



CITY OF MERRILL
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
AGENDA • THURSDAY DECEMBER 16, 2021

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:15 PM

To attend remotely, call 920-485-1338 and PIN 578 819 879 #.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
 1. Minutes of November 18, 2021 meeting
- III. Agenda Items:
 1. Discuss talking points for public information
 2. Consider hiring/contracting procedure for Communications Specialist
- IV. Public Comment Period
- V. Establish date, time & location of next meeting
- VI. Adjournment



CITY OF MERRILL
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
MINUTES • THURSDAY NOVEMBER 18, 2021

Regular Meeting**City Hall Council Chambers****5:15 PM****I. Call to Order**

Alderman Blake called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Blake	Chair	Present	
John M. Van Lieshout	Aldersperson - Fifth District	Absent	
Mark Weix	Aldersperson - Seventh District	Present	
Dan Wendorf	Park and Recreation Director	Excused	
Tammie Mrachek	Community Enrichment Center Director	Excused	
Jessica Zellers	Library Director	Present	

Other attendees (either in-person or remotely) included: City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Scott Steele, Renea Frederick, John Greenwood, Mike Ravn and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Merrill Productions were present to videotape the meeting.

II. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):**1. Minutes of October 6, 2021 and October 21, 2021 meetings**

The minutes for the two meetings were in the meeting packet.

Motion (Weix/Blake) to approve the minutes of the October 6th, 2021 meeting. Carried.

Motion (Weix/Blake) to approve the minutes of the October 21st, 2021 meeting. Carried.

III. Agenda Items**1. Discuss Marketing, Branding & Communications Budget**

Information was in the meeting packet.

Scott Steele led discussion on the budget. On November 9th, the Common Council approved the 2022 City Budget, which included \$110,000 for Marketing.

The next step on the process is to hire a Communications Director, which will be a contracted position. By consensus, Scott Steele was authorized to begin this process.

Work on the Branding phase of the initiative is pending.

2. Discuss Timeline

The timeline was in the meeting packet.

Information on the timeline was reviewed, especially the items coming up in early 2022.

Renea Frederick raised the issue of the objective on the initiative. Discussion was held on this.

Mike Ravn stated that he was pleased that the Common Council opted to provide \$110,000 for the Marketing Initiative in the 2022 City Budget.

Alderman Blake reported that he will schedule a time to be on the radio, to publicize the Marketing Initiative, and he asked Scott Steele to join him. This will likely take place in early December.

Scott Steele suggested that the "Talking Points" be revisited at the next meeting.

IV. Public Comment Period

None.

V. Establish date, time & location of next meeting

Thursday, December 16th, 2021 at 5:15 P.M. in the City Hall Common Council Chambers.

VI. Adjournment

Motion (Weix/Blake) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 5:41 P.M.

Heideman, Bill

From: Blake, Rick
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2021 3:00 PM
To: Heideman, Bill
Subject: Fwd: Marketing agenda
Attachments: Merrill_Talking_Points__MarketBrand_Initiative_v4.docx

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Blake, Rick" <Rick.Blake@ci.merrill.wi.us>
Date: December 14, 2021 at 2:33:17 PM CST
To: Bill Heideman <NoReply@iqm2.com>
Subject: Marketing agenda

Bill,
 Here's the agenda for Thursday's Marketing meeting:

- I. To attend remotely, call.
- II. Call to Order
- III. Agenda Items:
 1. Discuss talking points for public information (see attached)
 2. Discuss hiring/contracting procedure for Communications Specialist, Options include: 1) hire a full or part-time employee; 2) advertise for a contracted part-time individual with specific duties and responsibilities; 3) put out an RFP and ask what a contractor would propose to meet our needs and what they would charge.
- IV. Public Comment Period
- V. Establish date, time & location of next meeting

Thanks, Rick

Attachment: Agenda Items (8513 : Discuss talking points for public information)

Talking Points: Merrill Community Marketing and Branding Effort

Main Point #1: We're investing in building a positive future for Merrill.

- Merrill city officials have approved a 2022 budget and are moving forward with a branding and marketing effort that will contribute to building a positive future for Merrill residents and businesses.
- This follows a three-year, community-involved research initiative focused on discovering and defining the assets and qualities that make the Merrill community unique in the marketplace.
- The research initiative was a community process that included a cross section of Merrill residents, business and community leaders, city officials and staff, and community partners – community insights were critical in contributing to this effort.
- The research provided deep insights into the opportunities, challenges, strengths and weaknesses of Merrill.
- The research informed newly updated and approved mission, vision and values statements that provide a contemporary vision for our future, grounded in our heritage and culture. They can be found on ci.merrill.wi.us.

Main Point #2: We're focusing a branding and marketing effort on attracting and retaining talent.

- For optimal resource and budget utilization, we are focusing our efforts on one primary goal – attracting and retaining talent in the area.
- Other options were considered, such as positioning Merrill as a tourist destination and attracting new businesses.
- But, Merrill businesses, like so many businesses across the country, have a deep need for workers to fill a multitude of open positions – the overwhelming need is for employees.
- A newly formed Marketing Committee will lead the development and implementation of a marketing and branding plan that will be used in economic development efforts to attract new and former residents and retain existing residents.
- The committee is made up of Alderpersons John Van Lieshout, Mark Weix and Rick Blake; City of Merrill staff Dave Johnson, City Administrator; Dan Wendorf, Parks and Recreation Director/City Forester; Jessica Zellers, Library Director; and Tammie Mrachek, Community Enrichment Center Director. Joining them are local business volunteers Scott Steele, vice president, chief marketing officer, Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I.; Melissa Wrycha, chief retail officer, Park City Credit Union; Bianca Boettcher, marketing manager, Thorogood; Renea Frederick, secretary/treasurer, FreMarq Innovations; Clyde Nelson, Executive Director, Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce; and citizens Mike Ravn, retired president and CEO, Church Mutual; John Greenwood, Merrill Aware and Active Citizens Group advisor/secretary; and Gene Bebel, engaged citizen.

Main Point #3: We believe the Merrill community is truly unique and special.

- The branding and marketing effort will help us share our story in a powerful and unique way that will appeal to people who want to be part of our exciting future.
- Merrill truly offers more to life – a unique mixture of small-town charm, career opportunities, great schools and fantastic four-season activities that we strongly feel will be attractive to workers.
- Our residents are the backbone of Merrill. We want to encourage those who have left to come home, those who are here to stay and those who don't know about us to make Merrill their home.

Main Point #4: This is a community effort – everyone's voice and participation are welcome and important.

- We want our residents and businesses to be part of this process and share their thoughts and vision for Merrill. Discussions will be open to the public.
- Stay engaged with us online. Join us at our monthly meetings. Just as our community members helped with research, we hope they also join us in our effort to implement the plan and share our message about how great it is to live, work and call Merrill home.
- The effort will be implemented by city staff and rolled out during a larger campaign in 2022.
- Future meetings and updates will be posted on the city website as well as the Merrill-Lincoln County Community Group on Facebook.