

**CITY OF MERRILL
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 4:15 PM**

- I. **Call to Order** Chairperson Krueger called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.
- II. **Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
 1. **June 2025 Minutes** - (Osness/D8 Alderperson Rutkowski) motion/second approve. The motion Passed.
- III. **Approval of Claims**
 1. **June 2025 Bills** -
 2. **July 2025 Bills** - Krueger suggested going through both June and July claims and considering with one motion at the end. There were several questions for Wendorf, which he answered for the Commission.

(D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/ Kubichek) motion/second approve. The motion Passed.
- IV. **General Agenda Items for Consideration**
 1. **Consider potential shelter building at Lion's Park - donated by Merrill Baseball Association & Pinno Buildings** - Wendorf began discussion by summarizing the idea and explaining what is being proposed and why it will help with youth baseball at Lion's Park. Wendorf stated that this has been discussed for well over 10 years by the Merrill Baseball Association and earlier this summer the discussion advanced to Pinno Buildings as one of their employees is now helping coach youth baseball and is at the park frequently. The idea includes moving the existing concession (portable Baker Barn) 90 degrees to the east so it faces south and construct a shelter facility over the top extending to the south to provide shade and protection from foul balls to patrons. Wendorf stated this is a good thing for the park and for the patron experience at Lion's Park. This individual approached his employer asking if they would be interested in cost sharing the project with MBA and they agreed to cover 50% of the cost, and MBA will cover the remaining 50%. The City of Merrill will not have to cover any of the costs of this project. Wendorf stated that because of the assumed value of the project (even if donated) has to be approved by the Commission and Personnel and Finance Committee.

(D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/ Gulke) motion/second approve. The motion Passed.
 2. **Consider potentially paving a trail through the MARC - potential donation from River District Development Foundation** - Wendorf began the discussion by providing background on the subject. He explained the Lincoln County ARPA funding that the River District Development Foundation

received for trail work that was initially intended for a potential extension near the Wastewater Treatment Plant that may not be able to be used because of flood plain issues. The RDDF pivoted recently to look at a better way to invest these funds in trail development and that led to the MARC. Wendorf said he met with reps from the RDDF, City Engineer, and Council Grounds State Park to brainstorm ways to provide a more complete trail through the MARC and connect to Council Grounds. Wendorf described the map that was provided with the different options that were discussed and the reasoning for each. Wendorf said the recommendation from the group was option A, which consists of creating a new trail between Rock Ridge Apartments and the soccer fields from Grand Ave. south to the existing trail, turning west over the drainage ditch towards the dog park and continuing behind softball diamonds 1 & 2 and eventually linking up directly with the trail that leads to Council Grounds. Option 1 includes a paved trail and allows pedestrians to access the park without having to contend with MARC drive or the parking lot if they don't want to. Krueger asked if this would include an approach cut out of the sidewalk at the location where the trail enters the MARC grounds by Rock Ridge. Wendorf said he would ask the City Engineer if that was possible but he did say that the actual River Bend Trail is the south sidewalk and if an approach is built there may have to be a crosswalk put in that location as well. He said he will discuss with City Engineer. Wendorf said he recommends Option 1 because it meets all of the criteria that has been discussed over the past 5+ years by the RDDF and many pedestrians who have provided feedback. Wendorf said this will have to follow the same process as the previous agenda item, as it is a donation to the City it will need P&R Commission and P&F approvals.

(D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/ Kubichek) motion/second approve. The motion Passed.

- 3. Begin discussion on 2026 Capital Equipment & Projects** - Wendorf began the discussion by reviewing the provided Capital Improvement list that was discussed for several months in late winter/early spring. Wendorf stated that this is introductory and wanted to begin discussion, so Commissioners have an opportunity to spend some time carefully considering which items they want to select for potential funding and which items they may wish to defer to future years. Wendorf stated that the first few items on the list were partially funded in 2025 and should definitely remain on the request list for 2026 so that we can finish those projects and not have to worry about them anymore. Wendorf also discussed the Streeter Square Basketball Courts and suggested removing them from the request list because they became a stumbling block during discussions last year. He said the courts are still in bad shape, but he would still like to have the surface replaced and will find a way to do it without asking City Council for funding. Wendorf also stated that he may add sand replacement in the pool filters to the list and has to evaluate that as soon as the pool closes (can't do it while in operation). Wendorf then continued by

mentioning each of the items that were listed and suggested moving a few of them to future years to give us a smaller list and a better chance at receiving funding. There were several questions that Wendorf answered and he invited the Commissioners to contact him at any time to discuss any items on the list or meet at any time if anyone needed any clarification or had thoughts to share. Wendorf then shared an idea involving asking City Council to provide a budgetary number/amount that they are comfortable borrowing for and having all departments work together to stay at or below that number. Wendorf stated it accomplishes the exact same objective but would potentially streamline the process and provide much clearer direction for departments, committees, and commissions. Ultimately, it is completely up to City Council and what they are most comfortable doing. Wendorf said this item will be on the next few agendas so we can continue to discuss and decide by no later than very early October.

V. Monthly Reports

- 1. August 2025 Director's Report** - Wendorf began discussion by fielding several questions from Commissioners regarding different park projects and events. Wendorf then summarized his report and wanted to thank sports organizations and event organizers for their tremendous successes this summer. Wendorf thanked Merrill Girls Softball Association for their unbelievable turnout for their traveling tourney with 49 teams and for hosting the American Legion Girls D1 & D2 State Tourney at the MARC the following weekend. Those two events, combined with Youth Hockey's Adult Hockey Tourney, Black Squirrel Scurry, Aquatic Center brought well over 10,000 people to the MARC grounds and to our community on those two weekends alone. Wendorf also thanked Merrill Baseball Association for their tourneys bringing in almost as many people for their tournaments as well as Youth Soccer for another banner year of youth soccer league! Wendorf mentioned that it seems as though overall park usage is increasing (organized sports, passive park visits, rentals, and trails and special use areas). This is a very positive trend for our community and one that we can hopefully continue to promote and provide.

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 1. The next regularly scheduled meeting would be for Wednesday, September 3rd, at 4:15 p.m. -**

VII. Public Comment Chad Krueger thanked the Parks Department, especially Buildings & Grounds Staff for their great job in prepping and maintaining the MARC Softball Fields and the grounds for their two tournaments. He said he heard a lot of great compliments from out of town visitors who were thoroughly impressed with our facilities.

VIII. Adjournment (Osness/D8 Alderperson Rutkowski) motion/second adjourn. The motion Passed. At 5:35 p.m.

