



CITY OF MERRILL
FESTIVAL GROUNDS COMMITTEE
AGENDA • THURSDAY AUGUST 6, 2020

Regular Meeting

Bierman Building

6:00 PM

- I. Call to Order
- II. Agenda items for consideration:
 - 1. 2020 Permanent Vendor stand fees
 - 2. Water lines to Permanent Vendor stands
 - 3. Update/progress on paving
 - 4. Update/progress on cattle barn
 - 5. Rodeo Update
 - 6. Fair Update
 - 7. Calendar of Events
- III. Monthly Reports:
 - 1. Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund
 - 2. Permanent Vendor Rep. Caylor
- IV. Public Comment Period
- V. Establish date, time and location of next meeting
- VI. Adjournment

UP COMING EVENTS AT THE FESTIVAL GROUNDS

2020

August	08-06-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	08-06-20	MASH Blood drive
	08-07/08-20	Relay For Life (grounds)** Cancelled
	08-12 to 8-16	Fair ** Cancelled
	08-18-20	MAPS Health Screening
	08-20 to 8-22	Christmas tree Growers Convention Cancelled
	08-25-20	Community Night Out Cancelled
	08-28-20	Riders Club (grounds)**
September	08-03-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	08-12-20	Wedding Cancelled
	08-18/19-20	Gun Show Cancelled
	08-26-20	Wedding – waiting to hear from bride
October	10-1-20	(Festival Grounds Committee Meeting) to be set by Committee
	10-17-20	Enrichment Center Craft Show – not definite yet
	10-24-20	Wedding – Bride is letting me know next week if she will cancel or reschedule
	10-31-20	Wrestling – Cancelled?

**** Yearly Repeat Events ****

Merrill Festival Grounds

August 6, 2020

Meetings and Discussions with:

Rod Akey to do a grid layout of the Expo Grounds.

Tom Hayden regarding City procedures.

Krista Mitchell regarding event potentials.

Jack Koshick regarding Wrestling dates and Covid impact.

Jack Koshick (x4) regarding alternatives for wrestling dates.

Maria Gund regarding wedding dates and Covid impact.

Association regarding possible Wedding Show.

Gun Show (x3) dates and alternatives regarding Covid impact.

Gun Show (x2) regarding dates.

Recycling Event schedule with Dave Johnson; meet Betina Peters; meet at Sell Building; Meet at Sell Building; open and close restrooms; close building; open building.

Paul Russell (x4) for possible opening of County Fair; County Fair Committee about Fair schedule and possible opening; Fair committee about schedule; John V. about County Fair; Dave Johnson about County Fair; Tom Hayden about County Fair.

Dan Barbacovi about Fair schedule (x5), alternative dates and WI Fairs.

Association (x2) about possible Wedding Exhibit Show.

Ag Association about possible exhibit show.

Local business about commercial rental.

Local business (x2) about sponsorship and angel investment for events.

Brian Block (x3) to discuss Rodeo concessions breakage and ticket issues; Rodeo staff for possible ticket sales alternatives and layout pricing.

Horse Show (x4) for set-up and event info.

Permanent Stands Meeting

July 23, 2020

On Thursday, July 23, 2020, the permanent stands met at the Eagle's Club in Merrill. Mike Caylor, chair of the group, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Attending:

Corey Dornbrack – Merrill VFW Post

Arnold Viljevac – Merrill VFW Post Commander

Jerry Leopold – Merrill Eagles Club

Bryan Plautz – Merrill Eagles Club

Steve Sabatke – Merrill Eagles Club

Darrell Barker – Knights of Columbus

Randy Wixon – Merrill Optimist Club

Valerie Caylor – St. Francis

Michael J. Caylor Jr – St. Francis

Dornbrack and Viljevac were welcomed as new members and Viljevac was congratulated on his recent appointment as head of the VFW.

Old Business:

Paving: Caylor reported in March he was not able to attend the city “festival grounds” meeting as he was leaving on vacation in Florida for a family wedding. He expressed disappointment that the meeting agenda was to “discuss” paving but instead the group voted on the paving projects for 2020. Caylor noted when the city committee met and last discussed paving in December of 2019, the group decided to move the paving discussion to spring in order for the committee to actually view the pavement down on the grounds, noting the purpose of holding the meetings on the grounds is just for such inspections. Instead, the committee took action on the paving at the March meeting and neither the agenda nor the minutes reflect the plans. Steve Sabatke informed the group that pavement removal is already taking place with city crews. He did give an overview of the paving and stated that the contractor will now pave right up to the front of the permanent stands and the gravel layer between pavement and the stands would be eliminated. Sabatke also credited Caylor with the suggestion of adding on the gravel portion behind the stands during the January discussion as that was part of the approved project. (The south end of the old racetrack)

Water Lines: The city contacted all the permanent stands via City Street and Weed Commissioner and Lion's Club member Ron Liberty to inform them of the need to replace the water lines behind six of the seven permanent stands. Numerous members expressed their frustration over the lack of communication from the city on the project. No one was sure if Liberty was communicating on behalf of the city or as a member of the Lions Club who was in the loop. While no one blames Liberty and we were grateful for the communication all felt it would have been best for the city to come to the stands directly and explain the process costs and plans. It was mentioned several times the groups expected a line-by-line break down from the city of the costs in order to explain it to their members. The Eagle's Club and VFW both noted that they had to run the expense of the hook up past their membership and the timeline conveyed by Liberty had actually passed before their monthly meetings. Both the Eagles and VFW had board or membership meetings planned the following week and expected approval but both were hoping for more information. Randy Wixon offered to seek clarification on several points and said he would communicate back to both groups and hoped to have the information in the coming days before their meetings. Caylor emailed Liberty during the meeting and explained the delay on the part of VFW and the Eagles; he did reply that it was still in the timeline and would communicate the delay and reason for it.

Steve Sabatke stated he was disappointed in the communication from the city as in 2019 he was told the water lines on the grounds were fine but now for some reason they were going to be replaced. Sabatke and others concurred better communication from the city would have helped make this decision easier for everyone but it was a 'you have to do it' moment because we all need water.

Bryan Plautz from the Eagle's Club commented that information from large scale or money needed projects needs to be relayed directly to the stakeholders by the city. He was very disappointed by the lack of communication from the city but said that had become the norm. Caylor informed the group that the festival grounds committee had been meeting on a regular bases prior to the Covid situation but agreed very little that was discussed at the meeting actually came to fruition as the city management team seemed to change the play after the huddle. An analogy given by Caylor was the groups all meet and decide to take a flight and agree on a time, the city group meets and agrees to everything, but when we show up at the airport we find the plane left the night before because of what the non-elected officials decided to do.

No Rent for 2021: Steve Sabatke briefed the group on a suggestion by Caylor that no permanent stand pay rent in 2021. Sabatke said he liked the idea and he said other alderman felt the same way. That topic then led back to a discussion via email with some and most of the permanent stands regarding a drive through fair food event. Caylor said he initially discussed the idea with the now former head of the Lions Club and now was getting very positive feedback from board members of the Optimist Club.

The thought was the groups would open their stands for several hours on one weekend to allow for drive through and to go orders of fair food. The event would allow the stands to raise some money in 2020, would allow us to clean stock and prepare our stands for Labor Day 2020.

Randy Wixon had previously reported to the chair and to his fellow Optimist Club members that he had a private conversation with City Administrator Dave Johnson and Johnson relayed to him that if the stands held such an event they would not get a rent reduction in 2021.

Steve Sabatke, also a city alderman expressed his disappointment in the city administrators comments and said he likely was not speaking for the council.

Everyone agreed with the city of Merrill strictly adhering to the guidelines set for by Shelley Hersil from the Lincoln County Health Department, no events could possibly be held on Labor Day, nor could we do any sort of fair food event before or after Labor Day to raise funds. The question was asked if the city would even allow a parade on Labor Day and everyone seemed to agree as the city is following the guidelines set forth by Hersil it is doubtful.

Caylor noted the stands saw a tremendous increase in sales when the Lincoln County Republican Party stopped holding their chicken BBQ on Labor Day. In the past, the Republicans provided 750 chicken dinners and their lack of participation created an overwhelming but fruitful burden on the other stands. Caylor noted the Republican group was recently selling their hardware for sale online for the BBQ so it is likely they are no longer planning to hold the event.

Next City Meeting:

Sabatke, speaking as an alderman and member of the city committee, said he had submitted numerous agenda items for clarification at the next festival grounds meeting. He expressed his concerns with dead trees on the north side, the status of the cattle barn remodel and the addition of electrical to the south side of the grounds where campers park. While discussing the cattle barn the group was informed of a push by a minority of people to remove the current cattle barn and replace it with something more modern.

Richard Bjorklund: Caylor brought up that the city council recently re-worked the contract of Richard Bjorklund in light of the Covid. We discussed his role on the grounds and the impact he has on the stands. It seemed to be everyone agreed Bjorklund is doing a great job as a consultant but he should be called the Bierman building coordinator as neither he or the city have brought any events to the grounds to directly benefit the stands. We did note two events were moved to the grounds (Barley Fest and Pork in the Park) but they are known as closed events. Bryan Plautz said he is frustrated by the closed events down there, although he feels they are able to work very well with the VFW as they trade off on certain events Bryan felt major events should not be a “pick and choose” with city officials on who can open up. This then led into a discussion regarding the lack of a roof on the grandstand and how much that could benefit the grounds and would likely lead to more events such as concerts. A question was asked, what happened to the digital billboard alongside of Hwy 51 that was promised by city leaders for so many meetings? No one knew the answer to that.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM

Next meeting at the call of the chair – spring? We hope!