



**CITY OF MERRILL**  
**FESTIVAL GROUNDS COMMITTEE**  
**AGENDA • THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2018**

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**Regular Meeting**

**Bierman Building**

**6:00 PM**

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- I. Call to Order
- II. Minutes of previous meeting(s):
  1. Minutes of January 4, 2018 meeting
- III. Agenda items for consideration:
  1. Discussion of use of grounds adjacent to Expo Center for Wausaubicon, June 16, 2018
  2. Continue discussion and reporting of alcohol licensing
  3. Fair financial report/update from Fair Assn. Rep. Becker
  4. Review Capital Improvement list
  5. Update on clay for the arena
- IV. Monthly Reports:
  1. Food Vendor Rep. Christensen
  2. Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund
- V. Public Comment Period
- VI. Establish date, time and location of next meeting
- VII. Adjournment



CITY OF MERRILL
FESTIVAL GROUNDS COMMITTEE
MINUTES • THURSDAY JANUARY 4, 2018

Regular Meeting Bierman Building 6:00 PM

I. Call to Order

In the absence of Chairperson Norton, Mayor Bialecki called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Table with 4 columns: Attendee Name, Title, Status, Arrived. Rows include Rob Norton (Excused), Tim Meehean (Present), Bill Bialecki (Present), Paul Russell (Present), Neal Christensen (Present), Bryan Bloch (Present), and Brad Becker (Present, Arrived 6:03 PM).

Also in attendance: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Festival Grounds Manager Richard Bjorklund, Diane Wais and City Clerk Bill Heideman. A student was in attendance to tape the meeting for Merrill Productions.

II. Minutes of previous meeting(s):

1. Minutes of December 7, 2017 meeting

Food Vendor Rep. Christensen asked for and received clarification on the fee amount to be charged to Relay for Life for their 2018 event.

Motion (Meehean/Russell) to approve the minutes.

RESULT: APPROVED

III. Agenda items for consideration:

1. Continue discussion and reporting of alcohol licensing

Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund requested that consideration of this be delayed until further information is received. Without objection, it was so ordered.

2. Fair financial report/update from Fair Assn. Rep. Becker

Fair Association Rep. Becker reported that financial information on the 2017 is not yet available.

Several fair board members will be attending the upcoming Wisconsin Fairs Conference.

Discussion was held on the scheduling of grandstand shows for the 2018 fair.

The 2018 fair will feature a different carnival. It is anticipated that this carnival will provide a minimum of 25 rides at the fair.

Attachment: 2018-01-04 FGC Minutes (3067 : Minutes of January 4, 2018 meeting)

### 3. Summary of 2017 activities

Information on 2017 events was in the meeting packet.

Diane Wais reported that there are currently no events scheduled for January, 2018. One event has been scheduled for February.

Food Vendor Rep. Christensen requested that an “ongoing” 2018 events calendar be available.

## IV. Monthly Reports:

### 1. Food Vendor Rep. Christensen

Food Vendor Rep. Christensen reported that their group met on December 14<sup>th</sup>. They are currently preparing a one-page information sheet on the seven permanent stands, including contact information and other information on the seven stands.

### 2. Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund

The monthly report was distributed at the meeting.

Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund reported verbally that he and Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey are currently assembling a Capital Improvements listing for the Festival Grounds.

Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund then reviewed the monthly report, which contained information on the following:

- General
- Tractor Pull
- Rodeo
- County Fair
- Bierman Expo Hall

A sympathy care will be sent to the family of Pete Annis, who passed away recently. For many years, Mr. Annis was a driving force behind making the rodeo a success.

## V. Public Comment Period

Rodeo Association Bloch reported that he has located some reasonably-priced clay, and is doing further research on pricing. He explained that this could help resolve the concerns with loose gravel in the arena area.

## VI. Establish date, time and location of next meeting

Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. in the Bierman Center.

## VII. Adjournment

Motion (Russell/Bloch) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:37 P.M.



## Merrill Festival Grounds

February 1, 2018

### Grandstand and Grounds:

#### General:

Research is underway to identify and source an interstate facing billboard for possible location on City property. Target for a recommendation is March 1.

City completed an upgrade to arena lighting. Installation of the new restrooms should be completed in time for the Rodeo. We will conduct an exercise to list other capital improvements for the grounds that can then be reviewed/expanded by the committee for future planning in accord with the TIF requirements.

The Lincoln County commissioned study from 2015 is an extensive document (over 100 pages at a cost of \$50,000), and it refers to successful Festival Grounds facilities as:

1. Year-round facilities are multi-use and include, at a minimum:
2. Indoor, fully climatized exhibition-style building
3. Entertainment venue customized for specific market demand in the form of a grandstand, race track, indoor arena, amphitheater, etc.
4. Defined and improved camping facilities
5. Dedicated livestock facilities
6. Up-to-date restrooms and patron amenities

The Study recommends that two key operational/positional characteristics for successful fairgrounds/event venues are:

1. Pro-active marketing and management of the facilities – This includes creating marketing materials, establishing co-marketing
2. Relationships with local/regional tourism organizations and businesses, conducting travel and tours for prospective clients and, in some cases, self-promoting of events and activities.

High community and political support – This is especially important in smaller markets to insure sustainability of the public asset through public investments and operational assistance.

To begin a capital improvement plan, the facilities within the grounds include:

- Bierman Expo
- Fair Association Office –Owned by Fair Association
- Lokemoen Building – Built 1974 – Owned by Fair Association
- Livestock Pavilion – Built 1927 – Square footage 18,224

- Old School House – Moved onto property 1960
- Fair Building – Owned by Fair Association
- Schultz Building – Built in 1880 – Square footage 4,595
- Our Savior Church Stand – Square footage 920
- Steckling Building – built 1965 – Square footage 6,150
- Sell Building – Owned by the Fair Association. – built 1980 – square footage 4,860
- Newest Bathrooms
- Knights of Columbus Food Stand – square footage 700
- St. John’s Church Concession stand – square footage 2,880
- County Owned Stand – they rent to various groups – square footage 1,232
- St. Francis Church Food Stand – square footage 1,409
- Eagles Club Food Stand – square footage 1,428
- VFW Food Stand – square footage 2,400
- Lions Food Stand – square footage 1,216
- Optimist Food Stand – square footage 783
- West Bathroom
- East Bathroom
- Grandstand
- Rodeo/Horse Arena – 100 x 220

The City of Merrill has moved past some of the recommendations/conclusions but it is always prudent to cast an eye to a comprehensive study so that future planning does not miss items.

Additional categories could include: Perimeter Fence, reduction of Humane Society footprint, paving/asphalt, plantings, trees, electrical grid, winterized buildings, canopies, shade and rest areas, picnic tables, sewer and water hook-ups,

#### Tractor Pull:

Merrill representatives are invited to the State Convention and Banquet in mid-December. The State Association will send NTPA Dirt consultant to Merrill in the spring to inspect, review and make recommendations. Note that 2 Pull events have taken place, the properties of the dirt surface have settled into a known form. Inspection will assist Merrill to make the correct preparations and plan for physical improvements if necessary.

Additional classes are being discussed and reviewed; possible 4x4 or semis.

Marketing discussions are taking place with a designer of marketing plans focusing on social media, purchased time branding, logo design, web design and unified messaging.

Pricing will be reduced to that of the year one event in concurrence with the sponsor and underwriter.

The goal of having excess revenue in year three is important for the event to contribute to the capital improvement of the grounds.

Antique Tractors event will expand classes in advance consistent with the classes added in 2017.

Bank attorney is trying to expedite the filing of 501-c3 or non-stock corporate paperwork.

#### Rodeo:

The electrical and water improvements completed by the rodeo have functioned very well and will benefit all grounds activities for years to come.

The Rodeo was rightly honored as the best small Rodeo in the country. Rodeo representatives will have attended the National Finals in Nov.

A new, sanctioned event is being discussed. Angel underwriting and financial assistance is being sought.

#### County Fair:

August 15-19

R. Bjorklund attended the Wisconsin Fairs Conference Jan 8-10 at his own expense.

Fair Committee members attended the state conference.

Congratulations. County Fair has a new Carnival Producer. The poor show produced last summer left the community upset. Changing the vendor should increase capacity, excitement, value, income and content. The Carnival producer is also bringing free entertainment. Early promotion of this change will serve the Fair very well.

The committee in charge of the livestock auction (the fair is a terminal show) has done a superb job of lining up corporate and private buyers for the auction. It is one of the better auctions in the state in the county fair category. The work done by the committee is a model for the fair to use in seeking additional support, sponsorship and possible angel underwriting. Such additional support will help the fair continue to be a "free fair".

Observations and suggestions following last year's fair are as follows. Implementation of some or all could help the fair present a friendly face and encourage greater attendance:

- Need to turn grounds lights on earlier

- Need to have a heavier presence of management during set-up

- Need electrician presence at electrical panels for set-up

- Carnival trucks parked inside fairgrounds. Park across street.

- Camper locations move to ends

- Sr Center closed. Open and put up passive displays of programs and projects.

Many electrical cords across walking aisles  
 Cars and trucks inside pedestrian areas  
 Electric panels open unlocked  
 Parkers still on a 9 but no gate traffic  
 Arena dirt used for rain fill  
 Bulls and Barrells show is weak. Replace if possible  
 Move butter carving and pie eating into Expo  
 Do more contests in Expo  
 Add kids contests  
 Try school tie ins prior to school closing for the summer  
 Carnival closed at 10, buildings at 10:10  
 Not enough traffic to warrant one way on 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
 Credentialed and vip parking signs for E end.  
 Chicken barn closed for judging  
 Demo derby ½ hour late start, 1<sup>st</sup> heat took ½ hour  
 Beer vendors in GS too loose  
 Beer tent set-up tables behind trailers...VIP?  
 No need for one way on 6<sup>th</sup> St  
 Karaoke return would help bolster content for the overall show  
 Reduce Monster Truck berm runoff  
 For a 3-truck show, the producer stretched the content into a good show  
 Fenced pavilions appear to not serve the fair's best interest  
 Carnival tear down too early.  
 Think about expanding demo derby and monster truck days  
 Eliminate bulls and barrels or seek different producer  
 Consider keeping the booking in August.  
 Submission of State report to DATCP

Bierman Expo Hall:

Sale of alcohol at the building is an issue that will be important to some future users of the building. Generally, users will fall into certain categories such as private (weddings, birthdays, bar mitzvas, and family gatherings), commercial/paid events (concerts, trade shows, exhibit shows, etc), fund raisers (honorariums, benefits, foundations, charities). Commercial and fund raisers need the profit from alcohol sales; private events do not. A group has been contacted for potential sale of alcohol at expo events. The total number of potential events will not represent a significant annual potential gross sales.

Reservations for weddings in summer of 2018 are increasing monthly. Diane is superb at talking with the potential users. She has excellent acumen for event business.

Jack Koshick, talent buyer for NRG Radio is interested in the Expo as a possible concert site.

Cameo Roets, Marketing director for WIFC, WDEZ, WSAU, WOZZ AND Fox has visited and is considering producing radio station entertainment concerts at the expo. She and her operations manager were very impressed with the facility and its application to their event needs.