



**CITY OF MERRILL**  
**FESTIVAL GROUNDS COMMITTEE**  
**AGENDA • THURSDAY MARCH 5, 2020**

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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 February 5, 2020 meeting
- III. Agenda items for consideration:
  1. Cattle Barn
  2. Discussion on pavement options
  3. Fair update
  4. Rodeo update
  5. Calendar of Events
- IV. Monthly Reports:
  1. Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund
  2. Food Vendor Rep. Caylor (No meetings until April)
- V. Public Comment Period
- VI. Establish date, time & location of next meeting
- VII. Adjournment

**City of Merrill  
Festival Grounds Committee  
Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 6:00 P.M.  
Bierman Building**

I. Alderman Norton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee members Present: Mayor Derek Woellner, Rob Norton, (Chairperson), Alderman John Van Lieshout, Alderman Steve Sabatke, Bryan Bloch, Michael Caylor, Brad Becker

Other attendees included, City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Festival Grounds Manager Richard Bjorklund, Krista Mitchell, Kyle Gulke, and a MP3 representative.

Excused: City Clerk Heideman

II. Minutes of pervious meeting:

1. Minutes of the December 5, 2020 meeting.  
Motion (Van Lieshout/Bloch) to approve.

III. Agenda Items for consideration:

1. Water & Electrical  
Rodeo Association Rep. Bryan Bloch asked that we take a look at what it would cost to upgrade the plug-ins along the south fence for campers. Just electrical and water. He's seen people charged \$20/day at another fairgrounds for the same thing, so there is the possibility of revenue. Would be nice for the rodeo, also could be used during the fair. City Administrator Dave Johnson asked if we were looking to have this available year round or just during events. Bryan said just during events right now, but worth looking into for the future. Possibly also have a restroom that's open year round, if we decide to have camping year round. Alderman John Van Lieshout thought it would be a good idea to get an estimate. Dave Johnson will look into getting estimates.
2. Cattle Barn  
City Administrator Dave Johnson reported that there are six things we can do to address the cattle barn: nothing, patches, partial wood replacement, full wood replacement, new siding (different options), or build a new building. There was discussion about the pros and cons of having a new building. Some pros being more space, other venue options, possibly rent out stalls. Cons were that the current building has a lot of sentimental value, it's a "showpiece" as there are only 3 in

the state, cost. Dave Johnson said we have \$107,000 to work with. Food Vendor Rep. Michael Caylor asked why are we wanting to scrap the building if we have the budget to fix it? Alderman Steve Sabatke said he doesn't think we're to the point where it needs to be torn down. Michael Caylor moved to use funds to purchase Hardy Board, Mayor seconded. Michael Caylor withdrew motion to wait so they could see samples of siding first. Mayor suggests we concentrate on fixing the siding on the current building and not a new building. Estimates will be presented at next meeting.

3. Use of cattle barn for animals during natural disasters  
Copy of the Emergency Building Use Agreement was handed out. City Attorney Tom Hayden said they worked on it together with Nancy Bergstrom. Mayor motioned to approve agreement, Michael Caylor seconded. Bryan Bloch asked to discuss, Rob Norton opened for discussion. Quick discussion regarding only using the buildings that are available at the time. All in favor Aye, no opposed, motion carried.
4. Calendar of Events/Feedback  
Krista reported on the upcoming events. Getting wedding inquiries for summer months. There's a new event coming in May, a pig show, hopefully it will be a repeat event for us. Rick Bjorklund said the wrestling events are getting more filled up with each show. The gun show was successful in the beginning of January, he plans to keep it at that time of year for the future. Dave Johnson mentioned that the Riders Club is thinking about doing some advertising this year with hopes of getting some people in the stands. Bryan Bloch mentioned they might like to see some camping hookups also.

#### IV. Monthly Reports:

1. Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund

The monthly report was in the meeting packet.

Mayor agrees that an atv youth track would be a good idea for the area.

2. Food Vendor Rep. Caylor

No meetings until April.

3. Fair Association

Brad Becker reported that they have 25 rides coming to the fair this year, the Carnival has been signed, and they are looking to get hatchet

throwing and an escape room. Demo's are on Friday, Tractor Pull Saturday, and Monster Trucks on Sunday.

V. Public Comment Period

There was no Public Comment.

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

Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Bierman Building.

VII. Adjournment

Motion (Van Lieshout/Mayor) to adjourn. Carried.  
Adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared and submitted by:

Krista M. Mitchell

**March**

Cattle Barn

Discussion on Pavement options

Calendar of Events (Attachment)

Festival Grounds Manager Report – Bjorklund (Attachment)

Fair Update

Rodeo Update

Attachment: Agenda Items (4863 : Cattle Barn)

## UP COMING EVENTS AT THE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

### 2020

<b>March</b>	03-05-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	03-06/07-20	Gun Show**
	3-20-20	Merrill High School Boosters Club Fundraiser
	3-28-20	Wrestling
	3-31-20	Merrill City Council Candidate Forum
<b>April</b>	04-02-2020	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	04-03/04-20	Enrichment Center Craft Show**
	04-18-20	Prom**
<b>May</b>	05-02-20	Wedding
	05-07-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	05-23-20	Pig Show (cattle barn)
	05-29-20	Riders Club (grounds)**
<b>June</b>	06-04-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	06-06-20	Wedding
	06-12/13/14-20	Rodeo**
	06-19-20	Riders Club (grounds)**
	06-20-20	Wrestling – Tentative

\*\*      **Yearly Repeat Events**      \*\*

Attachment: Upcoming Events (4867 : Calendar of Events)

Merrill Festival Grounds

March 5, 2020

Grandstand and Grounds:

General:

In the process of removing snow mass from the sides of the Expo Hall building, it became impossible to do so without dragging landscape stone with the snow being removed. Future consideration to replacing the stone with another material may eliminate this problem.

Addition of lighting needs to continue to be a priority to create a safe and user-friendly environment. Raising the grandstand poles and enhancing the light clusters is a priority for safety, production and ease of operation (not having to keep refocusing). American flag is missing.

Projects that have improved the appearance and function of existing buildings is very noticeable and appreciated by the community and user groups. Capital improvement categories could include: Barn replacement, Perimeter Fence (with caution and concurrence of user groups), reduction of Humane Society footprint, paving/asphalt at the Grandstand and improved elevation between the east and west bathrooms, plantings, trees, electrical grid, winterized buildings, canopies, shade and rest areas, picnic tables, sewer and water hook-ups.

Events or contests with low cost operations but relatively broad appeal are the goal for the grounds. Even those events will require advance funding assurance.

Bierman Expo Hall:

The NRA Gun Show is on March 6 and 7. The organizer is very pleased with the facility and with the help he receives from Merrill. The consensus is that three gun shows that currently occupy our schedule is the maximum that our size market can absorb without harming the attendance at all shows.

The City crews do an excellent job of opening and clearing parking space in case of snow.

The Aqua Jays have conducted set-up and clean up for all the commercial shows in the Expo and are respected by all the show managers.

The Flag obtained by Tammy for the Expo Hall is stunning. Thank You Tammy.

The last Wrestling Show produced about 340 attendees. Given the short lead time, it was an encouraging turnout. The promoter has scheduled another show for March 28 titled Merrill Mania. It will feature a former Merrill resident who went on to a WWF career. Ryan

Schwartzman has helped the promoter tremendously and the Chamber has helped with sales and marketing. New sales at County Market and Mobile helped. The event is seeking sponsorship as well as angel backers.

The show that was originally held on opening day weekend was moved to early Jan. It did well and expects exhibitors to book more heavily in subsequent years. Attendance was over 1000. The consensus among the exhibitors is that the move to Merrill was good for all.

Reservations for weddings are increasing monthly.

#### Tractor Pull:

The Midstate's Pullers replaced the WTPA/NTPA. The Dirt Flingers (minis and garden tractors and specialty classes) were added with the antique Pullers for the daytime free show.

Efforts have been made to move the Tractor events into the County Fair to help the overall health of both events.

#### Rodeo:

Entrance Gate created a nice welcoming sense of arrival.

The new layout of the grounds was excellent and well received by all.

Show did a good job of watering down the entrance area and practice areas to hold down dust.

Consider improving hook-up service on S fence line.

Commercial and concessions set-up was accomplished rapidly and was a clean presentation.

Though the intent was good the use of orange plastic barrier was not necessary. Saw horse barriers look better and accomplish the same goal.

Double check electrical load balance along the Memorial fence line.

Increase infield electrical capacity to 600 amps.

Elevate arena light poles by 20 feet and continue to add lighting across the grounds.

Obtain a hydrant hose bib (similar to the ones used by the carnival) for better hose use.

Elevate/barrier an area with hose and water for horse washing.

Put benches along the chutes for use by contestants.

VIP and handicap parking worked very well.

Parking operation in general, was excellent; the best of any event.

Consider moving the tent a few feet west to better avoid utilities.

Consider "selling" deep discount tickets for Sunday only to sponsor's favorite charities.

#### County Fair:

The elimination of fencing worked very well; it was also efficient to allow the beer stands to sell wristbands at the counter.

Seek to sell, trade or barter for display space under the Grandstand, west of the carnival and east of poultry barn. Perhaps, invite the military to move displays in at no cost. Attempt to leave no empty space between the east end of the grandstand and the cattle barns. Attempt to fill all buildings

Consider active and/or participative displays such as chain saw carving, wood working, fish tank, kid's shows, animal petting, jugglers, etc. Such shows are inexpensive, easy to book and easily fill space as needed. They give a sense of activity and fun and help to keep families at the grounds longer. Put all benches and picnic tables in areas closer to the activities.

Renovation of the restrooms was excellent. They were clean and well lit. Families appreciated it.

Review ATM vendor and fees. Require a report from the Processor of the ATMs.

Use the Expo stage for pie eating and butter carving contests and other such competitions and free programs. Work out re-scheduling use of the building to make sure the expo stage is kept busy.

Open the Enrichment Center end of the Expo for passive display of projects and programs; open the gift shop to sell items to the public and hand out information to increase public awareness and participation.

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 new altruistic support, sponsorship and possible angel underwriting of specific events. Sponsor each day of the fair. Such additional support is essential to help the fair continue to be a "free fair".

Add lights to the east and west poles in the grandstand to keep from having to refocus lights. Consider raising the height of the north grandstand poles to reduce glare into the grandstand seating. Focus heavily on general lighting throughout the grounds. Light equate to safe in attendee's minds.

Have a heavier presence of electrician during set-up. Lock electric panels throughout the fair, reduce hose and cable crossings and cover all crossings with heavy rubber mats. Assure that the electrician contractor is bonded, certified and insured.