

August '21 MEETING MINUTES

Merrill Enrichment Center Committee

Meeting was held on August 19th, 2021 at 2:15pm

Merrill Enrichment Center Conference Room – 303 N. Sales Street

Present: Paul Russell (Aldersperson), Gene Bebel, Rose Akey, Sharon Harvey, Sharon Anderson

Absent: Laura Bertagnoli (Chair), Josh Jaeger, Jennifer Clark (ADRC representative)

1. Opening

- a. Russell called the meeting to order.

2. Consent Items

- a. Motion by Bebel second by Harvey to approve June minutes. Motion carried.
- b. Motion by Akey second by Bebel to approve June-July vouchers. Motion carried.

3. Public Comment

- a. Clyde Nelson and Brad Becker attended meeting to answer any questions relative to discussions about the fair.

4. Operations

- a. Traffic count during the fair relative to the MEC. Director shared that we had approximately 40 people pass through the Center, some stopping in the craft shop and picking up newsletters.
- b. Director discussed the tornado response during the fair as being a best/worst case scenario in the respect that no people were injured. We had overflow into the building from the 4H groups and food stands that were setting up for the fair. We used the two bathrooms as those were the designated areas at the time of the build. Nelson added that the fair was not started so many people sheltered in the closest outdoor restrooms or in place. If the tornado would have been on Friday night we would have had more of a problem. Clyde also mentioned that the PA system speakers run all the way down the midway. The Directors concern is that the MEC needs to have a stronger plan which includes identifying safe locations and signs drawing individuals to those locations to take cover during inclement weather as well as when the Expo is rented for other occasions. Director met with Fire Chief Klug to discuss this. He did state that this building, along with others in the city, were not built to be safe places to go to during inclement weather but we need to choose the best locations we have. The recommendations will be marking the bathrooms, maintenance closet and if needed, the hallway as safe locations. Russell suggested having signs outside that would direct people on the grounds into our bldg. Klug also mentioned that the city as a whole should all be on the same page for responding to these weather events. Russell agreed with the recommendations along with the fact that the city needs to have a larger discussion on evacuation of the Festival grounds and a city plan. Bebel mentioned how dangerous it is for patrons to sit in the grandstands without a roof. Discussion continued and Russell thought this subject best to bring to the Festival Grounds committee meeting.
- c. Director shared that our August promotions had zero response. This happens sometimes and we will simply try again once summer is over and people are back into their routines.
- d. Director discussed the upcoming 2022 Festival of Quilts sponsored by the MEC. Director is excited to announce that after years of trying to start self-directed volunteer teams, we have our first with this committee. There are 8 individuals on the team. Director and MEC staff is involved as needed.

5. ADRC

Jennifer was not available on the call but provided the following updates;

- a. ADRC-CW will be reopening Senior Dining Sites slowly: Gleason Lions Club site opened on August 16. Tomahawk site will reopen on September 1 and the Jenny Towers Merrill Site will reopen on September 16. Customers will need to: Wear a mask while at the senior dining location, except for when eating or drinking; physical distance 6' except with others from the same household.
- b. Please continue to help spread the word about the Senior Farmers Market Vouchers. They are still available in Lincoln County. This program provides \$25 vouchers to income-eligible seniors (age 60 and older) to purchase Wisconsin-grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs from approved markets. Vouchers will be available through September 30. Call ADRC for more information: 888-486-9545.
- c. September is Fall Prevention Awareness Month. ADRC has lots of opportunities coming up: Stepping On Virtual Program-- See attached flyer. October Virtual Presentation Series- Safe Today, Healthy Tomorrow: Practical Falls Prevention -- See attached flyer.
- d. ADRC will start offering one-time monthly events called "Topic Tuesdays". Visit ADRC events calendar for more information: www.adrc-cw.org. Current topics include: Dementia Basics and Brain Health Basic. In-person and virtual options will be available. More classes will be added soon.
- e. Powerful Tools for Caregivers program coming up. This is for family caregivers. Learn how to take care of yourself, while caring for someone else. See attached flyer for more information.

6. Discussion

- a. Director brought up the need for better Communication with Fair Board during the fair. The grey line that exists is always a challenge in that if we, the MEC staff, are in the building; naturally people think we are the contact for the expo events. We are always happy to help if available but the fair board/volunteers should be the main contact.
- b. Bathroom cleaning was discussed. We were aware that Greg Bissonnette was hired during the fair to keep the bathrooms clean. Clyde Nelson and Brad Becker shared that the two ladies that normally clean were not available. The MEC also understands the vast amount of traffic using our restrooms during the week and weekend. Suggestions discussed are possibly to have more than one person helping clean them during the fair. Director requested bathrooms be cleaned prior to Monday morning as we also need to utilize them once we come in to work on Monday morning.
 - i. The fact was brought up that the Fair, as many organizations, is in need of more volunteers. These obviously contributed to the restroom cleaning and set up and take down of the 4H exhibits. Brad mentioned the difficulty in getting the exhibits out of the expo the week following the fair. He further stated the Fair Board has the festival grounds including the expo building for the whole month of August. Director was not aware of the whole month rental but rather the week before through the Tuesday after at the latest. Director stated that communication and coordination are crucial to avoid controversy and have everything run smoothly for both the MEC and the fair.

ii. Director did not feel it beneficial to be open during the fair. We did have around 40 people walk through from the expo, with some stopping to pick up newsletters and stop in our craft shop. Director did mention that even one new person knowing what we do is great word-of-mouth advertising. Given that, the MEC is not able to run any activities to bring in revenue during this time. Director suggested we work from home on administrative work or take vacation time. Russell asked the committee if everyone was ok with the suggestion. No comments were made. Director stated to Russell that it seems he has an issue with us not being open. He agreed. Another suggestion was made for the MEC to be open the entire time during the fair. Director disagrees with this as we are limited to payroll hours to begin with and it would take away from our normal operations upon returning the week after. A decision was made to revisit this next May prior to the fair. Director feels this discussion needs to happen prior to that time and will add it to a future meeting agenda.

- c. "Make It A Merrill Day" is October 2nd. The MEC will host its first Fall Craft & Market Event. Barley Fest also takes place the same day at the MARC. We will market these events together along with other events happening around the city that day to draw people to Merrill.
- d. Status of Masks was discussed. At this time we still have signs saying that vaccinated individuals do not need to mask. Enforcement is based on trust. If necessary, Director would enforce masks while entering and exiting the building.
- e. Agenda item for next month include discussion on the MEC partnering with River Bend Trail to host a day on the trail for community members from Jenny Towers, Park Place, Stonebridge and community members who cannot easily get to the trail on their own.

7. Adjournment

- a. Motion to adjourn made by Bebel second by Harvey.

The next meeting date is **September 16th at 2:15pm in the MEC Conference room.**

Public invited to call in. Phone: 570-415-1107 PIN: 428 0782 670#

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

Respectfully submitted,

TMrachek

Tammie Mrachek

MEC Director