CITY OF MERRILL

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

AGENDA ● TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2021

Regular Meeting | **City Hall Council Chambers** | **5:00 PM**

I. To attend remotely, call 321-405-2639 and PIN 507 853 868 #.

II. Call to Order

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Agenda Items:

1. Continue review/discussion of Strategic Plan issues/goals
2. Discuss possible administrative changes
3. Discuss creation of new Standing Committee: Marketing & Communications
4. Discuss amending composition of standing committees from three alderpersons to four

V. Public Comment

VI. Adjournment

Strategic Plan

2020-2024

Merrill, WI

Attachment: Strategic Plan 2020-2024 (5687 : Continue reivew and discussion of Strategic Plan

Primary Core Values

- The City of Merrill government stakeholders identified the following core values that will be the guiding principles and foundation for the City:

- inclusive	- responsive
-progressive	- realistic
- optimistic	- approachable
- trustworthy	- eco-friendly
- respectful	- transparent
- collaborative	- adaptable
- efficient	- fairness

Using the primary core values, the group developed the following mission statement:

Mission Statement: Provide high quality services in an innovative consistent and efficient manner while continuing to promote growth.

Using the primary core values, the group developed the following vision statement:

Vision Statement: Envision superior services while being open, responsible and transparent to the public.

Using the primary core values, the group developed the following community vision statement:

Community Vision Statement: Embrace our diverse heritage while working toward a brighter future.

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- Strengths
    1. Merrill provides a safe environment for its citizens.
    2. Merrill is a supportive, philanthropic community i.e. Bierman Foundation, MAPS scholarships.
    3. Merrill has a quality education system with interaction with MAPS, NTC and parochial schools.
    4. Recreational spaces i.e. MARC, Council Grounds, extensive municipal park system.
    5. Geographic location along the Wisconsin River and Prairie River.
    6. Economic development districts for tax base increase.
    7. Intersectional access to Hwy 39-51 and Hwy 64.
    8. High quality city services provided by committed employees and experienced department heads i.e. fire/ambulance, police, street/sanitation and the Merrill-Go-Round.
    9. Recent growth momentum.
    10. Establishment of Merrill Enrichment Center on the Festival Grounds.

- Opportunities
    1. Desire to build out a marketing/identity platform for the City.
    2. Develop industrial land availability east and north of Merrill near the Hwy 39/51 bypass - annexation.
    3. Enhance Merrill's recreational park options i.e. build an indoor multi-sport complex, sponsor more state-wide sport tournaments, and develop a robust disc golf venue.
    4. Continued expansion of the River Bend Trail System – both north and south.

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5. Take advantage and promote MAPS recognized training and internship programs.
6. Utilize TIDs as a tool to compete and grow businesses in Merrill.
7. Rehabilitate and repurpose older buildings, residential and commercial.
8. Assist in the development of Merrill's riverfronts for both business and housing.
9. Support Good Samaritan Health Center and other medical facilities for better health care.
10. More promotion of the Central WI region i.e. consideration of a Central WI Inter-city transit program.
11. Develop a view that local government is here to promote business – both new and existing.
12. Sponsorship of more "community events" to attract non-residents.

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Strategic Issue Prioritization

City officials and community members were asked to identify issues that are the most important for city government to address in the coming years.

After discussion and a voting process, officials and members chose the following strategic issues:

- How can Merrill city government help grow the city's tax base?
- How can Merrill attract more people (young and old) to live, work and play in our city?
- How can Merrill create an acceptable balance of taxes and municipal services?
- How does Merrill increase citizen civic engagement in government issues?

Attachment: Strategic Plan 2020-2024 (5687 : Continue reivew and discussion of Strategic Plan

CITY OF MERRILL
ACTION PLAN

Strategic Issue #1: How can Merrill increase the tax base?

Tasks/Action Steps:	Who	Target Completion Date	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
What steps are relevant to achieving the Strategic Issue and who will be Involved in each step? List steps in order to be implemented.	Person(s) responsible for implementing the step?	When is this step to be completed?	What resources are needed to complete this step?	How will we know if the step has 1) been completed, 2) worked?
1. Implement a balanced approach using new residential and commercial development along with annexation to promote growth throughout the city.	City Staff RDA City Council	Ongoing, projects will be reported on in the evaluation method.	Marketing, Time and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress relating to this action step and present at a council meeting.
2. The city shall use all tools available to help potential and current businesses find options to build new or expanded existing businesses.	City Staff RDA City Council	Ongoing, projects will be reported on in the evaluation method.	Marketing, Time and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress relating to this action step and present at a council meeting.

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3. Promote the city and city government by the latter telling stories about existing services, the local educational system, and quality of life amenities (frequently update the city website; partner with the chamber when possible; partner with community entities when possible; use various media to tell the story)	Designated City Staff	End of 2020	Marketing, time and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented a council meeting.
4. Work with the Redevelopment Authority, LCEDA, and other entities to explore development of vacant, underdeveloped, or undeveloped parcels within city limits.	RDA	Ongoing	Marketing, time and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented a council meeting.
5. Work with/make it easier for existing businesses and corporations corporations to expand their operations (if city government regulations prevent them from doing something, city government must help them find another way to reach their goals that still follows regulations).	City Staff Common Council Existing business developers	End of 2020	Staff time	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented a council meeting.
6. Continually assess those economic development projects that have the greatest potential to grow the tax base – e.g. return on investment (TIF will continue to be an important tool).	RDA, LCEDC	Ongoing	Time and funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented a council meeting.
7. Apply for grants, etc. to help supplement economic development projects, whether in annexed areas or not.	City Staff, RDA Common Council	Ongoing	Marketing time and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented a council meeting.

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Strategic Issue #2: How can Merrill attract more people (young and old) to live, work and play in our city?

	Action Steps	Who	Target Completion Date	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
Housing	Implement a balanced approach to provide all levels of housing: Affordable, Mid Range, High End	RDA, LCED, WHEDA, Real Estate Developers, City Administrator, City Finance Director, City Council Members	Yearly Evaluation	Establish a committee to develop a plan for TID completion projects	Committee will be established in year 4 or 5 of plan due to end date of TID
	Establish programs that could utilize Affordable Revolving Loan Funds (RLF) such as Down payment Assistance, Homeowner Rehab Loans, Rental Rehab Loans, and Homebuyers Education. (target blighted areas)	Community Development Department	Yearly Evaluation	Apply for Block Grants and other type of alternative funding options for residents and developers	Will show evidence of progress towards knowledge of application process and applicable uses of grants available

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Jobs	Promote job creation and diversity	City IT/City Clerk for webpage; Local Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, RDA, LCED, City Administrator, City Finance Director, City Council Members	Yearly Evaluation	Partner with the Chamber to access the Central Wisconsin Job Recruitment website and partner with the Chamber to cross promote website that can be utilized as a recruitment tool for new businesses and thus residents to the area.	Document growth of jobs on a yearly basis and document yearly which entities are utilizing the site and set goals to increase partners.
	Explore ways to support and provide services needed for jobs: Adequate Childcare & Healthcare	City; Local Businesses; Chamber of Commerce; RDA; Co-op of business resources.	Immediate need	Need to increase childcare resources, perhaps with a business co-op	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented at a Council meeting.

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	Provide training needed to keep students and others here for good paying jobs; recruit for training of jobs.	NTC, Youth Apprenticeship Program (Best in State), Fab Lab, Business Lab, employers with on-site training programs; scholarships for students and employees.	Yearly review	Local businesses, NTC, MAPS,	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented at a Council meeting.
Quality of Life/Amenities	Support existing non-profits and organizations that provide services	City departments-Park & Recreation, Library, Enrichment Center, Airport, Transit, Local non-profits, Community organizations; Chamber of Commerce	Yearly review	Time	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented at a Council meeting.
	Continue to work with partners to promote the restaurants/entertainment options	LCED, City, RDA, Chamber of Commerce, existing businesses	Yearly review	Time, Marketing and Funding	A yearly report will be created to detail the progress and presented at a Council meeting.
	Pursue and continue to sustainable community initiatives				

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Marketing	Consider hiring a Marketing resource to make Merrill a destination of choice for living, working and playing	All City departments, other city partners- Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Yearly Evaluation must include a list of partnerships made during that time period	Create a Marketing plan for the city	Evaluate yearly whether targeted steps towards a more cohesive marketing plan have made an impact and if so consider hiring a full time position.
	Take a note from Tourism and develop a promotion pipeline that promotes in specific area.	Tap into already on-going platforms with Wausau, Centergy, and WEDC.	End of 2020	Implement billboards and other highly visible means of promoting Merrill both in the city and outside city limits	Report out on progress to the Common Council.
	Apply for Rebranding grant and implementation plan.	Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, City, LCED.	Yearly Evaluation must include a list of partnerships made during that time period	Work with Chamber of Commerce towards developing a logo for the city Explore partnering with area entities to explore hiring a grant writer to obtain funding for initiatives	Report out on progress to the Common Council.

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CITY OF MERRILL
ACTION PLAN

Strategic Issue #3: How does Merrill create an acceptable balance of taxes and "municipal services"?

Tasks/Action Steps:	Who	Target Completion Date	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
What steps are relevant to achieving the Strategic Issue and who will be Involved In each step? List steps In order to be Implemented.	Person(s) responsible for Implementing the step?	When Is this step to be completed?	What resources are needed to complete this step?	How will we know If the step has 1) been completed, 2) worked?
Establish a metric or range for yearly tax increases by considering the use of the consumer price index.	Dept. Heads Council	Annually	Cooperation with Dept. Heads & Council	Follow CPI and final Budget Approval Dept.
Do a regular prioritization review of a comprehensive list of all city capital improvement projects.	Dept. Heads Finance Dir. Council	Annually, Affects Borrowing	Review and Prioritize Plan	Capital Plan and Budget Approval
Examine the merits of revenue funding of operations in a "user utility" Structure such ads a wheel tax, bottle tax, etc. or creating a storm water or garbage/recycling utility.	COW meeting to establish so all are on board.	Asap, need to be established by July.	League of Municipalities. Other Municipal	Improved revenue sources, equity, improved services.

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Strategic Issue #4: How does Merrill increase citizen civic engagement in government issues:

Key Task	Tasks/Action Steps	Who	Target Completion Date	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
City government improved Communication to Citizens *(marketing)	Form Task Force to see what is needed or desired	Member Contributors, Specific ACC Members Interested in Civics 101	Jan – March, 2020	Meeting time, place, facilitator, agenda	Desired directives towards next steps
	Report findings to Mayor/Council for next direction & input	Task Force, Mayor, Council, Dept. Heads & IT	March – June 2020	Meeting time, place, agenda	Obtain further direction and input along with potential constraints or obstacles for final output to citizens
	Finalize Plan(s) of improved communications	Task Force, Mayor, City Council	June – Oct. 2020	Meeting time, place, agenda, set timetable for implementation	Approval to proceed with implementation (either full or phased depending on desired plan)
	Implementation	Applicable City Staff	Oct. 2020 - ???	Staff, collaboration, applicable mediums (websites, publications, etc.)	Completion of respective plan phase(s)
General Education for Public Involvement**	Similar to above, also builds on achievement of above.	Member Contributors, Specific ACC Members, Civic Service Host Groups such as MAPS, service clubs	May initially be done in conjunction with above with similar or alternate timeline for implementation developed	Meeting time, place, facilitator, agenda, notification of events, draw for events	Number of events held/attended, increased awareness of government entities
Civics 101 Concept	Hold open forums, educational Q&A sessions, etc.	Department Heads, Police, Fire, Street Dept., etc., MAPS, Civic Groups, keep library involved	On-going based on initial timeline or event schedule established	Meeting time, place, facilitator, agenda, notification of events, draw for events	Number of events held/attended, increased awareness of government entities
Civil Discussions & Discourse***	Lead by example	All participants in any government related forum	Immediately – ongoing	Strength of Character, Voice of Reason, Power of Persuasion	Improved interaction between all impacted benefactors
Collaborative – Deliberative Processes	Incorporate into general education. Offer as part of HS curriculum/class	MAPS, Mayor, Specific Interested ACC Members	Ongoing	Parties of Authority, School Board, Mayor, Superintendent, Teacher	School has been approached to look for way to incorporate civil discourse and discussion into common coursework

* Encompasses all original tasks/action steps listed

** Encompasses #1, 2, 3, & 7 of the original tasks/action steps listed

*** Encompasses #4, 5, 6 &7 of the original tasks/action steps listed

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Success on Merrill's Strategic Plan Implementation

Success in achieving Merrill's Strategic Goals are dependent on:

- All involved in our community must be willing to be cooperative, communicative and collaborative.

- The plan and its goals must be constantly reviewed by the community and the Common Council.

- City government must take a strong leadership role in defining roles and responsibilities with specific tasks.
    1) Create an ad hoc Strategic Plan Committee consisting of City officials and citizen members to provide oversight and monitoring of the progress of the strategic plan.

- Throughout the year, progress on the goals must be reported out and there should be yearly summaries provided to the community and Common Council.
    1) A specific point person, ie committee chairperson, must be given a specific timeline to report to the Common Council at least on a quarterly basis.
    2) The report can be put on the Council agenda on a rotational basis with all assigned goals.

- Each goal should have an assigned administrative or Common Council member along with a community member to assist in providing input and collaboration with Merrill citizens at large to maintain a regular flow of information to the community and Common Council.

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Mayor's Proposed Administrative Changes

Identified Issues:

1. The number of candidates we have run for mayor is often underwhelming, likely due to the large commitment and small salary. As it currently stands, the position has and will likely continue to be sought only by retired, independently wealthy, or very young candidates with the time to spend and/or budget to get by. Someone raising a family and working a full-time job is not likely to run.

2. The Administrator position is not directly accountable to any one elected official. The public perception is that this insulates the position from public accountability, since they can't vote the person in the position in or out, and because their representatives for the city, the mayor and their district alderperson, cannot alone hold the position responsible for any misdoings.

Proposed Solutions:

1. Make the mayor a full-time position, tying the salary directly to the Median Income of the city (currently about $49,249). This should make the position more attractive and may increase our candidate pool.

2. The administrator's current contract should be renegotiated, adding in that the mayor can unilaterally terminate the administrator. The council would still of course approve any new administrator, and a unilateral termination would still include six months of compensation. This makes the administrator directly accountable to the mayor, the chief executive officer of the city, which gives the public a more direct route to holding the position to account.

Problems with the Solutions:

1. The full-time mayor position would need to be funded, which impacts the rest of the budget.

2. A contract that contains a clause stating the mayor can unilaterally terminate the administrator's employment may limit the number of applicants that apply for the position.

The bottom line:
The public wants to be able to choose who is in charge. The proposed solutions will give them more options to choose from when electing a mayor, and will give that mayor more control over the top unelected position.

Attachment: Mayors Proposed Administrative Changes (5688 : Discuss possible administrative changes)

Sec. 2-81 Standing committees; action on committee reports
(5) (4 pending BPW and w&s combination)
a. Consists of 3 (or 4) alderpersons
b. Duties. The marketing and communications committee shall:
1. Establish and maintain brand style standards for the city, including but not limited to official logos, mottos, color pallets, and typefaces.
2. Create marketing campaigns and subsequent budget requests to promote the city outside of the area.
3. Create and manage communication channels with the area community to keep the public up to date on city government actions and recreational events.
4. Prescribe policy and manage content of the city website and social media accounts.

Attachment: Marketing and Comm Ordinance (5689 : Diiscuss creation of new Standing Committee: Marketing & Communications)