderman Burgener for requesting that this item be placed on the agenda.

Charles Novitch stated that he was skeptical of the data included in the Revenue Report submitted by NTC. He stated that NTC pays no taxes on their property, but that the total annual taxes paid by neighboring residents is approximately \$250,000. He added that City of Merrill elected officials receive no votes from the NTC administration.

Charles Novitch then made the following suggestions:

- NTC must be challenged on the noise levels produced by sirens in moving vehicles
- Hours of siren use should be reduced (suggested 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., less on weekends)
- Noise violators should be fined in excess of \$1,000

Ralph Sturm stated that the City currently has noise ordinances in place, and those ordinances should be enforced.

Garth Swanson, the Lincoln County Board representative in the area of the facility, was in attendance and stated that he is assisting in addressing this issue.

Mayor Bialecki stated that he will contact NTC officials to discuss the possibility of using sirens inside the training vehicles as a method to reduce the noise.

Alderman Sukow stated that discussion on this would end at this time, but that the public could speak to this issue later during the "Public Comment" portion of the meeting.

Ordinance amending Chapter 26: Add bow hunting, plus clarifications & updating

The proposed ordinance was in the meeting packet. Police Chief Neff had requested that it be placed on the meeting agenda.

Police Chief Neff explained that the current ordinance related to bow hunting is outdated. The language in the proposed ordinance would regulate bow hunting within the City limits and would update the ordinances to more closely “mirror” the Wisconsin State Statutes.

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to recommend approval of the ordinance, and refer that recommendation to the Common Council. Carried.

The proposed ordinance will be on the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Ordinance amending Chapter 8 to add Pawn Shops

The proposed ordinance was in the meeting packet. Police Chief Neff had requested that it be placed on the meeting agenda.

Police Chief Neff explained that there are currently no City ordinances related to pawn shops. He reported that he has been contacted by someone who is considering opening a pawn shop in Merrill. He is suggesting this ordinance as a proactive measure to have something “on the books” to regulate pawn shops, if and when someone decides to open one. The proposed ordinance is based on ordinances already adopted by neighboring municipalities.

Motion (Sukow/Peterson) to recommend approval of the ordinance, and refer that recommendation to the Common Council. Carried.

The proposed ordinance will be on the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Ordinance amending Chapter 16 to add Pawn Shop fees

The proposed ordinance was in the meeting packet. Police Chief Neff had requested that it be placed on the meeting agenda.

Police Chief Neff explained that the proposed ordinance would establish fees for pawn shops. The fee amounts are based on fees already established by neighboring municipalities.

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to recommend approval of the ordinance, and refer that recommendation to the Common Council. Carried.

The proposed ordinance will be on the May 13th, 2014 Common Council meeting agenda.

Continue considering potential steps to address train whistle noise at night

This has been an ongoing issue. City Administrator Johnson had requested that it be placed on the agenda.

An update report from City Administrator Johnson was in the meeting packet. City Administrator Johnson verbally summarized the report. He questioned whether the City would want to spend in excess of a million dollars on a problem that may not even be resolved after the money is spent.

Alderman Sukow stated that the committee has worked on this for some time now, and it is frustrating that a solution seems to be cost-prohibitive.

Alderman Sukow suggested the possibility of at least establishing some type of “quiet zone”, even if that did not resolve the problem completely. Alderwoman Peterson agreed with this suggestion.

City Administrator Johnson was directed to conduct research to determine the approximate costs of establishing a “quiet zone”. He will also conduct research related to the costs and other factors related to possibly closing the railroad crossing at Fifth Street.

This item will be on the May meeting agenda. No action was taken at this time.

Discuss safety concerns @ Pine Ridge Avenue & State Hwy 64 intersection

Alderman Sukow had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. He explained that he included it on the agenda so that the public knows that the Health and Safety Committee recognizes there are safety concerns at the unfinished intersection of Pine Ridge Avenue and State Highway 64, in light of the recent opening of the new Wal-Mart.

Work on the intersection is scheduled to begin May 5th. City staff will continue to monitor this situation.

2014-2015 Liquor License Renewal Schedule

The schedule was in the meeting packet. City Clerk Heideman explained that the schedule was included in the meeting packet in order to provide information on the renewal process for the 2014-2015 licensing period.

No action was necessary, requested or taken.

Monthly Report – Fire Chief Savone

The report was in the meeting packet. Fire Chief Savone reported that, last weekend, the Fire Department dealt with three fires that occurred almost simultaneously. He thanked neighboring Fire Departments and Law Enforcement agencies for their assistance addressing the situation. A Fire Department charity has presented a check to a family displaced by one of the fires.

The old tender has now been sold.

The Fire Department will be receiving a grant of approximately \$34,000 (90% funded).

Alderwoman Peterson complimented the Fire Department for their efforts during the busy weekend alluded to by Fire Chief Savone.

Monthly Report – Police Chief Neff

The report was in the meeting packet. Police Chief Neff reported that the new canine officer should be “on duty” in approximately two weeks.

Monthly Report – Lincoln County Humane Society

No report was submitted this month.

Place monthly reports on file

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to place the monthly reports on file. Carried.

Schedule next meeting

Monday, May 19th, 2014 at 4:30 P.M.

Public Comment

Several people commented on the issue of the noise at the NTC training facility, as follows:

Mark Gehring stated that it is difficult for he and his wife to relax after work due to the excessive noise.

Marilyn Schmidt cited an incident that she witnessed which she said exposed a potential safety issue at the facility. She also requested the data submitted by NTC.

Bill Fehrmann distributed a report that he prepared on this issue.

City Clerk Heideman suggested that Mayor Bialecki appoint an ad-hoc committee to address this situation. The committee could be comprised of NTC officials, citizens in the training center neighborhood, City staff and Common Council members.

Alderman Sukow stated that, in his opinion, Northcentral Technical College has not adequately addressed the noise problem. He promised the concerned citizens in attendance that the Health and Safety Committee will continue to attempt resolution of their concerns.

Adjournment

Motion (Peterson/Sukow) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:07 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC
City Clerk