



**CITY OF MERRILL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

MINUTES • WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20, 2019

Strategic Planning Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

6:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Mike Ravn called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Russell	Aldersperson - First District	Absent	
Steve Hass	Aldersperson - Second District	Present	
Rick Blake	Aldersperson - Third District	Present	
Steve Osness	Aldersperson - Fourth District	Present	
John M. Van Lieshout	Aldersperson - Fifth District	Present	
Mike Rick	Aldersperson - Sixth District	Present	
Rob Norton	Aldersperson - Seventh District	Present	
Steve Sabatke	Alderman - Eighth District	Present	
Derek Woellner	Mayor	Present	

Other attendees included: Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Police Chief Corey Bennett, Street Superintendent Dustin Bonack, Transit Director Brad Brummond, City Attorney Tom Hayden, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Utility Operations Manager Gabe Steinagel, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Park and Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Bill Bialecki, Debbie Kinsey, Mike Ravn (Meeting Facilitator), John Greenwood, Renee Fredrick, Kyle Gulke, LaDonna Fermanich, Al Wix, Sharon Anderson, Lee Opsahl, Gene Bebel, September Murphy and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Hunter Lane was present to videotape the meeting for Merrill Productions.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Did not occur.

III. Agenda Items for Consideration:

1. Review information gathered at last meeting, related to strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

Two handouts were distributed. The first handout was related to the 2020 budget requests. The second handout was a list of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that were compiled and discussed at the last meeting.

Mike Ravn granted five minutes to allow the meeting attendees time to review the handouts.

2. Identify long-term strategic objectives for the City of Merrill.

To begin discussion on long-term strategic objectives, the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan Issues were reviewed. There were four major issues, as follows:

1. How can Merrill City Government grow the city's tax base?

2. Are there any services Merrill City Government needs to provide that it currently is not? Are there services that city government may not be able to provide any longer or should not be offering?

3. What is Merrill City Government's budget philosophy?

4. How does Merrill City Government create and implement strategic economic development and redevelopment?

Mike Ravn that stated that, as a starting point, he would suggest several objectives that could be included in the new Strategic Plan. They were as follows:

1. Economic development issues
2. How to get "millennials" more involved in city government?
3. City services (cost vs. benefit)
4. Tax philosophy
5. Increase citizen participation
6. More positive work environment for city employees

Mike Ravn then opened the meeting up for further suggestions from attendees, and the following suggestions were made:

Alderman Hass suggested that economic development is certainly critical, and he would like to see more development on the west side.

Alderman Sabatke mentioned that bringing more people to the city would help, but questioned how much money the city could put into that endeavor.

The question of whether "geographical balance" of development was important was mentioned.

Finance Director Unertl noted that there are numerous tax-delinquent properties. Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator added that there are numerous vacant buildings.

Renee Fredrick asked that plans be development and implemented to address the problems being discussed.

City Administrator Johnson suggested that an infrastructure investment policy needs to be created and implemented. That raised the question of prioritizing the importance of helping existing businesses as opposed to bringing in new businesses.

The possibility of a budget philosophy was then discussed. The possibility of asking taxpayers what they would be willing to pay in taxes was mentioned.

Alderman Sabatke suggested that the city could "embrace" the concept of being a bedroom community for Wausau.

Gene Bebel suggested that marketing should be high priority.

The availability and affordability of housing was then discussed.

Bill Bialecki mentioned that child-care needs to be available and affordable.

Gene Bebel stated that all government entities need to work together.

Mike Ravn raised that question of the priority level of a “Main Street” Merrill program.

IV. Public Comment Period

None.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M. (No motion or vote).