



CITY OF MERRILL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MINUTES • TUESDAY APRIL 13, 2021

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:00 PM

I. Call to order

Mayor Woellner called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Russell	Aldersperson - First District	Remote	
Steve Hass	Aldersperson - Second District	Remote	
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: City Administrator Dave Johnson, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Parks & Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Cindi Christiansen, LaDonna Fermanich, Christine Vorpapel, Lori Anderson-Malm and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Merrill Productions was present to videotape the meeting.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

Lori Anderson-Malm made comments regarding the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Federal Grant program. She has done research and suggested that the money should be given to businesses that have been and continue to be adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lincoln County Fair Administrator Cindi Christiansen spoke on the importance of funding for the Lincoln County Fair. She added that the fair benefits the civic organizations that operate stands at the fair, as well as the entire area business community.

LaDonna Fermanich addressed several topics, and also questioned how the City administration can justify recommending that certain entities receive funds through the ARP program.

IV. Agenda Items for consideration:

1. Update on Public Fire Protection (PFP) transfer from property tax to water Bills, as well as preliminary Water Rate Study

Information was in the meeting packet.

Finance Director Unertl reported that this was on the agenda to bring everyone “up to speed” on these utility-related issues.

Discussion was held on the Water Rate Study and potential water rate increases. Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey noted that there were no increases in 2018, 2019 or 2020. He stated that smaller annual increases seem to be accepted better by customers, rather than waiting a number of years and then implementing a larger increase.

This was on the agenda “for information only” at this time. No action was necessary, requested or taken. Rate adjustments will be considered at future meeting(s).

2. American Rescue Plan (ARP) preliminary Finance Director Recommendations

Information was in the meeting packet.

Finance Director Unertl reported on the American Rescue Plan Federal Grant program. The City will be receiving a total of \$890,000 (\$445,000 in 2021 and \$445,000 in 2022) as a result of this act. Lincoln County will be receiving approximately \$5,000,000.

Finance Director Unertl provided additional verbal details on her recommendations for allocating these funds.

Alderman Sabatke suggested that this money should be used to help people, rather than “given back” to the City.

Alderman Russell urged sponsorship of “big” events. In his opinion, giving small amounts to many entities would not have a noticeable positive financial impact. He suggested that a review of recent funding by the City would help in making future funding decisions.

It is possible that, sometime before the next regular Common Council meeting (May 11th), there will be either a Committee of the Whole meeting or a special Common Council meeting to consider funding requests, options and recommendations. No action was taken at this time.

3. Strand Associates proposal for East Side Water Storage Tank

Public Works Director/City Engineer explained that placing this item on the agenda was not an attempt to circumvent the Common Council or any other City committees.

Time constraints did not allow for any further discussion on this agenda item. It will be discussed at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

V. Adjournment

Motion (Osness/Van Lieshout) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:00 P.M.