

City of Merrill
Meeting of Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

Wednesday, January 5th, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.
City Hall Common Council Chambers

RDA Present: Clyde Nelson, Sheila Polak, Steve Sabatke, Tony Kusserow,
and Val Mindak

Absent: Derek Woellner and Lori Anderson-Malm

Others: Alderpersons Rick Blake and Mark Weix, Finance Director Kathy Unertl,
City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden Public
Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, IT Manager Dustin Brown,
Bill Bialecki from Lincoln County Economic Development Corp. (LCEDC),
and Merrill Productions video operator

Call to Order: Nelson called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Consider approval of RDA meeting minutes from November 3rd, 2021:

Motion (Sabatke/Polak) to approve the meeting minutes from November 3rd. Carried.

Public Comment: None.

Update on Tax Increment generated for 2022:

Unertl highlighted the over \$1.7 million in tax increment being generated for 2022 Tax Increment District (TID) projects and development incentives. Tax increment is being generated for all but TID No. 9 (Wisconsin River frontage and S. Center Ave.) and TID No. 10 (FoxPoint).

The priority the past six years has been facilitating growth in TIDs outside of TID No. 3 (East Side) before the 2026/2027 closure of TID No. 3. Unertl emphasized that the fiscal goal of being able to backfill tax increment will be successfully met due to the TID growth and upcoming 1/1/2022 valuation for FoxPoint development in TID No. 10

Update on 2021 Developments:

Building Permits for 2021 totaled about \$12.5 million. Comparison information from 2017 through 2021 was provided. New commercial developments, as well as completed improvements from 2020 construction starts were listed. The building permit for FoxPoint (TID No. 10) S.C. Swiderski, LLC apartments was for almost \$6.7 million.

There were 14 single-family home building permits issued in 2021, as well as 9 permits in 2020 (i.e. total of 23). This represents over 52% of new single-family homes built in City of Merrill since 2008. There will be 56 new units in the four FoxPoint apartment buildings.

Review and discuss the City Strategic Plan, 2020 - 2024:

RDA Commissioners discussed the City's Strategic Plan. The need for all types of housing was emphasized, especially related to affordable housing and role/mission of Merrill Area Housing Authority (MAHA). Mindak and Nelson reported that strong new home mortgage financing would be continuing.

Sabatke suggested that there could be developer interest in rehabilitation of houses instead of demolishing. Johnson reported that health and safety conditions require razing after review and orders from the City Building Inspector Darin Pagel. Unertl noted that the delay in delinquent tax foreclosures by Lincoln County hampers savaging these types of homes. Bialecki advised that Wisconsin Statutes for the delinquent tax foreclosure process are from 1910.

Mindak questioned whether the Common Council wanted more information than the 2021 Development and housing summary information.

Potential 2022 – 2023 Projects and Needs:

Discussion focused on the following:

TID No. 9 – former Anson-Gilkey site: Unertl advised fiscally it will be possible to transfer tax increment from TID No. 7 (N. Center Ave.) and TID No. 10 (FoxPoint) into this TID. Unertl recommended issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) interest in redevelopment of this Wisconsin River frontage.

TID No. 8 – former bank site on W. Main St.: RDA previously authorized issuing an RFP for redevelopment. This RFP will be issued by end of January 2022.

Land for Residential Development: Johnson emphasized that there are three builders willing to construct new residential units. Various potential sites are being reviewed by City staff. There will be a closed session at the February 2022 RDA meeting to discuss potential sites for consideration of future City purchase.

Former Jefferson School: Sabatke asked about future options. Merrill Area Public Schools (MAPS) owns the property. Johnson commented that the pending April 2022 funding referendum might impact MAPS Board of Education decision-making on future directions.

Livingston Building: The Merrill Parks & Recreation Commission is discussing. This building between the Skate Park and Kitchenette Park will be used by the Parks & Recreation Department.

VFW Building: Sabatke asked about future for this building and noted some adjacent vacant land along E. 2nd St. The current property ownership hasn't been in contact with City staff.

TID No. 9 – former SEMCO buildings: There is some interest in redevelopment by an individual whom doesn't own the property. The property is now under Kyes St. Holdings, LLC. Although the 2018 taxes were paid in October 2021. There are now three years of delinquent taxes owed. There is historical environmental contamination. There are exterior building orders issued by City Building Inspector Darin Pagel.

Next RDA meeting: Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022 at 8 a.m.

Adjournment: (Sabatke/Polak) to adjourn at 8:47 a.m. Carried.

Minutes prepared by RDA Secretary Kathy Unertl