



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

Regular Meeting	City Hall Council Chambers	5:15 PM
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To attend remotely call 615-640-0169 PIN 734 587 266 #

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
 - 1. Minutes from the February 20th meeting.
- III. General Agenda Items for Consideration**
 - 1. Discuss and consider the January and February revenue/expense reports.
 - 2. Review and discuss the Marketing Strategy Revisions
 - 3. Business Survey update
 - 4. Chamber of Commerce - update
 - 5. LCEDC Economic Summit Opportunity
- IV. Monthly Reports and Updates**
 - 1. Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - 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, April 17th 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, FEBRUARY 20, 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: D4 Alderperson Fermanich, D8 Alderperson Rutkowski, D5 Alderperson Holdorf
Present Not Voting: Social Media Specialist/Fairgrounds Coordinator Hallie Savall, Scott Steele, Sarah Sturm, Mayor Hass, CA Akey, City Clerk Anderson-Malm, Cameo Almli, IT Manager Brown, Sarah Guild, Merrill Community Media.
 - 1. Introduce D5 Alderperson - Landis Holdorf** - Chair Fermanich introduced newly appointed District 5 Alderperson Landis Holdorf to the committee.
- II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
 - 1. January 23 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. The March meeting packet will include January and February Revenue/Expense reports. -**
 - 2. Discuss and Consider the 2025 Marketing Strategies & Focus** - Scott Steele led the discussion and provided an overview of the previous strategy. LCECD Guild joined the discussion and provided additional information. Following the presentation, no action was taken. This will be on the March agenda for further discussion.
 - 3. Business Hiring Survey - update** - Scott Steele provided an update. The survey will be sent via email to businesses.
 - 4. Chamber of Commerce - update** - Sarah Sturm provided an update. She mentioned the 4 shows the Chamber has participated in and updated information regarding the NFL draft.
- IV. Monthly Reports and Updates**
 - 1. Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - Fairgrounds Coordinator/Social Media Specialist Savall** - SMS Savall highlighted some items from her report.
 - 2. Monthly Report - Midwest Communications** - Cameo Almli from Midwest Communications provided additional information and highlighted some items on her report.
 - 3. Consider placing monthly reports on file** - Alderperson Rutkowski motioned to place the reports on file. Alderperson Holdorf seconded and the motion passed.

V. Public Comment None.

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

VII. Adjournment Alderperson Holdorf motioned to adjourn. Alderperson Rutkowski seconded and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by City Clerk Anderson-Malm

Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next scheduled meeting.

26 -Reserved - Non-Lapsing
M&C - Cable/Video

	ANNUAL BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	Y-T-D ACTUAL	% OF BUDGET	BUDGET BALANCE
REVENUES					
=====					
<u>Intergovernmental</u>					
45305-43439 State VSP Aid	24,324.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,324.00
45305-43510 CARES COVID-19 Reimb	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL Intergovernmental	24,324.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,324.00
<u>Licenses and Permits</u>					
45305-44900 Cable Franchise (Less Adm)	95,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95,500.00
TOTAL Licenses and Permits	95,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95,500.00
TOTAL REVENUES	119,824.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	119,824.00
EXPENDITURES					
=====					
<u>Supplies & Expenses</u>					
55305-03-40000 MAPS Merrill Productions	35,650.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	35,650.00
55305-03-40022 Closed Captioning Legal	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-45000 Audio-Chambers & Expo	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-46389 Wi-Fi Public Replacements	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-46390 Software-Web Filtering	2,250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,250.00
55305-03-46400 Social Media Archiving	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-46500 Festival Grounds & Expo	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47250 City Website Hosting	4,650.00	4,650.00	4,650.00	100.00	0.00
55305-03-47500 Accela Live Streaming	10,250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,250.00
55305-03-47523 CivicPlus - Meetings	4,600.00	9,415.35	9,415.35	204.68	(4,815.35)
55305-03-47533 M&C Committee - Resources	4,600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,600.00
55305-03-47534 MWC Monthly Ads	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47536 Visitor Guide Ads	3,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00
55305-03-47555 Marketing Contractor	32,208.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,208.00
55305-03-47557 Social Media Contractor	32,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,500.00
55305-03-47566 M&C - Cell Phone	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47575 LCEDC Marketing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL Supplies & Expenses	129,708.00	14,065.35	14,065.35	10.84	115,642.65
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	129,708.00	14,065.35	14,065.35	10.84	115,642.65
REVENUES OVER/(UNDER) EXPENDITURES	(9,884.00)	(14,065.35)	(14,065.35)	0.00	4,181.35

26 -Reserved - Non-Lapsing
M&C - Cable/Video

	ANNUAL BUDGET	CURRENT PERIOD	Y-T-D ACTUAL	% OF BUDGET	BUDGET BALANCE
REVENUES					
=====					
<u>Intergovernmental</u>					
45305-43439 State VSP Aid	24,324.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,324.00
45305-43510 CARES COVID-19 Reimb	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL Intergovernmental	24,324.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,324.00
<u>Licenses and Permits</u>					
45305-44900 Cable Franchise (Less Adm)	95,500.00	23,471.13	23,471.13	24.58	72,028.87
TOTAL Licenses and Permits	95,500.00	23,471.13	23,471.13	24.58	72,028.87
TOTAL REVENUES	119,824.00	23,471.13	23,471.13	19.59	96,352.87
EXPENDITURES					
=====					
<u>Supplies & Expenses</u>					
55305-03-40000 MAPS Merrill Productions	35,650.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	35,650.00
55305-03-40022 Closed Captioning Legal	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-45000 Audio-Chambers & Expo	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-46389 Wi-Fi Public Replacements	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-46390 Software-Web Filtering	2,250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,250.00
55305-03-46400 Social Media Archiving	0.00	3,978.60	3,978.60	0.00	(3,978.60)
55305-03-46500 Festival Grounds & Expo	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47250 City Website Hosting	4,650.00	0.00	4,650.00	100.00	0.00
55305-03-47500 Accela Live Streaming	10,250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,250.00
55305-03-47523 CivicPlus - Meetings	4,600.00	0.00	9,415.35	204.68	(4,815.35)
55305-03-47533 M&C Committee - Resources	4,600.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,600.00
55305-03-47534 MWC Monthly Ads	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47536 Visitor Guide Ads	3,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00
55305-03-47555 Marketing Contractor	32,208.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	32,208.00
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55305-03-47566 M&C - Cell Phone	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47575 LCEDC Marketing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL Supplies & Expenses	129,708.00	3,978.60	18,043.95	13.91	111,664.05
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	129,708.00	3,978.60	18,043.95	13.91	111,664.05
REVENUES OVER/(UNDER) EXPENDITURES	(9,884.00)	19,492.53	5,427.18	0.00	(15,311.18)

Merrill, Wisconsin

Marketing and Communications Committee

2025-2027 Strategy Update March 10, 2025

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 18-45.
 - ii. Recent high school or college graduates.
 - iii. Mid-level professional and mid-level laborer, early to mid-career.
 - iv. Interests align with attributes found in Merrill.
 - v. Willingness to move or travel.
 - vi. Include relevant zip codes within Wisconsin but outside of Lincoln County as well as continuing efforts in MN, IA and IL.
 - c. Four challenging “truths”
 - i. Merrill population is declining.
 - ii. Merrill population is aging.
 - iii. There an insufficient pipeline of young individuals or families moving into Merrill.
 - iv. There is an insufficient 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, Tik Tok, 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.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Join us for this important summit designed to empower and improve rural businesses and communities.

Get powered up by engaging in either a full day or half day of economic energy. Learn about the issues that can help drive your business and community to the next level of success.

9:00 a.m. ECONOMIC UPDATES (Morning Session)

- Local economic updates.
- State of the Economy address by **John Koskinen**, Chief Economist for the WI Dept of Revenue.
- Keynote presentation by **Mike Ward**, WEDC.

12:00 p.m. FOOD TRUCK LUNCH

1:00 p.m. ECONOMIC EDUCATION (Afternoon Session)

Three different break-out session tracks will allow you to choose the educational path that powers up your business best!

Managing Your Business:



- a. Building a Culture of Retention.
- b. Finding Resources to Run your Business.
- c. Legal Foundations for Small Businesses.

Financing Your Business:



- a. Business Funding Options and Sources.
- b. Doing Business with the Government.
- c. Tips and Tools to Secure Funding.

Marketing Your Business:



- a. Marketing Method Pros and Cons.
- b. Marketing on a Budget.
- c. Working with Marketing Partners.

Closing Presentation:



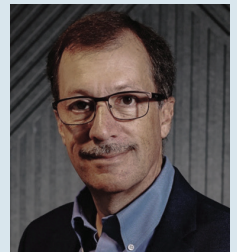
Empowering Economies Through Entrepreneurs.

Keynote Speaker

Mike Ward, VP,
Business & Community
Development, WEDC

Topic:

Empowering Rural
Economies



Tickets:

- \$40 full-day:
Includes lunch by local food trucks.
- \$25 half-day (includes lunch).
- \$20 half-day (no lunch).
- \$200 reserved table:
Include 6 seats and lunch.

Event open to anyone looking to power up their business, their community, and their local economy!

Registration Deadline is April 6.

To register and for more information, visit tinyurl.com/2025EconomicSummit or email Director@lincolncountyedc.org, or call/text (715) 390-0747.

More session details are available at tinyurl.com/2025EconomicSummit.

Help Power Up this Event – CONTACT US ABOUT BECOMING A SPONSOR!

tinyurl.com/2025EconomicSummit | Email Director@lincolncountyedc.org | Call/text (715) 390-0747



**LINCOLN
COUNTY**
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

2025 Economic Summit

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Registration Opens: 8:15 a.m.

Inshalla Country Club, N11060 Clear Lake Rd, Tomahawk, WI 54487

March 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 met with Dustin about the analytics for the website.

I met with LaDonna, Scott, Cameo and Connor about marketing strategies.

Social Media -

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

MWC -

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

Food Truck-a-Palooza

I have 20 confirmed food trucks, 21 craft/vendors, and \$7100 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.

February 2025 Social Media Analytics

Facebook Page Reach: 8,345 (Up 33.9%)

- *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: 31,660 (Down 5.2 %)

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

New Facebook Page Likes: 9

Cumulative Facebook Page Likes: 3,561

Link Clicks on page - 20

Content (Most Popular by Reach)

1. Food Truck Post (Reach 5,207; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares 29)
2. Free Fishing weekend (Reach 3,521; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares:64)
3. Officer Brendan swearing in (Reach 939; Likes, Reactions, Comments, shares and link clicks: 36)
4. Weinbrenner (Reach 828; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 67)
5. Nominate for street signs (Reach 816; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 7)

LinkedIn -

We Currently have 44 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 36 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.

Website Analytics 2025							
	Acquisition	Experience Merrill		Home Page		Park & Recreation	
	<u>"midwest"</u>	<u>Views</u>	<u>Active Users</u>	<u>Views</u>	<u>Active Users</u>	<u>Views</u>	<u>Active Users</u>
May 2024	68	103	92	3602	2365	753	455
June 2024	72	76	70	3342	2324	826	494
July 2024	101	88	82	4040	2868	989	573
August 2024	87	429	373	4362	3263	804	461
September 2024	136	2539	2495	2820	1783	516	339
October 2024	294	1586	1545	2639	1457	317	198
November 2024	288	1636	1561	1989	1144	344	211
December 2024	270	1845	1789	2143	1207	325	208
January 2025	306	3096	3026	2409	1235	534	307
February 2025	307	774	717	1981	1028	586	340