



CITY OF MERRILL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES • TUESDAY JUNE 1, 2021

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:15 PM

I. Call to Order

Mayor Woellner called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Russell	Aldersperson - First District	Remote	
Steve Hass	Aldersperson - Second District	Present	
Rick Blake	Aldersperson - Third District	Present	
Steve Osness	Aldersperson - Fourth District	Present	
John M. Van Lieshout	Aldersperson - Fifth District	Present	
Mike Rick	Aldersperson - Sixth District	Present	
Mark Weix	Aldersperson - Seventh District	Present	
Steve Sabatke	Aldersperson - Eighth District	Present	
Derek Woellner	Mayor	Present	

Other meeting attendees (either in-person or remotely) included: Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Police Chief Corey Bennett, City Attorney Tom Hayden, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Facilities Maintenance Manager Nick Wszalek, Library Director Jessica Zellers and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Merrill Productions was present to videotape the meeting.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Agenda Items:

1. Consider applications received from local organizations for American Rescue Plan (ARP) grant funds, and establish amount to fund the program.

Three applications have been received. They are from the Haunted Sawmill, Merrill Community Theater and the Merrill Youth Softball Association.

It was noted that several decisions related to the program are still pending.

Alderman Osness spoke in favor of the Merrill Youth Softball Association request.

Finance Director Unertl noted that the City has approximately \$300,000 remaining from the funds received through the program. The three requests received total \$31,500.

The total amount to be designated for organizations holding local events/programs was discussed. Alderman Hass suggested establishing an amount, but no deadline to apply, and then discontinuing the program when the designated amount has been distributed. Mayor Woellner agreed with that proposal.

Motion (Woellner/Blake) to designate \$70,000 of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Federal Grant Program funds to fund the American Rescue Plan Act Funding grant program for organizations holding local events/programs. Motion carried.

Motion (Osness/Weix) to approve the request (\$15,000) from the Merrill Youth Softball Association for American Rescue Plan Act Funding grant funds. Motion carried.

It was decided that more information must be obtained before a decision can be made on the Merrill Community Theater request.

2. Discuss potential hazard pay for employees who worked through the pandemic.

Alderman Rick had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. He is asking that hazard pay be considered for City employees who worked at their normal worksite during the COVID-19 pandemic.

City Administrator Johnson responded that other municipalities have considered this type of pay. The main concerns seem to be determining which employees would be eligible and then determining the pay amounts for eligible employees.

No action was taken.

3. Discuss future street projects, including (but not limited to): Grand Avenue, East Tenth Street (Center Avenue to Lake Street), N. State Street (W. Tenth Street to Grand Avenue).

Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey provided costs on the future projects, including a breakdown of the water and sewer costs associated with the projects.

Public Works Director/City Engineer rated the projects as follows, in order of priority:

1. East Tenth Street (Center Avenue to Lake Street)
2. North State Street (West Tenth Street to Grand Avenue)
3. Grand Avenue

Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey then provided verbal information on several other prospective projects.

Alderman Sabatke suggested River Street as a prospective project. Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey replied that River Street is among the future projects being considered.

It was suggested that American Rescue Plan Act funds could, and should, be used for the water and sewer portions of future projects.

Finance Director Unertl suggested that, at the end of summer, all prospective future projects should be reviewed and evaluated.

At this time, Alderman Russell disconnected his phone from the meeting.

Motion (Hass/Blake) to refer the East Tenth Street (Center Avenue to Lake Street) project and the Grand Avenue project to the 2022 budget process. Carried.

Motion (Sabake/Hass) to refer the River Street project to the 2022 budget process. After discussion, it was decided that this motion to refer is not necessary. Consideration of all prospective future projects, including the River Street project, will be part of the 2022 budget process.

4. Discuss potential COVID-19 incentive programs

Mayor Woellner had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. He noted that area COVID-19 vaccination rates have been declining, and suggested that incentive(s) might be necessary to reverse the current trend. He suggested a lottery in which five vaccinated people who entered the lottery would each win \$10,000. To be eligible, people would have to be City residents and at least 18 years of age.

Alderman Sabatke suggested that Merrill Chamber Bucks could be used as an incentive.

Motion (Rick/Van Lieshout) to table. Motion to table carried 5-3 on roll call vote. Voting No - Alderman Hass, Alderman Blake and Mayor Woellner. Absent - Alderman Russell.

IV. Public Comment

Mayor Woellner expressed disappointment that the possibility of implementing COVID-19 vaccine incentive(s) was tabled without additional discussion/consideration.

V. Adjournment

Motion (Rick/Van Lieshout) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:14 P.M.