

**CITY OF MERRILL  
TOURISM COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024 MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING MERRILL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 705 N  
CENTER AVENUE 12:00 PM**

- I. **Call to Order** Dan Wendorf called the meeting to order at 12:03 pm.  
Members present: Dan Wendorf, Sue Kunkel, Sara Gilbert, Alderperson Weix, Gary Schwartz  
Others present: Clyde Nelson, Cheryl Skoug, Merrill Community Media
- II. **Public Comment** There was no public comment.
- III. **Minutes from Previous Meeting**
  1. **Consider placing the minutes from the June 25th meeting on file** - Sue Kunkel motioned to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Alderperson Weix seconded and the motion passed.
- IV. **2025 Budget Discussion**
  1. **Review 2025 Budget - Wrap-up on 2024 Budget** - We are waiting for Black Squirrel Scurry to turn in invoices to get reimbursement from the 2024 Grants. We did spend more this year than before on different marketing avenues. Tradeshow – we have already spent \$2900 on Tradeshows in 2025. The money was spent on registration for the tradeshows in 2025. We have added Duluth in addition to Cedar Falls, LaCrosse, Madison, and State Fair. Green Bay RV Show – North Central Tourism Committee (formally ITBEC) will reimburse for expenses that may be incurred for that event. Gary Schwartz is pleased to see the Chamber going to the Tradeshows. Tourism was able to help with Food Truck-a-Palooza.  
**Budget** – \$86,500 has been the average fund that has come in throughout the years in Room Tax. Tourism Commission receives 70% of the Room Tax collected. The City and Park & Rec Department split the remaining 30%. In 2025 the Chamber would like to do the following items: adding Duluth to trade shows, changing the foyer for more access of information, change phone system next year, Postage will change because of the resources for getting the visitor guides distributed, we would like to keep a balance (buffer) in the checkbook of \$15,000 to \$20,000 in case of something that might come up, we could look at getting a influencer to come to Merrill, but we do need to have funds available to pay for that, Contingency – we are looking at getting a TV/display for when we go to tradeshows. The Merrill Chamber is willing to pay for half of it if tourism pays the other half. We would like to have a video that loops about all the fun that Merrill offers.
  2. **2025 Grant Application - Grant Applications** –  
- Merrill Lions – Long time event, would like to see them change their advertising resources. The Commission was informed that they did radio

advertising this year instead of print. The event had more cars even without the Nicklaus cars. Would like to see the range of vehicles that comes to this event. Would like to see them push out the advertising radius Asking for \$1,400, suggested grant \$1,400.

- Lincoln County Fair – A lot of Class and family reunion happen during this time. People from all over come to attend the fair. The vehicles that were parked in lots were from all over the United States. Vendors that come stay in hotels during the week. They have used TV ads from Channel 7, Spectrum, Channel 12. In 2025 they would like to push our further with tv ads. Asking for \$20,000, after some discussion, the suggested grant is \$21,000.

- Wisconsin Pro Rodeo –The PBR comes and books 12 to 15 rooms just for their people and use another fifteen rooms just at AmericInn. Asking for \$25,000, suggested to go with \$21,000 – same as the Fair.

- Merrill Concertina –mice event that brings people to Merrill and spend the night. Would love to see them advertise more. Asking for \$425, granted \$425.

- Merrill Ice Drags – money used last year was to pay for advertising the cancelling of the event. Hope that this year, they have ice to race. It is a great way to get people to know about Council Grounds and see its beauty by the drive through the park. Asking \$7500, granted \$7500.

- Black Squirrel Scurry – Greg has made this a magnificent event. He is getting more people coming to Merrill and spending the night. Chamber is working on Silent Sports in the 2025 Destination Guide. Asking \$1000, granted \$1000.

- Underdown Trail Ride – Silent Sports is turning into a rage. IRONBULL does an excellent job of getting it out. Asking for \$900, granted \$900.

\_Underdown Fat Bike Races – again another magnificent event that is bringing more people to Merrill every year. Asking \$250, granted \$250.

- Carry the Cross – Last year application was dropped off late and was asking for \$1,000 to \$10,000, not a certain amount. Does this event bring overnight stays? The event is on Sunday afternoon. Would like to see more advertising outside the Merrill Area. Asking \$1500, granted \$1,000.

- Food Truck-A-Palooza – Great event for the city. People came from all over to enjoy the event. Other County Fairs came down to talk to the different food vendors to come to their fairs. All the food trucks are coming back and have seven waiting to come. Asking \$1500, granted \$1500.

- Mud N Jams – ATV/UTV run that is a Charity Event. Who participates in this event? How do they get people to come? Asking for \$5500, granted \$2000. Money needs to go towards advertising outside the Merrill Community.

- Everything Goes Sales – Fundraiser for the Town of Russell Fire Department. Does it create overnight sales? Dan is collaborating with Tom Hayden about the language on how this event falls. This is an individual applying for money and not an organization/business. Would like to see the application done in the Town of Russell Fire Department instead of a person. Will hold off with granting any funding until Tom Hayden will have time to review how and who can accept funding for Grant funding. Will revisit after Tom had enough time to review this. Asking \$1200, granted \$0.

- Fireworks – when looking at the status for who/what can receive money for Tourism. The legal reps are saying the Firework events do qualify to tourism money. What is the city planning to cut this event out of their budget altogether? As we review this event, we feel that this does not qualify as the Grant funding. This is a different event all together and would like to move this to Other Promotions. Park and Rec have tried in the past to make this an event out at the MARC with the Fireworks. But they have noticed that people come more towards the darker it gets. The Commission would like to know if the city is putting anything into the pot for Fireworks. The amount being asked for is the whole amount for Fireworks. Sue Kunkel made a motion that we move this event to Other Promotion in the Tourism budget. The Commission will reimburse the City of Merrill \$12,000 as long the city matches the \$12,000 for fireworks, giving the city \$24,000 for Fireworks. Mark Weix seconded this motions, voted and carried.

- New Budget of the Tourism Commission is \$74,100 for all expenses, and \$57,975 for Grant funding totaling \$132,075. With the \$16,000 moved to Other Promotions, a motion was made to accept the 2025 Budget with said changes made by Sue and seconded by Sara, voted, and carried.

**V. Set Date and Time for Next Meeting** Next meeting will be held in June 2025, unless something comes up beforehand. Meeting notice will be sent out at least 24 hours before the event will occur.

**VI. Adjournment** Sue Kunkel motioned to adjourn. Alderperson Weix seconded and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 pm.

Minutes recorded by Cheryl Skoug and published by City Clerk Anderson-Malm  
*All minutes are in draft form until approved at the next scheduled meeting.*