

SEPTEMBER '20 MEETING MINUTES

**Merrill Enrichment Center Committee**

Meeting was held on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 3:15pm  
Merrill Enrichment Center Conference Room – 303 N. Sales Street

*Present:* Laura Bertagnoli (Chair), Gene Bebel, Rose Akey, Sharon Harvey,  
Rev. Lucas Williams, Jennifer Clark (ADRC representative),  
*Absent:* Paul Russell (Aldersperson)

**1. Opening**

- a. Laura called the meeting to order.

**2. Consent Items**

- a. Motion by Akey second by Harvey to approve August minutes. Motion carried.
- b. Motion by Akey second by Harvey to approve Aug-Sept vouchers. Motion carried.

**3. Public Comment** – no public comment

**4. Budget**

- a. Kathy Unertl joined our meeting to discuss the expectation on the MEC to contribute to the general fund to offset operational cost. She explained the three departments in the City that are expected to contribute financially to the general fund are the MEC, Park & Rec and the Library. These contributions are primarily to help offset any increase in operations. Bebel asked the question on the financial responsibilities of the MEC relative to the Expo Center. Unertl explained all expo and festival grounds expenses are from Fund 24 paid for by property tax, room tax, and expo rental revenues. The MEC only pays for phone/911 services in this building. She further explained that the police department takes up 25% of the city's tax levy budget followed also by our fire department and then streets. Bebel requested a fiscal status report for the Merrill Festival Grounds from Kathy.
- b. Outlook for 2021 discussion also took place relative to the upcoming budget. Director questioned the requested number for 2021 based on our current state of operations. Director is compiling data from the past 3 years for Committee and Council review.

**5. Discussion**

- a. Sales and Use Tax was moved up on the agenda so Kathy could participate prior to leaving the meeting. Discussion on collecting use tax was brought up in an early meeting at city hall. MEC committee members were informed and provided documents to review. Bertagnoli brought up a few questions relative to the wording in the document. Much of the questions stemmed from the use and definition of the word 'recreational' vs. entertainment. Bebel also was concerned of having to raise fees. Mrachek reached out to the Middleton Senior Center Director to find out if she collects tax on her activity and program fees. She informed us that she does not because they are a tax exempt department of the City. Kathy suggested we check further into this. Mrachek will contact the WI DOR for further guidance. Bebel expressed concern of having to raise fees, especially at this time. He also suggested possible fundraising efforts if needed. Director does not want to raise fees and can look into grants if necessary.

**6. COVID-19 – Phase 2 – Update on Operations**

- a. Director provided the following information on attendance and outreach.
  - i. Aug 20 – Sept 17 attendance for exercise classes was 191 (many are repeat participants), 19 walkers, 66 additional participants for various programs. Total was 276.
- b. Needless to say, the MEC Thanksgiving meal will look different this year. There will not be a sit down meal at the church but rather offer both delivery and carry out. St. Stephens will be the church preparing the meal. Rev. Lucas is having a meeting with his council this week. Mrachek recommended using our building for the pick-up location for both volunteer drivers as well as the carry-outs. We have a more favorable location, free of steps and plenty of parking. Rev. Lucas agreed and will bring it back to the St. Stephens church volunteers and council. Mrachek invited volunteers to come to the Center to see our space. Bertagnoli added the expo has plenty of space for social distancing, we have a kitchen that could accommodate and if overflow we could cook at the church and bring it over. Harvey noted the need for strong communication/advertising so people would be aware of the change. We should have more information by mid-October.

**7. ADRC**

- a. Jennifer Clark informed us the ADRC is still closed for face-to-face meetings but they are running virtual meetings and classes. Living with Chronic Conditions is their first virtual class and it went well. They will continue to offer other classes. They have been able to reach more regionally with this method of instruction. Many do not care to drive or they feel safe at home rather than being in a group and worrying about social distancing, etc. the next workshop begins October 15<sup>th</sup> with a pre-session check in on October 8<sup>th</sup>. Call to register 1-888-486-9545.

**8. Discussion**

- a. Rev Lucas shared that the WIC (Women Infants Children) program has a new home at St. Stephens Church. He also shared the annual Oktoberfest will take place at the Sawmill on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> outside from 4-9. People can carry out to sit and eat.

**9. Adjournment**

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Bebel second by Rev. Lucas Williams.

The next meeting date is **October 15<sup>th</sup> at 3:15pm in the MEC Conference room.**

**Public invited to call in. Please check city website for call in number.**

*Vouchers will be available for review 10 minutes prior to meeting time.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*TMrachek*

Tammie Mrachek MEC Director