

City of Merrill
Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

Monday, September 19th, 2016 at 6:00 P.M.
City Hall Common Council Chambers

RDA Present: Bill Bialecki, Amanda Kostman, Tim Haight, Jill Laufenberg,
Karen Karow, Tony Kusserow, and Ryan Schwartzman

Others: Alderpersons John Burgener, Mary Ball, Rod Norton, and Tim
Meehan, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Finance Director
Kathy Unertl, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Public Works Director
Rod Akey, Mary Rajek from Redevelopment Resources, Ken Maule
from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp. (LCEDC), John
Donovan from S.C. Swiderski, LLC, Scott Kwiecinski from Horizon
and Paul Russel from Merrill Area Housing Authority (MAHA),
Jeremy Ratliff from Merrill Courier, IT Manager Ron Turner
livestreaming the meeting, a student from MAPS taping the
meeting, and about fifteen interested individuals

Call to Order: Chair Bialecki called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Consider approval of meeting minutes:

**Motion (Schwartzman/Karow) to approve the RDA meeting minutes from
September 9th, 2016. Carried.**

**Presentations and Questions/Answers from housing developers for 1905 14th St.
(former Fox Point site):**

S. C. Swiderski, LLC: John Donovan highlighted the S.C. Swiderski, LLC experience
in residential apartment development. In Merrill, the firm already has 160 rental units on
Jackson Street and 12 larger rental units with attached garages on Semling Drive. In
response to the fall-out of the 2008 economic collapse, S.C. Swiderski identified the gap
for rental housing in the region. The firm has about 1,200 rental units with another 400
under construction, and another 600 – 800 in design.

The Swiderski housing proposal is for four buildings (i.e. two 12 units and two 16 units –
for total of 56 apartments) with market rate rents ranging from \$720 for one bedroom to
\$995 for three bedroom. Construction could begin in spring 2017 with occupancy
potentially by the end of 2017. In response to questions, Donovan advised that firm is
reviewing installation of air exchange units in planning new developments.

Unertl asked about the Semling Drive rental pace. Donovan responded that they were
a bit surprised by the demand for the larger units with attached garages. Rents range
from \$995 to \$1,100. All 12 units are rented.

Horizon/MAHA: Scott Kwiecinski from Horizon highlighted on the proposed residential development involving three buildings with twenty-units in each building. There would be 51 affordable units and 9 market-rate apartments. All units would have 1st floor private entries. Nine of the twenty units in each building would have attached garages. No other covered parking is proposed. Greenspace and stormwater drainage are included in their plan, as well as leasing office and small-scale social area.

Development timeframe is dependent upon WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority) tax credit financing. Applications are due in January 2017 with tax credit awards announced in late April/early May. Construction could start in late 2017 with occupancy in summer of 2018.

MAHA would control and manage the housing development. Waiting lists were noted for all types of MAHA housing.

Dean Hass: Asked about WHEDA tax credits. Swiecinski advised that investors provide financing for the development in return for Federal tax credits that support affordable housing options. Hass opposes tax credit use.

Warren Ament: Works for subcontractor building S.C. Swiderski developments. Both developers responded that there would be competitive bidding for construction work.

Paul Wagner: As employee of Church Mutual Insurance and member of MAHA, Wagner emphasized having quality housing product that was affordable.

Mary Rajek: Based upon her work with Redevelopment Resources, Rajek commented on the link between community development, business, and housing. There is need for affordable housing in communities. The low vacancy rate for rental housing in Merrill was also noted.

Karen Karow: She reported that someone contacted her concerned with Washington School enrollment and capacity.

MAHA Executive Director Paul Russell commented that not all potential tenants would have children. Russell noted about 40 to 50 families on MAHA housing waiting list.

Gene Bebel emphasized that having new kids could be positive development for Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS). Although elementary school space is bit tighter, there is lots of vacant space at the middle school and the high school. Middle school has capacity for 1,000 students with enrollment trend heading toward 500 and high school has capacity for 1,100 with enrollment trend heading toward 800.

Bill Bialecki: Bialecki asked about long-term ownership of the proposed Horizon/MAHA development. There is 10-year tax credit period, followed by 5-year compliance period. Merrill Area Housing Authority (MAHA) could potentially purchase the housing development after Year 15 is complete.

In response to question about development of the Premier Apartments (by Merrill Area Recreational Complex), City Administrator Dave Johnson reported Phase 1 involves 36 units with potential for two additional phases based upon rental experience.

Public Comment: There was no additional public comment.

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

Bialecki read the following notice:

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:

Request for Proposal housing responses for 1905 E. 14th St. (former Fox Point site); possible recommendation for developer; and potential TID No. 10 development incentives.

Motion (Schwartzman/Kostman) to move to closed session. Motion carried 7-0 on roll call vote at 7:50 p.m.

There was discussion on above item.

Adjournment: Motion (Karow/Laufenberg) to adjourn at 8:17 p.m. Carried.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl