

**CITY OF MERRILL  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025 MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING    CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS    4:15 PM**

**I. Call to Order** Roll Call:

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

Present Not Voting: Parks Director Dan Wendorf

Excused: Joan Tabor

Absent:

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

**II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**

1. **December 2024 Meeting Minutes** - Osness motioned to approve.  
Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion Passed.

**III. Approval of Claims**

1. **December 2024 claims** - Osness asked Wendorf about ice painting costs. Wendorf stated that several years ago they contracted with a company that paints the ice. Previously it took over a full day to paint the ice ourselves plus we had to purchase supplies. Now with the contractor they bring supplies and paint our entire sheet of ice in half of a day, it is a cost savings. Gulke asked about Street Department Charges and Wendorf explained that the Street Department Mechanics service and fix our equipment and we get billed from them for performing those services.

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

2. **January 2025 claims** - Malm asked Wendorf about the charges from Lamers Bus for the Brewers Trip. Wendorf stated that we contract with them every year for our Brewers Bus Trip so we have a coach bus on the long ride to and from Milwaukee. Wendorf stated those charges are passed along to the participants through our trip fee. Malm was questioning why we pay them now before we have incurred usage. Wendorf stated that is how they do business and how we have done it every year. Wendorf did state that in our agreement we can cancel without penalty if our trip doesn't fill up several weeks in advance.

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

**IV. General Agenda Items for Consideration**

1. **Discuss 5 year capital plan** - Wendorf began the discussion by summarizing the capital budget results for 2025 and pointing out the items that were

approved, not approved, and partially funded. He showed the 5 year plan that was in the packets and discussed that the items that were not funded or partially funded need to be re-slotted back into the capital plan as they still need funding at some point and simply do not go away. That is going to be a challenge moving forward to figure out how to fund certain things, especially aging equipment, mechanicals, and amenities. Wendorf said that it would be nice for City Council to determine an amount they would like to borrow each year for capital projects so that each department and their oversight committees have at least a target amount they need to plan for when they have their budget discussions and decisions to forward to City Council for approval. Wendorf stated that without clear budgetary direction on capital items it is impossible to plan for. Then at the Council budget meetings many individual requests are scrutinized in great detail, which is fine, but if there was clear capital budget direction given we could use that during our Commission discussions to comply so we help achieve their goals before we even begin City City Council capital budget discussions. Gulke stated that he would like to see the trail connecting Prairie Trails to the City Forest moved up the timeline as he feels that is an important one because of our initiatives over the past few years in connecting trails and parks. Rutkowski, as our City Council representative, said she was interested in the idea of a target amount stipulated by City Council for capital budgeting and she would look into it. Novitch suggested that we revisit this if needed as the year goes on so that we can be prepared for the 2026 budgetary process.

- 2. Continued discussion on potential Special Event Permit** - Novitch said this topic was introduced at our last meeting and liked the idea of using this to gather useful information from event organizers that utilize our facilities. Wendorf stated that he used a number of other communities who have had special event permits for years to take bits and pieces of each of theirs to come up with the draft before the commission today. Wendorf stated that he does not want to charge a fee for this and that it would simply be nice for this process to gather preemptive information for our department. it would also help event organizers to understand all of the "to do's" during the planning stages of their respective events and to avoid surprises for both entities as the event grows near. We have a small department that has a lot of daily responsibilities during the summer months so it is difficult for us to drop everything and be reactionary for every little thing that might pop up for certain events. There was some discussion regarding whether or not to keep the word "permit" in the title but was ultimately decided to leave it in there so that people do understand that if they are expected to exceed 100 people that they do need to fill it out and turn it in. Krueger asked if there could be a piece added into the document for follow up - once it is filled out and signed off on it must be turned into the Parks Office so that we (and the appropriate departments) have a copy as does the organizer. Krueger also suggested additional information be added showing restroom capacities for those respective locations as well. Wendorf informed the Commission that he

worked with the Street Department, Police Department, Fire Department, as well as the City Attorney thus far to create this form. He said that a copy has also been sent to the City's insurance provider to make sure they weigh in on it as well as provide appropriate language for our Hold Harmless portion of the permit as well. He said he will make the suggested changes and bring this back for review at a future meeting as soon as he can.

3. **Update on MARC ballfield lights grant** - Wendorf informed the Commission that he, along with Lindsey Steinagel from Merrill Fastpitch Association, recently met with the Bierman Foundation to present their grant that was submitted for MARC field lights last year. Wendorf said that the meeting went very well and that we were awarded a grant to have field lights installed on MARC diamonds 1 and 2 as well as diamonds 3 and 4 provided they fall within the amount that the Bierman Foundation set forth. Wendorf stated he contacted the sports lighting company he had been working with right after to re-work the proposal to add diamonds 3 and 4 so he can take it back to the Bierman Foundation for review. It is looking very promising that we will have lights on all four of our southern fields at the MARC. Wendorf stated that this will allow for more teams to enter the summer fastpitch tournament as well as city league games, practices, and that we are hosting the girls Legion State Softball Tournament this summer (and hopefully future State Tournaments). So this investment will really enhance opportunities for our teams as well as enhance our economy by bringing in more teams each year with more opportunities. Wendorf said he will keep the commission updated and will eventually have to bring bids back to the commission for approval when the time comes. Wendorf was asked about a timeline and he said it was still up in the air because some variables are beyond his control at the moment and that when he gets the revised numbers back he needs to meet again with Bierman Foundation, then has to get specifications for bids, and so forth. He did say that currently there is an average of 16-18 weeks lead time for lights so he is hoping it can happen later this year if all goes well but will just keep working on it until we get them here and installed.

## V. Monthly Reports

1. **February 2024 Monthly Report** - Wendorf summarized his board report and fielded several questions.

## VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting

1. **The next regularly scheduled meeting will be March 5th, 2025 at 4:15 in the Council Chambers at Merrill City Hall -**

## VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

## VIII. Adjournment

Gulke motioned to adjourn. Krueger seconded and the motion Passed.

