



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

Regular Meeting **City Hall Council Chambers** **5:15 PM**

To attend remotely call 240-514-8466 PIN 182 153 725 #

I. Call to Order

II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting

1. Minutes from the October 16th meeting.

III. General Agenda Items for Consideration

1. Review October revenue and expense reports
2. Review approved 2026 marketing budget numbers
3. Status and discussion of business marketing videos.
4. Review and discuss banner options.
5. Grant updates
6. Tour of Lights update
7. Food Truck update
8. Chamber update
9. Lincoln County Economic Development update

IV. Monthly Reports and Updates

1. Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - Social Media Specialist Savall
2. Consider placing monthly reports on file

V. Public Comment

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting - Thursday, December 18th 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, OCTOBER 16, 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 (remote)
Present Not Voting: Social Media Specialist/Fairgrounds Coordinator Hallie Savall, City Clerk Anderson-Malm
Excused: Scott Steele, Sarah Sturm
- II. **Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting**
 1. **Minutes from the September 18th meeting** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D5 Alderperson Holdorf) motion/second to place minutes on file. The motion passed.
- III. **General Agenda Items for Consideration**
 1. **Review the September revenue and expense reports** - The revenue and expense reports were reviewed.
 2. **Discuss and review the revised 2026 Budget proposal** - Chair Fermanich discussed the revisions to the 2026 budget from Finance Director Ley.
 3. **Status of business marketing videos** - SMS/FC Savall updated the committee. Nine out of twelve businesses have finished filming. She has received good feedback from the businesses. Scott Steele would like to be involved with the opening and closing of the videos to make sure everything is consistent.
 4. **Tourism grants (Merrill, Wausau)** - Chair Fermanich updated the committee and would like to pursue a tourism grant from Marathon County.
 5. **Tour of lights - update** - SMS/FC Savall stated the sign-up form for homeowners is on the City website. The event is scheduled for December 10 with four to five busses running.
 6. **Food truck discussion** - SMS/FC Savall received feedback from the truck vendors and several stated there were too many trucks. In 2026 there will be 20 food trucks. Hallie is looking for ideas on how to incorporate 20 entries; a first-come-first paid basis is one of the suggestions.
 7. **Chamber updates** - There was no actual report however the Chamber banquet was held last week and they are in the process of working on the destination guides.
 8. **LCED updates** - There was no report.
- IV. **Monthly Reports and Updates**

1. Monthly Report & Statistical Analytics - Social Media Specialist Savall
- The reports were included in the packet.

2. Consider placing monthly reports on file - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D5 Alderperson Holdorf) motion/second to place monthly reports on file. The motion passed.

V. Public Comment There was no public comment.

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

VII. Adjournment (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D5 Alderperson Holdorf) motion/second to adjourn. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 5:40 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
<u>REVENUES</u> =====					
<u>Intergovernmental</u>					
45305-43439 State VSP Aid	24,324.00	0.00	24,324.37	100.00	(0.37)
TOTAL Intergovernmental	24,324.00	0.00	24,324.37	100.00	(0.37)
<u>Licenses and Permits</u>					
45305-44900 Cable Franchise (Less Adm)	95,500.00	0.00	64,372.83	67.41	31,127.17
TOTAL Licenses and Permits	95,500.00	0.00	64,372.83	67.41	31,127.17
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TOTAL REVENUES	119,824.00	0.00	88,697.20	74.02	31,126.80
<u>EXPENDITURES</u> =====					
<u>Personnel Services</u>					
55305-01-21000 Wages-Perm-Regular	31,985.00	0.00	22,321.89	69.79	9,663.11
55305-01-51000 Social Security-Medicare	465.00	0.00	1,614.27	347.15	(1,149.27)
55305-01-52000 WRS-Retirement	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-01-55000 Life Insurance	50.00	0.00	40.29	80.58	9.71
TOTAL Personnel Services	32,500.00	0.00	23,976.45	73.77	8,523.55
<u>Supplies & Expenses</u>					
55305-03-10000 Office Supplies	0.00	0.00	1.48	0.00	(1.48)
55305-03-45000 Public Meeting Technology	10,000.00	0.00	10,102.02	101.02	(102.02)
55305-03-47250 Web Service (Host/Archive)	4,650.00	0.00	8,819.43	189.67	(4,169.43)
55305-03-47534 MWC Monthly Ads	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
55305-03-47535 Other Marketing Expenses	0.00	0.00	455.56	0.00	(455.56)
55305-03-47536 Visitor Guide Ads	3,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,000.00
TOTAL Supplies & Expenses	17,650.00	0.00	19,378.49	109.79	(1,728.49)
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TOTAL EXPENDITURES	50,150.00	0.00	43,354.94	86.45	6,795.06
REVENUES OVER/(UNDER) EXPENDITURES	69,674.00	0.00	45,342.26	0.00	24,331.74

**City of Merrill 2026 Adopted Budget
Fund 26 Marketing & Communications**

		2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Adopted	06/30/2025 Actual	2025 Projection	2026 Adopted	Change \$	%	Notes:
Beginning Balance													
31-5714	N/L Cable Franchise	197,647	230,633	285,903	277,936	203,608	152,043	152,043	152,043	143,141			
REVENUES													
45305-43439	State VSP Aid	12,008	24,324	24,324	24,324	24,324	24,324	24,324	24,324	24,324	-	0%	DOR Estimates released 10/1.
45305-43510	CARES COVID-19 Reimb	18,326	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
45305-44900	Cable Franchise (Less Adm)	107,595	95,107	93,409	93,920	85,240	95,500	43,955	87,910.18	90,000	(5,500)	-6%	5% allocated to General Fund
TOTAL		137,929	119,432	117,733	118,244	109,564	119,824	68,279	112,235	114,324	(5,500)	-4.6%	
EXPENSES													
Personnel Services													
26-55305-01-21000	Wages-Perm-Regular	-	-	-	-	-	31,985	13,342	31,985	38,081	6,096		Social Media/MFG Manager
New	Longevity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
26-55305-01-51000	Social Security-Medicare	-	-	-	-	-	465	937	465	2,913	2,448		Social Media/MFG Manager
26-55305-01-52000	WRS - Retirement	-	-	-	-	-	2,000	-	2,000	2,742	742		Social Media/MFG Manager
NEW	Health Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
26-55305-01-55000	Life Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	50	17	50	72	22		Social Media/MFG Manager+ 10% Adm
Supplies & Expenses													
26-55305-03-10000	Office Supplies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	100		Postage, copies, etc.
26-55305-03-40000	MAPS Merrill Productions Reimb	58,666	54,401	82,957	68,045	65,237	35,650	16,058	37,860	-	(35,650)		Inactive. Contract Ended 2025
26-55305-03-40022	Closed Captioning Legal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Inactive. Not used since 2018
26-55305-03-45000	Public Meeting Technology	18,473	38	112	26,112	-	10,000	-	6,851	10,000	-		Meeting software + hardware
26-55305-03-46333	Downtown WiFi/Internet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	Inactive
26-55305-03-46345	Aquatic-Wifi/Internet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	Inactive
26-55305-03-46389	Wi-Fi Public Replacements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	Inactive. Not used since 2017
26-55305-03-46390	Software-Web Filtering	17,643	-	1,081	8,250	3,363	2,250	-	2,250	-	(2,250)	-100.0%	Inactive Moved to Fund 10.
26-55305-03-46400	Social Media Archiving	-	-	-	2,185	3,979	3,979	3,979	3,979	-	(3,979)	-100.0%	Inactive. Combined with 55305-03-464
26-55305-03-46500	Festival Grounds and Expo	438	-	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	NA	Inactive
26-55305-03-47250	Web Service (Host/Archive)	-	-	-	9,300	-	4,650	4,650	4,650	12,850	8,200	176.3%	Website Hosting, Social Media archive, Mt
26-55305-03-47500	Live Streaming	9,724	9,724	9,724	10,113	-	10,250	2,139	-	-	(10,250)	NA	Inactive. Combined with 55305-03-45C
26-55305-03-47523	CivicPlus - Meetings	-	-	-	3,863	10,057	4,600	9,415	9,415	-	(4,600)	-100.0%	Inactive. Combined with 55305-03-45C
26-55305-03-47533	M&C Committee - Resources	-	-	1,575	2,288	1,132	4,600	21	100	-	(4,600)	-100.0%	Inactive. Combined with 55305-03-10C
26-55305-03-47534	Marketing Ads	-	-	-	8,859	13,045	-	-	-	28,500	28,500		Facebook \$2k/mo + Visitor Guide
26-55305-03-47535	Other Marketing Expenses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,110	-	-		Vidoes, other projects, etc.
26-55305-03-47536	Visitor Guide Ads	-	-	-	-	5,412	3,000	-	3,000	-	(3,000)	-100.0%	Inactive. Combined with 55305-03-475
26-55305-03-47555	Marketing Contractor	-	-	29,855	29,260	31,955	32,208	13,420	13,420	-	(32,208)	-100.0%	Inactive. Contract Ended 2025
26-55305-03-47557	Social Media Contractor	-	-	-	24,050	26,950	-	40	-	-	-		Inactive
26-55305-03-47566	M&C - Cell Phone	-	-	369	247	-	-	-	-	-	-		Inactive
26-55305-03-47575	LCEDC Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		Inactive
TOTAL		104,943	64,162	125,700	192,572	161,129	145,687	64,018	121,136	95,258	(50,429)	-34.6%	
Change in Net Position		32,986	55,270	(7,967)	(74,328)	(51,565)	(25,863)	4,262	(8,901)	19,067			
ENDING FUND BALANCE													
31-5714	N/L Cable Franchise	230,633	285,903	277,936	203,608	152,043	126,180	156,304	143,141	162,208			
TOTAL		230,633	285,903	277,936	203,608	152,043	126,180	156,304	143,141	162,208			
SUMMARY:		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025			2026	\$	%	
Merrill Productions		58,666	54,401	82,957	68,045	65,237	35,650			-	(35,650)	-100.0%	
Salary, Wages, Benefits		-	-	-	-	-	34,500			43,808	9,308	27.0%	
Meeting Technology		46,277	9,762	10,944	59,823	17,398	35,729			22,850	(12,879)	-36.0%	
Marketing		-	-	31,799	64,704	78,494	39,808			28,600	(11,208)	-28.2%	
		104,943	64,162	125,700	192,572	161,129	145,687			95,258	(50,429)	-34.6%	

MERRILL MARKETING STRATEGY - REFRESH

Modified: November 13, 2025

Overview:

Digital strategy balances storytelling, lifestyle appeal, and career opportunity — all within Merrill’s brand promise: *“Experience More to Life.”*

Marketing Objective:

Inspire career-driven individuals and families to stay in or relocate to Merrill by showcasing a community where meaningful work and affordable living meet quality of life.

Core Messaging:

Merrill Wisconsin offers diverse job opportunities set against the backdrop of small-town charm, fulfilling lifestyle and four-season outdoor adventure.

Target Audience Overview

Demographics:

- Age: 25–45
- Location: Minneapolis–St. Paul, Chicago, Milwaukee metro areas, Marathon County
- Family status: Single or with young families
- Career: Skilled trades, manufacturing, construction, or related fields
- Values: Outdoor recreation, safety, affordability, strong schools, community, work–life balance

Psychographics:

- Seeking better quality of life and affordability
- Enjoy hands-on work, community events, nature, and local connection
- Often frustrated with city congestion, cost of living, and commute times

Budget Allocation (\$2,000/month)

Channel	%	Monthly Budget	Notes
Paid Ads (Meta/FB)	70%	\$1,400	Geo-targeted video + carousel ads
Boosted Posts (Meta/FB)	20%	\$400	Promote organic content that performs well
YouTube	-	0%	Post business, community, 3 rd party videos on City YouTube channel – promote through City and Community websites.
Expenses	10%	\$200	Video, content creation

12-Month Campaign Plan

Breathe Deeply. Grow Fully. Come Live, Work, Play in Merrill Wisconsin

Goal: Build awareness and lifestyle interest.

Theme: Highlight Merrill’s natural beauty, small-town charm, and family-friendly lifestyle.

Ad Formats: Business interview video (BIV), carousel of scenic spots, lifestyle snippets.

Month	Theme	Call to Action
Jan	Rotate BIV - Live, BIV - Work, charm, winter recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Feb	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Work, charm, winter recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Mar	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Live, charm, spring recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Apr	Rotate BIV - Live, BIV - Work, charm, spring recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
May	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Work, charm, spring recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
June	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Live, charm, summer recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
July	Rotate BIV - Live, BIV - Work, charm, summer recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Aug	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Work, charm, summer recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Sep	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Live, charm, fall recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Oct	Rotate BIV - Live, BIV - Work, charm, fall recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Nov	Rotate BIV - Play, BIV - Work, charm, fall recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web
Dec	Rotate BIV - Live, BIV - Work, charm, winter recreation	Rotate: Learn more → City Experience Merrill web/Events web

Targeting & Optimization

Geographic Targeting:

- 50-mile radius around Minneapolis–St. Paul, Milwaukee, and Chicago
- Marathon County
- Include lookalike audiences from page followers and video viewers

Interest Targeting:

- Outdoor recreation, fishing, hunting, hiking, boating, camping, biking
- Skilled trades, carpentry, welding, HVAC, construction, manufacturing, electrical, mechanics
- Family life, parenting, home ownership, real estate, small towns

Demographic Filters:

- Age 25–45
- Household income middle to upper middle (top 50%)
- English language

Optimization:

- Start with traffic/conversion objective to landing page (More to experience City page)
- Retarget video viewers (25%+) and engagement audiences each quarter
- A/B test imagery and ads (nature vs. family vs. community vs career)
- Measure CTR, video completion, and landing-page actions monthly

Success Metrics

KPI	Goal
Reach	60,000–90,000 / month (geo + interest targeting)
CTR	1.5–3%
Video Views	40–60% completion
Landing Page Visits	1,000–1,500 / month

Monthly monitoring of campaign. Adjust ads based on performance.



Name: Rod Akey
Title: City Administrator
Address: 1004 East First Street
City, State, Zip: Merrill, WI 54452
Phone: (715) 536-5594
Email: Rod.Akey@ci.merrill.wi.us
Website: https://ci.merrill.wi.us/

This agreement is between Community Showcase Banners, LLC an affiliate company of CGI Communications, Inc. D/B/A CGI Digital and the city of Merrill WI, and shall remain in effect from the date it is signed by both parties until the completion of the one (1) year of banner display, as described herein.

Community Showcase Banners shall provide the following:

- A minimum of 25 custom- graphic vinyl banners for all permissible poles
- Business sponsors featured on the bottom 30% of the banner
- Artwork, design and size customized to meet your community's specifications (standard size 30" x 72")
- All brackets, hardware, installation and maintenance
- Quantity of banners determined by number of sponsor participants
- Duration of sponsor participation will be one (1) year with the option to renew each following year of the agreement
- Sponsorship fulfillment including all related aspects of marketing, production, and printing
- The city of Merrill WI will assume no cost for the sales and production of the banners for this project


The City of Merrill shall provide the following:

- Letter of introduction supporting the program on your organization's letterhead
- The right for Community Showcase Banners to use organization's name in connection with the preparation, production and marketing of the program set forth herein only
- Identification of, access to, and permission to utilize the preferred pole sites for accurate banner placement
- Identification of and access to a minimum of 25 poles for banner placement

This Agreement shall automatically renew for an additional one-year term 90 days after the commencement of each term's banner display, unless canceled by either party as provided below.
City's Right to Cancel: The City may cancel this Agreement for the following year by providing written notice to the Provider within 90 days after the commencement of the banner display for the current term. If no such notice is given within this period, the Agreement shall be considered renewed for another one-year term.

Provider's Right to Cancel: The Provider may cancel this Agreement by providing express written notice of its intent to cancel within 90 days after the commencement of the banner display for the current term.

We, the undersigned, understand the above information and have full authority to sign this agreement.

Merrill WI	Community Showcase Banners / CGI Communications, Inc.
Signature:	
Name (printed):	Name (printed): Nicole Rongo
Title:	Title: Vice President, Government Relations & Strategic Partnerships, CGI Communications, Inc.
Date:	Date: 11-6-25

YEAR 1



Proposed City Design for your banner project. Please note that the colors of the printed banners may vary from those shown in the proof due to the banner material.

YEAR 2 & 3



Proposed City Design for your banner project. Please note that the colors of the printed banners may vary from those shown in the proof due to the banner material.

YEAR 4 OPTIONS



November 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 have attended Ribbon Cuttings and open houses.
Met with Sarah Brooks and have discussed new ideas for Merrill.
I have the sponsorship letters for the Food Truck-a-Palooza created and ready to go.
Talked with Christina about the videos and how they are progressing.
Received confirmation that we were granted \$1200 for the FTP from the tourism commission.

Social Media -

I have been getting November's events in the Calendar and working on December happenings as well.
The name the Plow truck went well. "Snow Boss" won - 3rd grade classes at Washington School decided on the name and the people on FB Voted for it.
Tour of Lights has been advertised. Dec. 10th bus leaves city hall at 5. Please call 715-536-7112 to reserve your spot on the bus.

Marketing Opportunities

Upcoming events for promotion-

Merrill Merry Christmas Downtown

Tour of Lights

Food Truck-a-Palooza 2026

Looking forward to next year and the 250th birthday for America. Looks like the fireworks will be on the 3rd or 4th this year.

October 2025 Social Media Analytics

Facebook Page Reach/Views: 58,930 (up 222.2 %)

- *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: Removing after this month. No longer on the analytics page.

- *The number of times your Facebook page was visited. Seems to have joined up with the reach.*

New Facebook Page Likes: 30

Cumulative Facebook Page Likes: 4,005

Link Clicks on page - 119

Content (Most Popular by Reach)

1. Ice Ordinance (Reach 4,694; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares 24)
2. Name the plow truck (Reach 4,487; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares:38)
3. Trick or treating (Reach 3,989; Likes, Reactions, Comments, shares and link clicks: 64)
4. Winner plow truck (Reach 3,197; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 55)
5. The River Groundbreaking (Reach 1,967; Likes, Reactions, Comments and Shares: 57)

LinkedIn -

We currently have 51 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 39 subscribers for the Main City Of Merrill YouTube Channel. The City of Merrill Meetings page has 35 followers. We will be working on getting the meetings videos uploaded onto Youtube.

Website Analytics - please see Website Analytics Summary.

Website Analytics 2025									
	Acquisition	Experience Merrill		Home Page		Park & Recreation		Food Truck-a-Palooza	
	"midwest"	Views	Active Users	Views	Active Users	Views	Active Users	Views	Active Users
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		
March 2025	375	618	539	2361	1271	635	355		
April 2025	371	574	540	2212	1261	664	418		
May 2025	509	891	856	2314	1326	902	513	1389	883
June 2025	0	93	76	2338	1337	1024	581	46	35
July 2025	0	75	60	2524	1460	999	563	44	39
August 2025	0	66	60	2079	1211	916	458	44	33
September 2025	0	61	48	1702	923	337	205	21	18
November 2025	0	50	45	2191	1187	421	253	15	13

Note - We stopped advertising with Midwest communications on 6/1/25