

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
ORIENTATION/TRAINING SESSION
Friday, January 8, 2021**

I. Call to order at 9:00 am by Mayor Woellner with the following attending:

Paul Russell – District 1, Steve Hass – District 2, Rick Blake – District 3, Steve Osness – District 4, John Van Lieshout – District 5, Mike Rick – District 6, Mark Weix – District 7, Steve Sabatke – District 8.

Other's present: Mayor Derek Woellner, City Clerk Bill Heideman, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, City Attorney Tom Hayden, Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Police Chief Corey Bennett, Street Superintendent Dustin Bonack, Transit Director Brad Brummond, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Enrichment Center Director Tammie Mrachek, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Utility Operations Manager Gabe Steinagle, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Park & Recreation Director Dan Wendorf, Facilities Maintenance Manager Nick Wszalek, IT Manager Dustin Brown and Merrill Productions Personnel.

Community members present; only last names were on former Clerk Heideman's notes: Bialecki, Lass, Wix, Drewek, Ravn, and Person with Strategic Plan.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Preliminary Items:

1. Welcome: Common Council President Paul Russell
2. Opening Comments: Mayor Derek Woellner; no video was provided for meeting as to what was said for the Mayor's opening comments.
3. Opening Comments: City Administrator Dave Johnson – It was a difficult year and we are making progress.
4. Agenda Review and Ground Rules: Common Council President Paul Russell – He followed the 9 Tools of Civility and said anyone can comment at any time.
5. Discussion of City leadership and communication: Common Council President Paul Russell – Per Russell, we need to work together as a team for the betterment of the city to make it a better place to live and work.

IV. Agenda Items:

1. Community Development and Strategic Plan: Mike Ravn

Mike Ravn was the facilitator for the Strategic Plan. He suggested possibility of Strategic Plan Review Committee.

Decision related to change need to be addressed now. We are 15 months away from the municipal election. Use the Strategic Plan as one tool when considering changes. The pandemic has had an effect on how government does business.

2. Consider timetables for reopening City Hall and other City facilities:

Mayor Woellner said right now he is reviewing the “category” and not will reopen until “high” or “moderate” are reached. He also said Health and Safety should review and make a decision. They can function as a Board of Health.

Motion (Rick/Osness) to open all city facilities on Wednesday, January 13th. Steve was not in favor of unilateral plan to open all buildings. Motion carried on 5-4 roll call vote.

3. Proposals for City Restructure

Aldersperson Sabatke presented a power point. He recommended getting this process going for April 2022 election for potential changes. He proposed a full-time Mayor and City Manager. He provided a synopsis of job descriptions for both positions.

Finance Director Unertl stated this is not an acceptable form of city government.

Aldersperson Sabatke suggested a complete and in-depth audit of the city.

4. Plan of succession for Merrill’s leadership

Elected Officials – possibility of elected Street Commissioner.

Tax delinquent properties that are repossessed by the city were discussed.

Mayor Woellner stated he will not run again if the Mayor is a full-time position.

Mike Ravn was given the opportunity to talk, he stated there is time to make decisions but they would need to be made soon.

Council President Russell mentioned he would like to see employees hired before certain people depart.

Aldersperson Hass said there was a lack of civility and that makes it difficult to hire replacements.

Police Chief Bennett reported on the recent hiring of three officers.

It was decided Personnel and Finance will address the succession plan.

5. Consider restructuring of city committees and commissions

There was discussion held on department heads attendance at Common Council meetings.

Mayor Woellner spoke on combining the Board of Public Works with the Water and Sewage Committee. He supports this change. He also suggested creating a Marketing Committee.

Aldersperson Sabatke supported combining the Board of Public Works and Water and Sewage committees. He also recommended combining the RDA and Community Development committees. Finance Director Unertl said the two committees have different responsibilities.

Aldersperson Osness commented he does not like commissions because the common council does not have much say in commission decisions.

6. Garbage collection program kick-off issues

Aldersperson Sabatke provided a handout with frequently asked questions on the garbage/recycling start-up program

Street Superintendent Bonack and City Engineer Akey gave a status report on the start-up. Board of Public Works will continue to work on this. Necessary ordinance changes are pending.

Discussion was held on single use plastics. That resolution will go to the Board of Public Works.

V. Closing Comments:

1. Comments: Department Heads

Street Superintendent Bonack said to stay positive.
Park and Recreation Director Wendorf agreed with Bonack.

2. Comments: City Officials and employees

There were no comments written in the notes.

VI. Public Comment Period

Bob Lass supports Alderperson Sabatke's recommendation for a full-time Mayor and no City Administrator. He also suggested the Aldermen get a pay raise.

There are 890 signatures so far on petition to make changes in Merrill. Hoping for 3,000 signatures.

Bill Bialecki said "good work done by appointed people". He is not in favor of a full-time Mayor.

VII. Adjournment

A motion was made (Russell/Osness) to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Minutes prepared by: Lori Anderson-Malm City Clerk from the agenda and meeting notes from former City Clerk Bill Heideman. No video was available for this meeting to verify any information.