



CITY OF MERRILL
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
AGENDA • THURSDAY NOVEMBER 18, 2021

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:15 PM

- I. To attend remotely, call 385-645-6872 and PIN 868 110 027 #.
- II. Call to Order
- III. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):
 1. Minutes of October 6, 2021 and October 21, 2021 meetings
- IV. Agenda Items
 1. Discuss Marketing, Branding & Communications Budget
 2. Discuss Timeline
- V. Public Comment Period
- VI. Establish date, time & location of next meeting
- VII. Adjournment



CITY OF MERRILL
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
MINUTES • WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6, 2021

Special Meeting**City Hall Council Chambers****6:00 PM****I. Call to Order**

Alderman Blake called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Blake	Chair	Present	
John M. Van Lieshout	Aldersperson - Fifth District	Present	
Mark Weix	Aldersperson - Seventh District	Present	
Dan Wendorf	Park and Recreation Director	Present	
Tammie Mrachek	Community Enrichment Center Director	Present	
Jessica Zellers	Library Director	Present	

Other attendees (either in-person or remotely) included: City Administrator Dave Johnson, City Attorney Tom Hayden, John Greenwood, Renea Frederick, Scott Steele, Clyde Nelson, Gene Bebel, Mike Ravn, Nancy Kwiesielewicz, Kris McGarigle and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Merrill Productions was present to videotape the meeting.

II. Agenda Item:**1. Introductions**

The meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. Review and update of Marketing and Communications Committee activities to this point

Discussion was held on the progress of the committee to date.

Presentation by Scott Steele, Vice President Chief Marketing Officer, Church Mutual Insurance Company

Scott Steele led discussion on a Power Point presentation. "Marketing, Branding & Communications Initiative".

The following topics were addressed during the presentation:

- Vision
- Mission
- Values
- Marketing Strategy
- Define Objectives
- Current Situation
- Target Audience
- Communications
- Personnel

Work on Brand Development is pending.

The timeline included in the presentation was then reviewed.

3. Discussion regarding possible marketing collaboration between City of Merrill and Merrill Chamber of Commerce

Opportunities for the City and the Chamber to work together were suggested and considered.

There was a suggestion to schedule a "focus" meeting between several committee members and several Chamber representatives.

III. Public Comment Period

None.

IV. Review Dates for Remaining Scheduled 2021 Regular Meetings:

Thursday, October 21st

Thursday, November 18th

Thursday, December 16th

(All meetings to begin at 5:15 P.M. in the City Hall Common Council Chambers)

V. Adjournment

Motion (Van Lieshout/Weix) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 7:22 P.M.



CITY OF MERRILL
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS
MINUTES • THURSDAY OCTOBER 21, 2021

Regular Meeting**City Hall Council Chambers****5:15 PM****I. Call to Order**

Alderman Blake called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Blake	Chair	Present	
John M. Van Lieshout	Aldersperson - Fifth District	Present	5:18 PM
Mark Weix	Aldersperson - Seventh District	Present	
Jessica Zellers	Library Director	Present	

Other attendees (either in-person or remotely) included: Melissa Wrycha, Renea Frederick, Scott Steele, City Attorney Tom Hayden and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Merrill Productions was present to videotape the meeting.

II. Agenda Items:**1. Update on reaction/input from Merrill Chamber of Commerce regarding October 20, 2021 presentation by Melissa Wrycha.**

Melissa Wrycha reported that the presentation seemed to go well. The Chamber seemed very interested in collaboration, although they did have some questions and concerns.

Alderman Blake mentioned that he will be extending an “official” invitation to Clyde Nelson to attend future Marketing and Communications Committee meetings. Mr. Nelson is the Executive Director of the Chamber.

2. Discuss Communications, Personnel and Budget sections of Marketing, Branding and Communications Initiative.

Information was in the meeting packet.

This agenda item was not addressed at the meeting.

3. Consider budget recommendations to forward to October 29, 2021 Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting.

Scott Steele led discussion on expenses that will be necessary components of an initial Marketing Budget. He noted that we will need to weight the “worth” of various components, based on available resources.

Hiring a Social Media person is necessary. Scott Steele suggested that this be a contracted, part-time position, approximately 20 hours per week. He estimated the annual cost for this position at \$25,000.

Hiring a Director of Communications is also necessary. Scott Steele suggested that this also be a contracted position, with the person working 30 to 35 hours per week. He estimated the annual cost for this position at \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Alderman Van Lieshout suggested that the Chamber of Commerce should be approached for possible funding for some of the costs.

Annual advertising costs were estimated at \$36,000, although Scott Steele suggested that, for 2022 only, \$27,000 (April to December) may suffice.

Funds will also be necessary for materials, branding and a logo. The total of these costs were estimated to be \$25,000 to \$35,000.

The total amount needed for 2022 was estimated at \$100,000 to \$120,000.

Alderman Blake suggested that Cable Franchise Fee funds are available to help fund the 2022 Marketing Budget. He proposed that the request to the Common Council be for \$125,000.

Alderman Blake will discuss the proposal with City Administrator Johnson and Finance Director Unertl, and a formal proposal will be drafted, for consideration at the October 29th Committee of the Whole budget meeting.

4. Next Steps

Scott Steele will begin drafting a job description for the Director of Communications position.

III. Public Comment Period

None.

IV. Establish date, time & location of next meeting

The next regular meeting has already been scheduled. It will be at 5:15 P.M. on Thursday, November 18th, and will be held in the City Hall Common Council Chambers.

V. Adjournment

Motion (Weix/Van Lieshout) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:06 P.M.



Merrill, Wisconsin

Marketing, Branding & Communications Budget

Update 10.29.21



Social Media

Social media will be integral in helping to tell Merrill's story and connect with new audiences and engage its current audience. The city will focus on four "buckets" to help guide content development:

1. Education: Keep people informed on what is happening – City Hall meetings, updates on projects, initiatives, etc.
2. Business: Focus on recruitment, local business updates, business/people features.
3. Entertainment: Share events, activities, etc.
4. Showcase: Feature unique stories/people/culture/etc. that highlight Merrill as a great place to live and work.

Facebook and Instagram: The City of Merrill can use posts, video, targeted advertising, and Groups to connect to a wide audience. It should become a trusted central source for community information. Note: Video dominates social media and tends to receive more exposure and engagement than posts.

LinkedIn: Actively use this platform to connect with professionals and job seekers. The City of Merrill can share some of the same content shared on Facebook, with a focus on sharing content for a professional audience.

- Merrill should prioritize creating a LinkedIn page.
After the LinkedIn page is created, City of Merrill employees should update their LinkedIn profile so they are following the City of Merrill page.
- Employees will also be encouraged to share content using their own personal profiles to help spread awareness about the new LinkedIn page and to encourage others to follow.

Social Media Advertising: Social media ads are some of the most cost-effective ads for a business. The City of Merrill can use targeting to reach our target audiences. Social Media Growth Goals

- The City of Merrill has an established presence on Facebook, with over 1,900 followers and over 1,700 likes. Facebook goals will include increasing the number of followers and increasing the level of engagement of posts.
- The City of Merrill does not currently have a presence on LinkedIn. LinkedIn goals will include establishing a LinkedIn page and a focus on growing the page.



Personnel

Objectives: *To consistently and adequately inform residents and local businesses about issues, programs and initiatives that will have a direct impact on them or their neighborhoods and to regularly engage individuals in open and meaningful dialogue.*

Recommendation: *Engage the services of a communications specialist (non-full-time employee).*

The objectives would be achieved through a range of public relations activities and communication channels including digital and social media, internal communication and speaking opportunities. Under the guidance of the Merrill Marketing Committee (Committee) and in collaboration with the various departmental teams (Departments), the consultant will undertake the following:

- Provide a central point of contract for internal and external communications efforts.
- Intentionally and clearly communicate policies, programs and processes to the community.
- Create a process for gaining community feedback and ensuring their voices are heard and considered.
- Ensures consistent processes are followed.
- Supports the Merrill community in developing, reviewing, editing and translating of communication materials, including public relations/media relations coordination and engagement.
- Works with the Committee and Departments to identify projects, stories and messages that are engaging, motivating and high quality, and which communicate impact and showcase the efforts of the City and community partners.
- Vets major issue and incident communications with assigned City personnel prior to public announcement.
- Contributes to identifying new and creative ways to enhance the visibility and outreach of the efforts of the Committee and Departments.
- Supports the Committee and Departments with the creation and/or delivery of communications activities and products such as written content, newsletters, social posts and events, related to the work of the City and community partners.
- Navigates the dissemination of communications in an accurate and timely manner through multiple channels (website, social, PR, meetings, etc.).
- Ensures that all communication materials synergize with the Committee communications strategies and branding.
- Ensures all communication material is targeted at agreed audiences and delivers agreed key messages.
- Documents learnings and build a 'library' of communication materials.



Personnel

Objectives: *To consistently and adequately inform residents and local businesses about issues, programs and initiatives that will have a direct impact on them or their neighborhoods and to regularly engage individuals in open and meaningful dialogue.*

Recommendation: *Engage the services of a Social Media Content Manager (non-full-time employee).*

Under the guidance of the Merrill Marketing Committee (Committee) and in collaboration with the Communications Specialist and the various departmental teams (Departments), the consultant will undertake the following:

- Leverage technologies to proactively and effectively communicate about City activities.
- Create content and maintain City Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn page; participate in the existing Facebook Merrill-Lincoln County community groups; continue to leverage the City website (ci.Merrill.wi.us).
- Monitor social media channels and interact, respond in a positive manner.



Budget Draft

Marketing Plan	Marketing Committee	No cost
Communications Specialist	Freelance – work for hire \$30 - \$35/hr x 30hrs/wk x 52wks	\$46,800 - \$54,600
Social Media Content Manager	Freelance – work for hire \$20 - \$25/hr x 20 hrs/wk	\$12,000 - \$15,000 per year
Social Media Ad Budget - Includes fees associated with 3 rd party ad placement and reporting.	Content Manager \$3,000/mo x 9mo	\$27,000 per year
Branding	Designer to create the brand identity elements	\$25,000 - \$35,000
City Materials	City materials would need to be updated to reflect any changes. New materials would be created to support the effort.	We do not have an inventory of materials to quote. But should take into consideration brochures, signage and any other market-facing materials. This could be well into six-figure territory.

Total Budget Range: \$110,800 - \$131,600

Timeline (Draft only)

The timeline for the marketing and branding will need to be somewhat fluid, considering that the committee is made up of volunteers. But, with a commitment to completion, we anticipate the following could be achieved.

Marketing

- ▪ Stage One (October 2021): Publicly share the marketing and branding effort and the updated vision, mission and values statements.
- ▪ Stage Two November 2021): Present full plan recommendations.
- ▪ Stage Three (January 2022 – taking holidays into consideration): City and community provide input.
- ▪ Stage Four (February 2022): 1) Finalize and approve the plan; 2) Begin implementation of the communications plan.
- ▪ Stage Five: Coordinate marketing efforts with branding efforts: Anticipate launch end of Q2 2022.

Branding

- ▪ Stage One (January 2022): Marketing Committee present brand recommendations (attributes, promise, personality, value proposition).
- ▪ Stage Two (February 2022): City and community provide input.
- ▪ Stage Three (March 2022): Finalize brand recommendations.
- ▪ Stage Four (May 2022): Marketing Committee present brand recommendations (story, tagline, identity)
- ▪ Stage Five (June 2022): City and community provide input on recommendations.
- ▪ Stage Six (July 2022): Finalize brand recommendations
- ▪ Stage Seven (August 2022): Launch marketing and brand campaigns.