

Merrill Enrichment Center Committee

Thursday April 17th, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

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

Present: Laura Bertagnoli (Chair), Mark Weix (Aldersperson), 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 Tlusty second by McCrank to approve March '25 minutes. Motion carried. Bertagnoli acknowledged the agreement between her and McCrank that in her absence McCrank would act as Chair. All were in favor.
2. Bebel asked how we pay instructors and if the \$3 fee is changing. Director said at this time we have no reason to change the \$3. She also explained the different percentages taken from instructors based on their pricing. Some incorporate the \$3 and others are a flat percent. Motion by Bebel second by Tlusty to approve Feb-March '25 vouchers. Bertagnoli mentioned the benefit of the punch card which is now \$30 and we draw at the end of the month for a free punch card. *This is easier to manage vs. how we initially started.* Bebel also asked if we receive any money from the Expo rentals. Director explained that we do not as that is rented directly through the City.

III. Public Comment - none

IV. ADRC

1. Clark stated they are currently in the middle of the State 2025-2027 budget process. Budget hearings are at NTC at the College Center for Health Services, April 29th from 10am- 5pm. The Joint Committee on Finance will be there. It is a public hearing that anyone can attend. Jennifer will be speaking regarding Healthy Aging Grants which focused on Fall Prevention. If people cannot attend in person, they are able to fill out a form online. Bertagnoli asked if there is a deadline on written submissions. Jennifer will find out and also provided the links below that people can reach out to support MOW funding and/or Fall Prevention work.
 - a. Written testimony can be shared with JFC (Joint Committee on Finance) members via an online portal at <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/listening-sessions/ausau/>
 - b. Via email at budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - c. Send via U.S. mail to: Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702Tlusty asked the current status of MOW including the frozen meals. Meals will go from 5 days to 4 days. He also asked how the people are picked to go from 5 to 4. Clark thought it was based on individual need but will check into it. Bebel asked if the MOW program is affected by what is happening at the National level. Jennifer will check into this as well. Weix asked what percent the ADRC receives from Federal government. Director recalls information showing both State and County breakdowns from Federal budget. Clark will look into this for us. Bebel also asked if MOW is in need of volunteers. Clark stated there is always a need and some organizations have a team approach, or some individuals can deliver one time a week.
2. Clark emailed the ADRC Nutrition supervisors and leadership staff to see if someone would be willing to attend the May MEC meeting to provide a more in-depth update regarding MOW funding.

V. Operations

1. DeStash recap – Director shared the floor with MEC employees Victoria Gaedtke and Stephanie Zoellner to discuss the success of the MEC's new DeStash offering. Gaedtke shared how she came across the event idea on Facebook and explained what the event actually is; an event where artists, crafters, and hobbyists sell unused, leftover pieces, etc...from their projects. Gaedtke shared that we had people lined up outside the door prior to opening. We also had Polka-dotted pie serving sandwiches out of our kitchen. The MEC made approximately \$1435 which included table fees and what we sold from cleaning out our closets. Zoellner added that we also donated remaining items to Park & Rec for their summer playground as well as to St. Vincent De Paul. In addition, we recruited a few of the people to teach classes here at the Center. The event was well received and we plan to offer this event again next year. Director thanked Tina Scott for the write up to promote the new event in the Foto News giving credit of the write-up to Vicki who was the voice behind the words.

2. Summer Luncheons – Director brought this to the committee for a brainstorming session. The MEC has remaining funding from the Bierman Foundation grants received back in 2015-16 which included a weekly community meal. Shortly after moving to the new Center, the program ended. The reason was that it took up our entire week and made it difficult to offer all of the other programs and activities that we have currently.
Recently, the MEC staff thought of offering a summer luncheon to those who need it most. A few ideas that we came up with were food trucks or having food brought in to serve. Our target group would align with what it used to be which included the housing authority. However, the population in these locations looks different than what it used to be.
Vicki thought of container vegetables they could grow, take care of, and have veggies for meals. We thought of 65 and up but that would be difficult to gather that information. Stephanie added having food catered here, or packaging meals and delivery to the housing authority, but then they are not socializing. Director asked committee for ideas on how we can reach the market we used to reach. McCrank asked how many days we were planning on and how many meals. Zoellner stated once a month during the summer so possibly 4-5 events consisting of 20-30 meals. Zoellner mentioned that we want the meal program money to last, at least a few years or so.
Director stated the most important focus is what demographic we want to reach, which would be those most in need. Bebel asked if we are looking for referrals. McCrank mentioned the meals on wheels program... is there confidentiality there or could we have them as our target reach? Director loves this idea. It aligns with what the Bierman foundation donated the money for. McCrank also asked if we could use our bus to pick up people. Stephanie recommended the Merrill-go-round for in town and we could foot the bill. Bertagnoli recommended breaking it down by area for pick-up as well. Tlusty asked if we have money for transportation. Director confirmed we do under the specified market it was intended for. The Committee discussion resulted in trying to reach those who are active in the Meals on Wheels program, as the funding for this program has been cut. Jennifer Clark, ADRC representative is looking into the possibility and we will revisit this again in May.
3. May offerings include a Farm to Table workshop that will be on the 7th at 11am. It did not make our newsletter so we will promote on Facebook, in house, and on the radio. We also have our Business Lunch & Learn on May 13th, a new Grief Book Study and a few new art classes.

VI. Discussion

1. Holz asked if we were considering a volunteer appreciation as last year's luncheon was very well received. Director stated we are looking into the first part of May.

VII. Adjournment

1. Motion to adjourn by Bebel second by Tlusty.

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

Respectfully submitted, TMrachek



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