



**CITY OF MERRILL**  
**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES • TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

**Special Meeting**

**City Hall Council Chambers**

**5:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order**

Alderman Russell called the meeting to order at 5:01 P.M.

| Attendee Name | Title                           | Status  | Arrived |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Rick Blake    | Aldersperson - Third District   | Remote  |         |
| Paul Russell  | Aldersperson - First District   | Remote  |         |
| Mark Weix     | Aldersperson - Seventh District | Present |         |

Other attendees (either in-person or remote) included: Mayor Derek Woellner, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Police Chief Corey Bennett, Deputy Health Officer Norbert Ashbeck, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Information Technology Manager Dustin Brown, Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Alderman Steve Sabatke, Alderman Steve Hass, Alderman Mike Rick and City Clerk Bill Heideman.

**II. Agenda Items:**

**1. Consider recommendation(s) to Common Council on Safe Routes to School Plan**

A draft of the plan was in the meeting packet.

Police Chief Bennett reported that this issue is also on the agenda of the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wendorf has also been working on this. Historically, a “general” type of resolution on the plan has been approved by the Common Council.

Alderman Hass stated that adopting a resolution on the plan does not “lock” the City into any type of commitment.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey stated his opinion that the plan is to be used as a guideline when planning projects and developing budgets. He added that approving the plan does provide an avenue for obtaining funding.

Deputy Health Officer Ashbeck stated that, to his knowledge, Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) does not have any major objections to the draft plan.

Alderman Russell stated that Department Heads and the Common Council should be involved in considering the plan.

Deputy Health Officer Ashbeck suggested that Dale Bergman be contacted and asked to attend a future meeting to discuss this subject. Mr. Bergman is the MAPS Director of Buildings and Grounds. Deputy Health Officer Ashbeck then stated that he would contact Mr. Bergman and invite him to a future meeting.

Fire Chief Klug inquired as to whether parochial schools were included in the plan.

Motion (Blake/Weix) to approve the Safe Routes to School plan, as presented, and refer this recommendation to the Common Council. This recommendation to approve would be considered by the Common Council in the form of a resolution.

|                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>RESULT:</b> | <b>APPROVED</b> |
|----------------|-----------------|

**2. Consider recommendation(s) to Common Council on opening of City facilities**

Mayor Woellner expressed surprise that this item was placed on the agenda. He reviewed his current plan on potential reopening of facilities. He predicts that Lincoln County is close to being classified in the HIGH COVID-19 level rather than VERY HIGH.

Alderman Sabatke shared his opinion that the closing of facilities is not helping to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. He added that the continued closure of the Enrichment Center is costing the City money.

Note: At this point, Alderman Russell asked Alderman Hass to temporarily run the meeting. Later in the meeting, Alderman Russell reassumed chairmanship.

Mayor Woellner stated that the goals on his current policy on closures are to set an example and protect the citizens. Alderman Hass agreed with Mayor Woellner.

Alderman Blake and Alderman Weix would like to see reopening plans in place before actually reopening takes place.

It was noted that the Mayor has the ultimate authority on this matter. It was agreed that more information should be available next week, and that the new information can be analyzed before any decisions are made.

No action was taken at this time.

**3. Discuss progress of transforming Health and Safety Committee into Public Safety/Board of Public Health**

Alderman Blake explained that the committee members were assigned a task related to this agenda item. His task was to determine whether Wisconsin State Statutes allow a City to create its own health department. He then read a portion of Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 251. He concluded by stating that it appears that state statutes do not allow a City to create its own Health Department.

Alderman Weix reported that he conducted research related to the possibility of including more medical professionals on the Health and Safety Committee. He tried to contact Dr. Gill to determine whether Dr. Gill wants to remain a committee member, but Dr. Gill was out of town. He will also contact other area medical professionals and ask them whether they would be interested in serving on the committee.

Alderman Russell stated that these issues need be researched further.

Mayor Woeller remarked that the Health and Safety Committee already has the power to act as a Board of Health.

No action was taken.

### III. Public Comment Period

City Clerk Heideman suggested contacting neighboring municipalities when gathering information related the possibility of transforming the Health and Safety Committee into Public Safety/Board of Public Health.

### IV. Adjournment

Motion (Blake/Weix) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:02 P.M.