

**City of Merrill
Committee of the Whole
Thursday, November 6, 2014 at 5:30 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, Utility Superintendent Kim Kriewald, Street Commissioner Richard Lupton, Enrichment Center Director Tammie Mrachek, Police Chief Ken Neff, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Fire Chief Dave Savone, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Duane Pfister, Jeremy Ratliff, Vince Conrad, Roger Drewek, Greg Hartwig, Kortney Pike (arr. 5:36), Steve Hass (arr. 5:54) and City Clerk Bill Heideman.

Call to order

Mayor Bialecki called the meeting to order at 5:32 P.M.

Public Comment

Roger Drewek noted that there are funds remaining in the budget that could be used for employee Health Savings Account (HSA) seeding in 2015. Mr. Drewek also mentioned that the hiring freeze currently in effect includes new positions. Based on that, he questioned why the funding for new positions that have not been approved is included in the proposed 2015 budget.

Consider lifting hiring freeze for pending firefighter/paramedic vacancy

A firefighter/paramedic position will soon become vacant as the result of a pending retirement. Based on that, City Administrator Johnson is requesting that the hiring freeze be lifted to fill that vacancy.

On October 28th, 2014, the Personnel and Finance Committee passed a motion recommending that the hiring freeze be lifted, and referred that recommendation to the Committee of the Whole.

141191

Motion (Schwartzman/Meehean) to lift the hiring freeze to replace a vacancy to be created by the upcoming retirement of a firefighter/paramedic. Carried.

Consider lifting hiring freeze for pending Police Dept. Admin. Asst. vacancy

A Police Department Administrative Assistant position will soon become vacant as the result of a pending retirement. Based on that, Police Chief Neff is requesting that the hiring freeze be lifted to fill that vacancy.

Police Chief Neff answered questions related to the position and also provided verbal information on potential consequences if the position is not filled.

Motion (Sukow/Schwartzman) to not lift the hiring freeze to replace a vacancy to be created by the upcoming retirement of a Police Department Administrative Assistant. Carried.

Note: No Common Council action on the motion is necessary.

Consider new reclassification/evaluation policy

City Administrator Johnson had drafted a reclassification/evaluation policy for City employees. Classifications and reclassifications would be based on the following factors:

- Education required
- Experience necessary
- Skills necessary
- Discretionary authority/decision finality
- Guidelines/guidance available
- Level of responsibility
- Complexity of work performed
- Consequence of error

On October 28th, 2014, the Personnel and Finance Committee passed a motion recommending that the policy be approved, and referred that recommendation to the Committee of the Whole.

141192

Motion (Meehean/Burgener) to approve, as presented, the new reclassification/evaluation policy for City employees. Carried.

Health Savings Account (HSA) seeding for City employees in 2015

Finance Director Unertl had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. Information was in the meeting packet.

Finance Director Unertl reported that there is approximately \$29,000 available in a contingency fund which could be used for employee Health Savings Account (HSA) “seeding” in 2015. Based on this, she is proposing that, in 2015, employee individual HSA plans be “seeded” in the amount of \$250 and employee family HSA plans be “seeded” in the amount of \$500.

Motion (Burgener/Meehean) to approve, as proposed, the 2015 Health Savings Account (HSA) seeding amounts of \$250 for individual plans and \$500 for family plans. Carried.

2015 budget status budget requests, budget adjustments and tax levy ordinance

Information was in the meeting packet. Additional information related to other taxing entities (Lincoln County, Merrill Area Public Schools, Northcentral Technical College) was distributed at the meeting. Finance Director Unertl provided additional verbal details on this information.

Alderman Lokemoen stated that, at this time, he is not in favor of the purchase of a Fire Department brush truck. Fire Chief Savone responded that, because the City has fire protection agreements with neighboring townships, the ability to effectively fight brushfires is critical.

Alderman Sukow asked whether it was absolutely necessary to purchase two new dump trucks for the Street Department.

Motion (Lokemoen/Schwartzman) to move the entire funding for the purchase of a Fire Department brush truck to the 2016 Capital Budget. The total cost of the truck is \$180,000. Carried.

Motion (Schwartzman/Lokemoen) to remove the funding for the purchase of a pool vehicle (a second vehicle for use by City employees, \$20,000) from the 2015 Capital Budget. Motion was defeated 2-6 on roll call vote. Voting Yes – Alderman Malm and Alderman Schwartzman.

Alderman Sukow spoke in favor of keeping the purchase of Fire Department rescue boat and trailer in the 2015 Capital Budget.

Motion (Schwartzman/Burgener) to move the funding for the purchase of a Fire Department boat and trailer (\$25,000) from the 2015 Capital Budget to the 2016 Capital Budget. Vote was tied 4-4 on roll call vote. Voting Yes – Alderman Malm, Alderman Lokemoen, Alderman Schwartzman and Alderman Burgener. Mayor Bialecki broke the tie by Voting “Yes”. Therefore, the motion carried.

Motion (Burgener/Sukow) to recommend approving the 2015 budget, including the adjustments made at this meeting, and forward the budget to the November 11th, 2014 Common Council meeting. Alderman Burgener requested that his motion be withdrawn. Without objection, it was so ordered.

Motion (Schwartzman/Sukow) to remove the funding for a part-time Fire Department Administrative Assistant (\$15,000) from the 2015 budget. Motion carried 5-3 on roll call vote. Voting No – Alderwoman Peterson, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Norton.

Motion (Meehean/Burgener) to place the \$15,000 removed by the previous motion in the fund for “seeding” employee Health Savings Accounts. Vote was tied 4-4 on roll call vote. Voting Yes – Alderman Malm, Alderman Lokemoen, Alderman Burgener and Alderman Meehean. Mayor Bialecki broke the tie by Voting “Yes”. Therefore, the motion carried.

Motion (Burgener/Sukow) to recommend approving the 2015 budget, including the adjustments made at this meeting, and forward the recommendation to the November 11th, 2014 Common Council meeting. Carried.

Adjournment

Motion (Burgener/Norton) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

William N. Heideman, CMC, WCMC
City Clerk