



**CITY OF MERRILL**  
**MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**AGENDA • THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2025**

**Regular Meeting**

**City Hall Council Chambers**

**5:15 PM**

To attend remotely call 470-771-3005 PIN 467 373 887 #

**I. Call to Order**

1. Introduce D5 Alderperson - Landis Holdorf

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

1. January 23 meeting minutes

**III. General Agenda Items for Consideration**

1. The March meeting packet will include January and February Revenue/Expense reports.
2. Discuss and Consider the 2025 Marketing Strategies & Focus
3. Business Hiring Survey - update
4. Chamber of Commerce - update

**IV. Monthly Reports and Updates**

1. Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - Fairgrounds Coordinator/Social Media Specialist Savall
2. Monthly Report - Midwest Communications
3. Consider placing monthly reports on file

**V. Public Comment**

**VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Thursday, March 20th at 5:15 pm**

**VII. Adjournment**

The Merrill City Hall is accessible to the physically disadvantaged. If special accommodations are needed, please contact the Merrill City Hall at (715) 536-5594.

**CITY OF MERRILL  
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 2025 MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING   CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS   5:15 PM**

- I. Call to Order** Chair Fermanich called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.  
Present: Alderperson Fermanich, Alderperson Rutkowski  
Present Not Voting: Social Media Specialist/Fairgrounds Coordinator Hallie Savall, Scott Steele, Sarah Sturm, City Administrator Akey, City Clerk Anderson-Malm, Cameo Almli, Merrill Community Media
- II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
  - 1. November 21 meeting minutes** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to place the minutes on file. Alderperson Fermanich seconded and the motion passed.
- III. General Agenda Items for Consideration**
  - 1. Discuss and consider the November and December Revenue and Expense Reports** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to approve. Alderperson Fermanich seconded and the motion passed.
  - 2. Discuss and consider the Business Hiring Survey** - Scott Steele explained to the committee that the baseline is a survey that will be sent to Merrill businesses regarding hiring and whether those individuals are Merrill residents or outside of the Merrill area. This will be extended to Chamber members and non-members. Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to go ahead with the survey. Alderperson Fermanich seconded and the motion passed.
  - 3. Review the retractable banner design** - Scott Steele updated the committee regarding the banner. Pictures should be replaced with landmark and updated photos (neighborhood, graduation, River Bend Trail). Scott will meet with Sarah from the Chamber and bring the new design to the committee.
  - 4. Initial discussion on current marketing strategies and potential modifications** - Alderperson Fermanich and Scott Steele started the discussion regarding marketing strategies. Scott will work with Midwest Communications and SMS/FGC Savall regarding marketing effectiveness. This will be on the February agenda for further discussion.
  - 5. Food Truck-a-palooza 2025 update and discussion** - SMS/FGC Savall provided an update. The date for the Food Truck-a-Palooza is May 17th. Currently, there are 11 trucks and 25 vendors committed to the event.
  - 6. Chamber of Commerce update** - Sara provided an update. 2025 Destination Guides were provided at the meeting. Sarah discussed the upcoming spring shows and the NFL draft and answered questions from the committee.

**IV. Monthly Reports and Updates**

1. **Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - Social Media Specialist Savall**  
- All reports were included in the packet.
2. **Monthly Report - Midwest Communications** - The report was included in the packet. Cameo highlighted some items and updated the committee.
3. **Consider placing monthly reports on file** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to place the reports on file. Alderperson Fermanich seconded and the motion passed.

**V. Public Comment** There was no public comment.

**VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Thursday, February 20 at 5:15 pm**

**VII. Adjournment** Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to adjourn. Alderperson Fermanich seconded and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by City Clerk Anderson-Malm  
*Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next scheduled meeting.*

# Merrill, Wisconsin

## Marketing and Communications Committee

### *2025-2027 Strategy Update*

**1. Committee confirmation if the core strategy elements are unchanged. If confirmed, present for approval to City as necessary.**

- a. Objective:
  - i. In a rapidly changing world, we will establish Merrill as a magnet for talent attraction and as an anchor for talent retention to achieve:
    - 1. Influx of qualified candidates applying to targeted industries and positions in Merrill.
    - 2. High percentage retention of existing workforce in Merrill.
    - 3. Effective and collaborative local, regional and statewide business and education partnerships.
    - 4. Consistent messaging.
    - 5. Efficient use of resources.
    - 6. Strong Merrill economy.
- b. Target Audience:
  - i. People, ages 25-45.
  - ii. Mid-level professional and mid-level laborer, early to mid-career.
  - iii. Interests align with attributes found in Merrill.
  - iv. Willingness to move or travel.
- c. Four challenging “truths”
  - i. Merrill population is declining.
  - ii. Merrill population is aging.
  - iii. There is no pipeline of young individuals or families moving into Merrill.
  - iv. There is no pipeline of workers to fill the dire needs of our local businesses.
- d. Communications:
- e. Brand Strategy:
  - i. The intent of the Merrill brand strategy is to create an emotional connection between people and place that will retain and attract residents, businesses and visitors.
- f. Brand Promise:
  - i. Merrill delivers an authentic experience that is achieved through a simple, fulfilling lifestyle and a diverse choice of rich and robust outdoor activities.
    - 1. *Authentic*: Merrill reflects the genuine nature of our experiences, people, community and history.
    - 2. *Simple*: Merrill offers small-town charm and amenities that are warm, open and neighborly.
    - 3. *Fulfilling*: Merrill offers a balanced integration of lifestyle and workstyle important to our target audience.
    - 4. *Outdoor*: Merrill offers a vast choice of outdoor activities important to the outdoor-loving side of our target audience.
- g. Brand Core Pillars:
  - i. Primary: Lifestyle/workstyle Integration and Outdoors.

- ii. Secondary: Family, Education, Community and Affordability.

**Strategy Elements Under Review:**

1. Media Mix:
  - a. Review if the current marketing mix is connecting with our target audience.
  - b. Explore and test additional digital marketing advertising channels (e.g. Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc.).
  - c. Explore opportunities to expand communications with citizens (e.g. local media, etc.).
  - d. Explore other options:
    - i. Website: Strengthen content to align with individuals considering Merrill as an employment opportunity.
    - ii. Billboards.
    - iii. Other.
2. Outreach:
  - a. Explore how we can strengthen relationships with regional trade/specialty colleges (e.g. NTC, Rasmussen, etc.) to increase talent pipeline.
  - b. Explore how we can strengthen our relationship with local organizations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, MAPS, Merrill alumni, AAC, Centergy, WEDC, Rotary, etc.).
  - c. Explore how we can strengthen relationships with local businesses including helping to tell their stories and provide tools to help build new or expand existing businesses.
  - d. Promote the city and city government to local, regional and applicable geographic locations to attract and retain residents and employees by featuring examples of work, life and play within Merrill.
  - e. Explore how we can support and leverage the efforts of the Rural Entrepreneurial Venture (REV).
3. Messaging:
  - a. Considering shifting from a three prong advertising effort (jobs, schools and housing) to a focus on jobs.
4. Creative:
  - a. Original Objectives:
    - i. In a rapidly changing world, we will establish Merrill as a magnet for talent attraction and as an anchor for talent retention to achieve:
5. Performance Metrics:
  - a. Complete 2024 business hiring survey and establish a baseline for annual measurements to identify if Merrill is attracting talent outside of Lincoln and Marathon County.
  - b. Work with local real estate professionals, rental facilities and construction firms to establish a baseline metric identifying if people are moving from within Lincoln County and Marathon County or if Merrill is attracting talent from outside of our two counties, including out of state.
  - c. Strengthen metrics to measure the effectiveness of advertising and social media efforts.
  - d. Define success metrics for City events prior to holding to help understand true success, room for improvement or discontinuation.
6. Budget:
  - a. Consider shifting budget priorities (e.g. media mix, etc.).
  - b. Explore grant opportunities to help supplement economic development projects.
  - c. Consider opportunities for additional volunteer, staff, etc. to help advance both the marketing and communications and City strategies.

## **February 2025 Social Media Report**

### **Tasks -**

I have met with the Mayor to discuss events and happenings within Merrill

I have met with LaDonna to go over goals and the agenda for the coming month.

I attended business after hours.

I met with Dustin Brown and LaDonna about the analytics for the website.

I met with LaDonna and Scott about marketing.

### **Social Media -**

I have been getting February's events in the Calendar and working on March happenings as well.

### **MWC -**

I have talked with Cameo and given her information for the Radio Ads.

### **Food Truck-a-Palooza**

I have 18 confirmed food trucks, 20 craft/vendors, and \$7000 in sponsorships so far. I have a few more leads for sponsorships that I am working on as well. The vendors are a little slower this year than last but I think they will come around.

I would really like to have bingo this year but am struggling to find a group that is willing to run it. If you have any ideas, please reach out.

## January 2025 Social Media Analytics

### Facebook Page Reach: 6,881 ( Down 61.9%)

- *The number of people who saw any content from your Page or about your page, including posts, stories, ads, social information from people who interact with your page and more. \*Reach is different from impressions, which may include multiple views of your posts by the same people.*

### Facebook Page Visits: 39,952 ( Down 33.8 %)

- *The number of times your Facebook page was visited.*

### New Facebook Page Likes: 20

### Cumulative Facebook Page Likes: 3,552

### Link Clicks on page - 38

### Content (Most Popular by Reach)

1. Hiring for lifeguard ( Reach 3,702; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares 27)
2. Free Fishing weekend ( Reach 1,280; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares:26 )
3. Officer Jaeger Retiring ( Reach 1,207; Likes, Reactions, Comments, shares and link clicks: 68 )
4. Officer Bacher Retirement (Reach 983; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 42 )
5. Alderperson Recruitment (Reach 979; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 18)

### LinkedIn -

We Currently have 43 followers on LinkedIn. Posts include - Ground Breaking Ceremonies, Chamber Ribbon Cuttings, Chamber Business after Hours, City of Merrill Years of Service Recognition (if employee agrees).

### YouTube

We currently have 34 subscribers for the Main City Of Merrill YouTube Channel. The City of Merrill Meetings page has 32 followers. This is where all recorded meetings are uploaded for people to watch. There has been an increase in videos being watched which is good to see. Nathan and Draco have been doing a great job getting meetings uploaded.

The Mayor communications videos are uploaded every month onto the Main City of Merrill page.

**Website Analytics - please see Website Analytics Summary.**

# City of Merrill January Overview:

- The campaign served 118,586 impressions in January, which is pacing slightly behind what we should be doing per month for the year. I reached out to the ops team to ensure we're on pace to reach the total impression budget of 1,440,000 for 2025 and they confirmed all is well. We had 193 clicks, for a .16% CTR. Both total clicks and click-through rates are up from the previous month.
- We also had 163 Site/Search Actions. These are online actions of people who see the ads, don't click, but still come to the city of Merrill's website.
- There are 376 Geo-Actions, which is quite the jump up from any previous month. I asked our team about this, and they set up to track foot traffic conversions from online targeting tactics like Search+Keyword Contextual and Site Retargeting. This means that if someone is targeted because of words they're searching, or because they visit the Merrill website, and then enter the City of Merrill, they will be counted as a Geo-Action/conversion.
- In previous months, we only tracked the tactics that target by location, like our Geo-opt and Geofencing tactics. We can easily switch it back to this, and I would probably recommend at least stopping this tracking on the Site Retargeting tactic, but I thought I'd let them discuss it.
- Geofencing was our best-performing tactic in terms of clicks, but Site Retargeting (with clicks and online actions combined) generated the most web traffic.
- The display ads are - jobs = .15%, Houses = .17, and Schools = .17% CTR. All of this regard to click-through rates are up quite a bit compared to the month of December.
- On the YouTube side of things, we've also seen a considerable increase in performance. We served 112,672 impressions in January, up about 19% compared to December. We also saw 12 clicks, which is always nice to see some clicks on a video campaign, even though the main KPI is video completion.
- All of the videos are just over a 96% completion rate, and the A Day in the week of Merrill - Sunday (Parks) had the highest engagement in regards too clicks.