

Merrill Enrichment Center Committee

Thursday January 16th, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

MEC Conference Room 303 N. Sales Street 2:15pm

Present: Laura Bertagnoli (Chair), Mark Weix (Alderpersion), Gene Bebel, Jay Tlusty, Sharon Harvey, Carol Holz, Elizabeth McCrank, Jennifer Clark (ADRC representative)

I. Opening

1. Bertagnoli called the meeting to order.

II. Consent Items

1. Motion by Weix, second by Tlusty to approve Nov '24 minutes. Director will fix words as pointed out by Bertagnoli and Holz. Motion carried.
2. Motion by Holz, second by McCrank to approve Nov-Dec '24 vouchers. Motion carried. Director noted the end of year revenues were \$11,398 but still waiting on year-end report from Finance Director.

III. Public Comment

1. Hallie Savall, the City's Social Media Specialist, introduced that she will be the new Fair Grounds Coordinator as well. She will be in charge of expo rentals as well as city events. McCrank stated this will be helpful for the MEC staff to work on coordination of events between the City and MEC. Bebel questioned the camper hook up needs on the Festival Grounds for events such as the horse shows. Savall has not heard of any plans for additional hook ups. She did share there will be 3 flea markets that will be held this summer on the grounds. Bertagnoli asked what the ice was near the grandstands. Savall shared there are for ice races, a new event for Merrill. Tlusty asked if there are any plans for buildings where the trees had come down on Memorial drive. Weix stated there will be fencing going up. Bertagnoli thanked Hallie for coming and Tlusty stated he was pleased to know the City budgeted for her social media position.
2. Discussion on the National Guard Building also was mentioned. Weix shared that the city is trying to acquire, but nothing is final yet.

IV. ADRC

Jennifer Clark shared the following information regarding funding changes for the ADRC;

1. Meals on Wheels will be negatively affected as funding has been cut, which equates to 40,000 meals. Frozen meals *may be* eliminated. Committee questions centered on what funding was cut and why. Clark shared that ARPA funds/grants given during COVID had now run out. Other Federal monies that went into the program were reduced 42%. That money covered meals but also the cost of volunteer mileage and other expenses. In addition the meal cost has gone up to \$6 vs. \$5 which is a 40% increase since 2019. Suggested donations from recipients will now be \$6 per meal but they are not required to pay that. There may be other funding sources, grants, etc., available that will be looked into. Bertagnoli and other committee members asked what we can do. Clark stated to talk to our representatives to voice how important it is to fund this program.
2. The ADRC is in need of advisory members. They meet on the fourth Wednesday, every other month. Contact the ADRC office for further information if you are interested.

V. Operations

1. The MEC's Christmas Joy celebration was held on December 19th starting at 10:30am, with socialization and snacks, followed by music from the Brass Patina Group. We had 36 deliveries of meals and small gift bags to those spending the holiday alone. We had 3 volunteers from Church Mutual assisting us in packing to-go boxes. Presents included a bowl cozy - handmade by our volunteer quilters, lotion, chapstick, hot chocolate & cider, a calendar and socks. Food was ham, steak rolls, baked potatoes, green beans, apples, oranges and homemade treats and cookies from Jim Blair.
2. Attendance for exercise classes has been amazing since our return in January and hopes those with New Year's Resolutions stay the course.
3. Director shared that January attendance has been fantastic! Attendance averages are at 60 people per day with Monday and Wednesday at 72 and 89. We are working on brainstorming new ideas for activities for Tuesdays and Thursdays.
4. Strong Bodies currently has a total of 28 participants. This is the highest number we have had in the program. Our next session begins on March 4th, and we are excited to offer a 7am class for early birds. Jennifer Thorson, our newest instructor, will be leading that group.

5. Our first Art & Craft DeStash Event will be held on March 29th from 10am-2pm. This event allows vendors to bring Art/ Craft/Hobby Supplies - which is anything you use to make your art/craft such as paints, brushes, easels, pastels, fabric, metal, stones, yarn, beads, just to name a few. Gently used tools (used for hobbies, arts & crafts) and display items. What NOT to bring to the DeStash? Finished or completed arts and crafts. This is not a rummage sale/flea market event.

VI. Discussion

1. Bebel inquired into the craft shop asking if it is what we expect it to be, which is a good value for both the person selling goods, and those buying. Bertagnoli added our low 15 % fee is also beneficial to the seller. In addition the variety of items for sale is very good. Holz added that crafters should try to get items into the shop before our craft event.
2. Members inquired into the status of our Health Fair. Director informed them that flyers will go out with our newsletters as initial outreach was not as strong as expected.
3. Bebel added that he and the entire guys group appreciate the hospitality of the MEC employees. Tlusty shared the loss of 3 of the group members in the last few months of 2024. He shared the sentiments from the families on how important and meaningful it was for them to be a part of the MEC guys group. Director added how difficult it is for us also when we lose participants, as they become part of our MEC family.

VII. Adjournment

1. Motion to adjourn by Harvey second by Holz.

The next meeting date is **February 20th, 2025 at 2:15pm at the MEC.** *Vouchers available for review 10 minutes prior to meeting time.*

Respectfully submitted, TMrachek



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