

1410150

**City of Merrill
Water & Sewage Disposal Committee
Wednesday, September 24, 2014 at 5:00 P.M.
Common Council Chambers, City Hall, 1004 East First Street**

Members Present (3 of 3): Alderman Rob Norton (Chairperson) and Alderman John Burgener, and Alderwoman Kandy Peterson.

Others Present Included: Mayor Bill Bialecki, Alderman Dave Sukow, Alderman Ryan Schwartzman, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Utility Superintendent Kim Kriewald, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Tonia Speener from Clark Dietz, Inc. – Engineers, Jeremy Ratliff from Merrill Courier, and Duane Pfister. A student was in attendance to videotape the meeting for the Cable Access Channel.

Call to order

Alderman Norton called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Vouchers for June, July and August

Motion (Burgener/Peterson) to approve the June, July, and August vouchers.
Carried.

Review and consider 2015 budget requests

The draft 2015 budget requests were provided in the meeting agenda packet. Unertl advised that there would be major reductions in health insurance with the new Utility Operator with Individual coverage instead of Family coverage, as well as another employee switching from Family coverage to the Health Incentive Program. The Water health insurance will be reduced by \$30,000 and Sewer health insurance by \$27,500.

Unertl reported that she will be reviewing the revenue projections for both 2014 and 2015. The impact of 2012 year-end auditor journal entries needs to be reflected in the budget amounts. As far as utility rates, there will be a 2.0% Sewer rate increase in both 2015 and 2016 (per Common Council action of October 12th, 2010).

Unertl noted that a full year of water fiscal information is needed before any potential rate adjustment request could be made to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC). The 2014 PSC water report should be available by the April 2015 Water & Sewage Disposal Committee meeting. A potential 3.0% simplified rate adjustment might be something for the Committee to consider. Unertl, Kriewald, and Norton commented on having potential annual smaller rate increases instead of potentially much larger increases every five or so years.

Review and consider 2015 budget requests (Continued)

Kriewald reviewed the 2015 capital requests. It was clarified that Sewage Replacement Fund cannot be used for the Wastewater Treatment Plant roof project. Unertl reported that it would be necessary to borrow the almost \$300,000 for the roof replacements. There should be adequate water and sewer revenues for the other capital projects or equipment.

As far as Landfill budget, Unertl noted that expanded use of contractor for sampling/monitoring work is proposed instead of having Utility personnel doing part of this work. The outside contractor does these services for other former landfills.

Discuss part-time administrative position

Burgener emphasized that the full-time administrative assistant has over 200 hours of overtime so far in 2014. Norton highlighted efforts by the Utility Department to cross train employees.

Unertl commented that there is almost \$3 million in Water and Sewer billing and collection financing work. There is no backup for utility billing. In response to questions, Kriewald reported that often no one is available to answer the phone or deal with walk-in customers if the Utility Administrative Assistant is off.

Motion (Norton/Burgener) to recommend authorizing part-time administrative assistant position. Carried. The ½ time position is included in the 2015 budget request and will be going to the Thursday, October 16th Committee of the Whole meeting.

Discuss full-time GIS position

Although up to 600 hours in GIS design work was authorized in the 2014 budget, Kriewald reported that level of time commitment was not possible given the severe 2013-14 winter requirements. Unertl advised of growing frustration of other City departments to implement GIS-based efficiencies to improve their operations.

There was discussion of potential ½ time vs. full-time GIS position, as well as need to back-fill the Utility Operator position if GIS position were authorized.

Motion (Peterson/Burgener) to recommend authorizing a full-time GIS position. Carried. An existing Utility Operator would transfer into the new GIS position and it would be necessary to back-fill a full-time Utility Operator position. Both positions are included in the 2015 budget request and will be going to the Thursday, October 16th Committee of the Whole meeting.

Operations Report

The report was in the meeting packet. Utility Superintendent Kriewald noted that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource response to the City's Compliance Maintenance Annual Report was also provided.

The construction firm has started working on curb/gutter on West 1st Street. It was necessary to remove several larger trees after consultation with Street Commissioner Dick Lupton and City Parks & Recreation Director/City Forester Dan Wendorf.

Public Comment

None.

Next meeting

Wednesday, October 29th, 2014 at 5:00 P.M.

Adjournment

Motion (Burgener/Peterson) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Kathy Unertl, Finance Director/Deputy City Clerk