



CITY OF MERRILL
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
AGENDA • WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

4:15 PM

I. Call to Order

II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting

1. November 2024 Minutes

III. Approval of Claims

1. November 2024 Claims

IV. General Agenda Items for Consideration

1. Update on bridge project to connect Prairie Dells County Park to the City Forest
2. Review Commission authority and responsibilities

V. Monthly Reports

1. December 2024 Director's Report

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting

VII. Public Comment

VIII. Adjournment

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**CITY OF MERRILL
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2024 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 4:15 PM**

I. Call to Order Roll Call:

Present: Gulke, Krueger, Novitch, Tabor, Malm, Osness, Alderperson Rutkowski

Present Not Voting: Parks Director Dan Wendorf

Excused:

Absent: Chairperson Novitch called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting

1. **October 2024 Minutes** - Krueger motioned to place minutes on file. Tabor seconded and the motion Passed.

III. Approval of Claims

1. **October 2024 Claims** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve. Krueger seconded and the motion Passed.

IV. General Agenda Items for Consideration

1. **Update on 2025 Budget** - Wendorf began discussion by summarizing the budgetary process after all three Committee of the Whole Budget Meetings have now been completed. He informed the Commission that the operating budget passed without alterations and as presented to the Commission. Wendorf also said the Capital Requests remained the same as updated at the last meeting with several items being partially funded, one item fully funded (pool heater) and one item not funded at all (shelter key locks). Wendorf stated his wish that the capital budget process would involve clear direction from City Council that involved an amount of funds that the Council was comfortable borrowing so that departments could formulate their capital requests to fit that amount. This would cut down on debates about the merits of individual projects at the highest level being that we have already had those conversations at our individual Committee/Commission levels.
2. **Consider Smith Center public skate punch passes** - Wendorf began the discussion by informing the Commission that he would like to switch from season passes in the Smith Center for skating to punch passes to mirror what we have done at the Aquatic Center over the past several years. Wendorf stated that punch passes still bring value to the consumer but also captures more realistic revenue for the department. Punch passes can be carried over from year to year if there are still visits remaining on them and can be used by anyone the punch pass holder would like. Wendorf stated the costs and types of punch passes would be exactly the same as the Aquatic Center: \$85 for 25 visits, \$37 for 10 visits, and \$20 for 5 visits. The cost for admission is regularly \$5.00 per person so there is a savings and the passes are worth it for anyone

who intends to visit the rink multiple times and for families as well.

Gulke motioned to approve. Tabor seconded and the motion Passed.

3. Consider adjusting Smith Center birthday skate party packages

- Wendorf led the discussion off by stating he would like to do the same with birthday party packages as with the punch passes and adjust their offerings to mirror what we have been doing at the Aquatic Center with success. Wendorf stated that they have been doing birthday parties at the Smith Center for many years but the adjustment he is requesting would be an overall cost for up to 10 people with a per person charge after 10 people. The prices cover our costs better and the up to 10 people is clearer for the users and easier for us to work with. Wendorf stated that he is proposing the three packages are as follows: Ice Cream Package would be \$90 for up to 10 people and includes admission, skate rental, reserved table, paper products, balloons, ice cream cup, soda, and a treat for the birthday person. Each child will receive one free skate pass for their next visit and there will be a \$7 charge for each person beyond 10. Hot Dog Package would be \$120 for up to 10 kids with the same language as stated above with a charge of \$8 for each additional person beyond 10. Pizza Package would be \$150 with the same details and language as stated above with a charge of \$9 for each additional person.

Krueger motioned to . Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion Passed.

V. Monthly Reports

- 1. November 2024 Report** - After hearing no questions related to the monthly report, Wendorf was asked to summarize projects that the department accomplished this year. Wendorf stated that they were able to accomplish the following projects in 2024: Nicklaus Bridge re-decking with concrete, Ott's Park dock and boat launch (dock was a generous gift from Lincoln County ARPA funding), Normal Park path, lights, and power station project (all made possible through \$75,000 donation from past City Band fundraiser and \$10,000 from monies raised by Chamber Foundation previously), Prairie River Pathway (trail to connect Prairie Trails with River Bend Trail) - there is still a portion to finish yet and signage but a good portion is now complete, Riverside Dock, Gruling Family Playground @ Agra Pavilion/Rotary Park (\$25,000 contributed in memory of Bob & Eppie Gruling). Wendorf stated how thankful he was for all of the cooperation they receive from the Street Department and other departments to help keep the cost down on all of these projects and also mentioned his sincere thanks to all of their community partners for always contributing to help accomplish these impactful projects. Wendorf mentioned to the Commission that since he started working here, through forming strong partnerships/relationships with local organizations, businesses, foundations, and writing grants that the Parks Department has brought in over \$9 million dollars in grants and donations. That is \$9 million dollars of projects,

programs, and initiatives that did not require tax payer funding or borrowing and may have never happened without strong partnerships, relationships, and successful grant writing.

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting

1. Wednesday, December 4th, 2024 @ 4:15 p.m. -

VII. Public Comment There was no public comment.

VIII. Adjournment Krueger motioned to adjourn. Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion Passed.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

11/1/2024					
ACE HARDWARE	SPLIT RING	10/22/2024	238945	\$58.17	10-55200-03-40000
ACE HARDWARE	GARBAGE BAGS/SHOVEL/RAKE	10/23/2024	239131	\$68.56	10-55200-03-40000
ACE HARDWARE	GARBAGE BAGS	10/30/2024	239143	\$33.99	10-55200-03-40000
ACE HARDWARE	BEAM CLIP	11/10/2024	239407	\$27.75	10-55400-03-50000
ACE HARDWARE	TRASH BAGS	11/15/2024	239560	\$43.17	10-55400-08-82000
BAGWELL MARKETING	WINTER STOCKING GIVEAWAY/WINTER WONDERLAND	11/5/2024	14922	\$992.52	26-55300-03-60022
BLUEJAY 96.3	ADVERTISING	10/31/2024	18881-9	\$249.00	10-55300-03-41500
BRANDT EXTINGUISHERS	INSPECTION/RECHARGE	11/11/2024	14515	\$86.00	10-55400-02-16500
CINTAS	UNIFORMS	10/30/2024	4209850272	\$96.48	10-55200-03-46000
CINTAS	UNIFORMS	11/6/2024	4210572986	\$96.48	10-55200-03-46000
J.WENNING	ZAMBONI BLADES	10/29/2024	104953	\$126.50	10-55400-03-51500
JULIANNE STACY	REFUND COMMUNITY ROOM	11/15/2024	VOUCHER	\$50.00	10-21-7200
MENARDS	UNIVERSAL CLIP LIGHTS	10/31/2024	30160496	\$11.98	26-55300-03-60022
MENARDS	WINTER WONDERLAND	11/6/2024	53296	\$34.40	26-55300-03-60022
MENARDS	PATIO BLOCK FOR MEMORIALS	11/6/2024	53296	\$9.36	10-55200-08-91000
MENARDS	SUPPLIES TO REINFORCE SHELF	11/10/2024		\$25.48	10-55400-08-82000
MENARDS	SUPPLIES TO REINFORCE SHELF	11/11/2024		\$41.67	10-55400-08-82000
MERRILL YOUTH HOCKEY	BIRTHDAY PARTY	11/2/2024	395	\$45.00	10-55300-03-41500
NORTHWOODS NURSERY	TREES	10/23/2024	81284	\$4,700.00	10-55200-08-92000
NORTHWOODS NURSERY	TREES	10/23/2024	81284	\$8,507.00	CAPITAL TREES ACCOUNT
RHYME BUSINESS PRODUCTS	COPY MACHINE	11/13/2024	3771025	\$94.69	10-55400-03-13000
SAM'S CLUB	LIGHTS FOR WINTER WONDERLAND	10/31/2024		\$127.76	26-55300-03-60022
SAM'S CLUB	RENEWAL	10/31/2024		\$52.75	10-55200-02-15000
SAM'S CLUB	WINTER WONDERLAND	11/6/2024		\$513.80	26-55300-03-60022
SAM'S CLUB	CLEANING SUPPLIES	11/6/2024		\$14.96	10-55400-03-44000
STAINLESS STEEL	GENERAL REPAIRS	10/30/2024	46464	\$1,299.50	10-55400-02-16250
SUSAN LOCKE	SECURITY DEPOSIT	10/30/2024	VOUCHER	\$100.00	10-21-7200
WALMART	PROGRAMS	10/29/2024		\$16.02	10-55300-03-41500
WALMART	CLEANING SUPPLIES	11/6/2024		\$34.82	10-55400-03-44000
WALMART	PROGRAMS	11/7/2024		\$10.91	10-55300-03-41500
WALMART	KIDS PROGRAMS	11/12/2024		\$29.56	10-55300-03-41500
WPRA	MEMBERSHIP - JOE WECKWERTH	11/1/2024	8244	\$150.00	10-55200-03-32000
WPRA	MEMBERSHIP - DAN WENDORF	11/1/2024	8241	\$150.00	10-55200-03-32000
WPRA	MEMBERSHIP - JIM YATES	11/1/2024	8243	\$150.00	10-55200-03-32000
WPRA	MEMBERSHIP - DAWN SMITH	11/1/2024	8242	\$150.00	10-55200-03-32000



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December 2024 Director's Report

Parks: Thanks to a beautiful and elongated fall season, we were able to finish up all of our necessary projects throughout our parks. We are all ready for the winter season to arrive whenever it gets here. In the meantime, we'll continue to work ahead on things that the weather allows. If the weather remains mild we'll continue with outdoor task such as park tree pruning, re-mulching recently planted trees, shelter maintenance, additional cleaning, and possibly late season turf maintenance. Once winter arrives, we'll transition into indoor tasks such as gathering worn or damaged picnic tables for repair and/or maintenance, interior shelter and facility work and repairs, snow removal, and ice rink building. We have a lot of picnic tables spread out over many locations and they get used and abused every year. The nice part about our urban wood reutilization initiative is being able to use the lumber from the trees that we have cut down to re-plank our picnic tables. With the 2025 City Budget being passed on 11/12/24, I have started preparations for the items we need to purchase and projects that need to be set up for next year so we are ready to go. We never know what kind of time frames we are looking at with some things so it is always best to get it going sooner rather than later. We also are never sure what the weather is going to bring us when we get to spring or summer so it simply pays to be as ready as we can be. I was contacted by another Eagle Scout looking to do a project recently and he would like to refurbish the totem pole that is located at Normal Park. The pole is 40+ years old and was installed to commemorate our centennial. I have asked a local contractor if they would donate their time to remove the pole and get it to a building with enough space for them to work on it over the winter months at the Fairgrounds. It is a great project for the Eagle Scout and it is a much needed refurbishment of a local landmark at a very popular park. I have also talked with the same contractor to get donated labor to install one of the power poles that was removed along the River Bend Trail at Ott's Park with an Osprey platform nest on the top of it. I have been working with the WDNR to find a way to relocate the Osprey family that continues to build a nest on top of the ballfield lights at Ott's Park. The problem with the nest location is they make a mess on the pickleball courts and create a fire hazard with the light standards because of the debris they use for their nest. We very much want the Osprey's to remain in Ott's Park because they are amazing birds but we want to try and encourage them to build their nest in a safer spot for everyone. I did find out that the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway water trail application (for National Water Trail Recognition) to the National Park Service has been submitted. The National Parks team reviews the applications through February of 2025, the successful submittals are submitted to the Department of the Interior for approval then Congress to vote and accept the recommended trails. It is a very competitive process though – in 2022 there were over 200 trails submitted and only four (4) being accepted. The trail will begin at our Riverside Park and end 21 miles downstream at Riverlife Park in Wausau (near Wausau on the Water – WOW). This is very good news in that we are the start point for a very unique and growing initiative which is water trails. I will continue to work with Bill Bertram and the City of Wausau to ensure that we maximize this great opportunity. I also talked with Lincoln County and they informed me that they approved bids from Custom Manufacturing for the bridge to connect the City Forest to Prairie Dells County Park. The bridge will be delivered and installed next summer when conditions and scheduling allows.

Forestry: A huge thank you to our Park Crew for their amazing work in getting all of the trees planted. This year was the most trees we've planted in many years at over 170 and they did a fantastic job as always. We had our Arbor Day/Tree City USA observation/recognition planting on November 7th along the River Bend Trail just east of the Agra Pavilion. I began the tedious process of re-certifying our community for Tree City USA again for this year and the application is due by the end of the year. One trend that I have been noticing over the past several years is people contacting me after we mark tree planting locations in neighborhoods that are obviously lacking trees telling me they do not want trees. Every time I ask them the most common response I get is that they don't want to rake leaves. . . I

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understand not wanting to create any extra work for people but I always use that opportunity to tell people the benefits to mulching their leaves as it is much better for free nutrients for your lawn. I know technically we do have the ability to plant trees on the boulevard without permission because it is city property but I have avoided it lately because those are locations that I know the trees will not be taken care of and in some cases damaged so I don't want to waste money where it isn't wanted. But the look and functionality of tree lined streets exponentially outweighs any perceived drawbacks of street trees.

Recreation: Our mini programs at the Agra Pavilion have been very successful with the different holiday themes and we're pleased to continue them through the upcoming holidays with Thanksgiving and Christmas themed programs. We have had great numbers participating and people like the building and location. Our sign-ups for Little Dribblers are coming to an end and the program begins on 1/7. Our numbers for this program have been trending upwards for the past few years so hopefully we continue that trend again this year, because it really is a great program. As we get into the month of January, we really begin the hard work of laying out our spring/summer recreation programs. There is a tremendous amount of work and organization that goes into summer recreation planning. We are very appreciative of all of Dawn's efforts in getting everything laid out and organized and she does a great job each and every year with this.

Smith Center: It is hard to believe that our ice season has already been going strong for over a month and a half and things have been going well so far. We picked up a fair amount of extra ice time from several Wausau area teams/clubs due to issues with one of the ice sheets at Marathon Park, which is good for us. It will continue to get busier over the next several months with youth and high school games and tournaments, as well as the figure skating show. As always we'll keep our ice in until around mid-March before transitioning back to dry floor events.

Note: I would like to wish everyone a very Safe and Happy Holiday Season! Thank you all very much for your time, passion, thoughts, and insights in helping our department and our beautiful community. Also want to thank all of our staff members (full and part time, as well as volunteers) for making 2024 another amazing year here at the Parks & Recreation Department family. We couldn't do it without each and every one of you and please know that it is greatly appreciated!!

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Wendorf
Parks & Recreation Director
City of Merrill