



CITY OF MERRILL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES • TUESDAY MAY 19, 2020

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

6:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Mayor Woellner called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Russell	Aldersperson - First District	Present	
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	Alderman - Eighth District	Present	
Derek Woellner	Mayor	Present	

Also in attendance: City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Utility Operations Manager Gabe Steinagel, Information Technology Manager Dustin Brown, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Police Chief Corey Bennett, Facilities Maintenance Manager Nick Wszalek (arr. 6:05), Brad Becker and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Several department heads attended the meeting remotely.

II. Silent Prayer

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Public Comment Period

Representing the Lincoln County Fair Board and the Festival Grounds Committee, Brad Becker stated his opinion that the efforts of Festival Grounds Manager Bjorklund have brought money into the City.

V. Agenda Items for Consideration:

1. Timeline and procedures for opening closed departments and City Hall

City Administrator Johnson reviewed the timetable for reopening various City departments.

City Hall and the Transit Department will be reopening on Tuesday, May 26th.

At this point, it is doubtful that the Aquatic Center will open in 2020, although no final decision has been made. The Parks and Recreation Department is holding discussions with neighboring municipalities on pool openings. To prevent overcrowding at open pools, the decision will likely be that either all pools in the area open this year or all pools remain closed for 2020.

The Merrill Enrichment Center will be reopening soon, although the reopening will be “slower” because many of their clients are considered vulnerable to COVID-19.

The T.B. Scott Library continues to work on reopening. Their reopening will be more “complicated” due to the number of children who normally visit the library.

Municipal Court will be reopening soon.

After City Hall reopens, the wearing of masks at City Hall will be encouraged but not required.

Access to playground equipment was discussed. At this time, the use of playground equipment is prohibited.

2. Review COVID-19 fiscal impact and consider any budget saving ideas

An article from the Wisconsin Policy Forum was in the meeting packet. Mayor Woellner reviewed the highlights of the article.

Finance Director Unertl then addressed the impact that COVID-19 has had on the Room Tax budget.

The fiscal impact of COVID-19 will be a continuing concern.

No action was taken.

3. Update on current financial status of Transit Department, in light of it being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information was in the meeting packet.

Finance Director Unertl reported that having the Transit Department closed has resulted in savings and is therefore fiscally positive for the City.

No action was taken.

4. Consider furlough for the Festival Grounds Manager position. At a meeting on May 13th, 2020, the Common Council referred this to the Committee of the Whole.

Alderman Hass asked whether the Festival Ground Manager contract could be amended. City Attorney Hayden suggested that the first step might be to sit down with the Festival Grounds Manager and discuss the current contract.

Alderman Russell stated his opinion that we need to evaluate all positions. He also stated that July 1st is a realistic deadline to make a decision on having or cancelling the 2020 Lincoln County Fair.

At some future meeting, the Personnel and Finance Committee will continue discussion on the Festival Grounds Manager contract.

No action was taken at this time.

5. Consider ordinance amending Chapter 18, Article II, Section 18-21, related to policy to limit tax rate increase in annual City budgets. At a meeting on January 14th, 2020, the Common Council referred this ordinance to the Committee of the Whole.

The ordinance, which was originally introduced in January, was in the meeting packet. The intent of the ordinance is to limit the annual tax levy increase to less than the Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment for that levy year.

Alderman Blake stated that he is not in favor of including “hard and fast” annual tax adjustments in ordinances.

Mayor Woellner will have the ordinance redrafted for consideration at a future meeting. No action was taken at this time.

6. Ordinance on scope of authority to call special meetings

Chapter 2, Article IV, Section 2-85 stipulates that only the mayor can schedule special meetings, which would include Committee of the Whole meetings.

The meeting packet contained two prospective ordinance amendments. The first option would allow any two Common Council members to schedule special meetings. The second option would also allow two Common Council members to schedule special meetings, but would require that one of the two be the Common Council President.

Motion (Osness/Van Lieshout) to refer the second ordinance option to the Common Council for consideration.

RESULT:	REFERRED TO COUNCIL	Next: 6/9/2020 6:00 PM
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7. Discussion on Common Council orientation

Alderman Russell raised the question of which day(s) and date(s) would work best for a Committee of the Whole meeting to include Common Council orientation. There appeared to be a preference to schedule the meeting on a Friday, and to provide adequate notice to the alderpersons (a couple of weeks) prior to the meeting. Times suggested included 8:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Robert’s Rules of Order and a Budget Overview were among the several suggestions to include on the orientation meeting agenda.

The question of Department Head attendance at the meeting was asked. City Administrator Johnson suggested that it was important for all Department Heads to be invited and to attend.

Alderman Russell announced that he would be sending an e-mail to gather more information from the alderman before the meeting is scheduled.

No action was taken at this time.

VI. Adjournment

Motion (Osness/Rick) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 7:35 P.M.