



CITY OF MERRILL
PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES • TUESDAY APRIL 28, 2020

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:15 PM

I. Call to Order

Alderman Hass called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Blake	Aldersperson - Third District	Present	
Steve Osness	Aldersperson - Fourth District	Present	
Steve Hass	Aldersperson - Second District	Present	

Also in attendance: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Finance Director Kathy Unertl (Remote), City Attorney Tom Hayden, Alderman Steve Sabatke, Alderman Mike Rick, Alderman Mark Weix, Information Technology Manager Dustin Brown, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Cheryl Plautz, Jill Bostrom, Brenda Grefe, Al Wix, Tasha Gleason (arr. 5:17) and City Clerk Bill Heideman.

II. Vouchers:

1. Vouchers

The vouchers were in the meeting packet.

City staff answered questions related to the vouchers.

Motion (Osness/Blake) to approve.

RESULT: APPROVED

III. Agenda items for consideration:

1. Consider potential extension of City property tax payment deadline in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information was in the meeting packet.

It was reported that, before the City could even consider an extension, the Lincoln County Board would have to adopt a resolution. Therefore, no action was taken at this time.

2. Update on current status of Small Business Emergency Support Program

Information was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson reported that, to date, 45 applications have been received seeking grants and 23 have been received seeking loans. To date, 41 grants have been approved. City Administrator Johnson provided details on the four applications that were not approved.

Tasha Gleason provided details on the current status of her business.

Alderman Osness raised the possibility of “tweaking” the program policy to make it easier for applicants to qualify for grants and/or loans.

Alderman Hass suggested that possible revisions could be considered at a future Committee of the Whole meeting.

Motion (Osness/Hass) to direct City Administrator Johnson, Community Development Program Coordinator Shari Wicke and City staff to prepare revisions to the program policy and submit these revisions to the May Common Council meeting.

RESULT:	REFERRED TO COUNCIL	Next: 5/13/2020 7:00 PM
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3. Review results of Carrlson-Dettmann study on Clerk/Treasurer staff wages.

Information was in the meeting packet.

Alderman Hass explained that this item was on the agenda because he was not sure the previous Personnel and Finance Committee was informed of the results/recommendations of the Carlson-Dettmann study on various positions in the Clerk/Treasurer office.

No action was necessary, requested or taken.

4. Consider request from Alderman Osness to implement a hiring freeze and a policy that all hires are subject to Personnel and Finance Committee approval (except for Police and Fire hires).

Alderman Osness had requested that this item be on the agenda. In light of potential fiscal ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, he is in favor of more Personnel and Finance Committee oversight of hiring.

Alderman Blake responded that the Personnel and Finance Committee is to be a legislative body and not an operational body.

It was mentioned that, if a hiring freeze is implemented, it would be necessary to exempt certain departments.

Motion (Osness/Hass) to implement a hiring freeze for all hires, and to review the freeze at the November, 2020 Personnel and Finance Committee meeting. The Police Department, Fire Department and the T. B. Scott Free Library would be exempt from the hiring freeze.

RESULT:	APPROVED & SENT TO COUNCIL	Next: 5/13/2020 7:00 PM
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5. Consider furloughing of Festival Grounds Manager position, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

City Administrator Johnson stated that this item should go the Festival Grounds Committee, not the Personnel and Finance Committee.

Alderman Blake said he does not want to see this position eliminated entirely. He said the Festival Grounds Manager seeks events well into the future, and it may be premature to even consider a furlough at this time.

The Festival Grounds Manager position is currently a contracted position, so he is not a City employee. The question arose at to whether it is legal to furlough a contracted position.

Motion (Osness/Blake) to direct City Attorney Hayden to research the legal ramifications of furloughing a contracted position. City Attorney Hayden is to report his findings at the May Common Council meeting.

RESULT:	REFERRED TO COUNCIL	Next: 5/13/2020 7:00 PM
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6. Discussion on summer help being hired on an as-needed basis

Alderman Hass stated that he included this on the agenda because the Parks and Recreation Department will be hiring summer help soon. It was noted that such hiring will be done only on an "as needed" basis.

No formal action was necessary, requested or taken.

7. Consider implementing policy that unused capital project funds be returned to the General Fund.

Alderman Osness suggested that, upon the completion of capital projects, any unused funds should be returned to the General Fund. Finance Director Unertl responded that borrowed funds cannot be returned to the General Fund.

To this, Alderman Hass suggested that these unused funds be returned to the Debt Service Fund.

Motion (Blake/Osness) to implement a policy that any unused funds from capital projects be returned to the Debt Service Fund.

RESULT:	APPROVED & SENT TO COUNCIL	Next: 5/13/2020 7:00 PM
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8. Consider amending policy on who can schedule a Committee of the Whole meeting.

City Attorney Hayden referred to the portion of the City Code of Ordinances that relates to “special meetings” of the Common Council, which would include Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings. Currently only the Mayor is authorized to schedule COW meetings.

It was suggested that the ordinance be amended to allow the Common Council President to schedule COW meetings. Another suggestion was to amend the ordinance to allow a certain number of alderpersons to schedule COW meetings.

City Attorney Hayden was authorized to draft an ordinance for consideration at the May meeting. No formal action was taken at this time.

RESULT:	REFERRED TO NEXT MEETING	Next: 5/26/2020 5:15 PM
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IV. Monthly Reports:

1. Municipal Court

The report was in the meeting packet.

2. Finance Director Unertl

The report was in the meeting packet.

3. City Attorney Hayden

The report was in the meeting packet.

4. City Clerk Heideman

The report was in the meeting packet.

5. City Administrator Johnson

The report was in the meeting packet.

City Administrator Johnson reported that recently he has noticed an increase in phone calls and e-mails from citizens who have questions or concerns.

6. Consider placing monthly reports on file

Motion (Osness/Blake) to place on file.

RESULT:	PLACED ON FILE
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V. Establish date, time and location of next regular meeting

Tuesday, May 26th, 2020 at 5:15 P.M. in the City Hall Common Council Chambers.

VI. Public Comment Period

None.

VII. Adjournment

Motion (Osness/Blake) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:00 P.M.