

Merrill Enrichment Center Committee
Thursday February 19th, 2026 MEETING MINUTES
MEC Conference Room 303 N. Sales Street 2:15pm
Present: Laura Bertagnoli (Chair), Mark Weix (Aldersperson)
Gene Bebel, Sharon Harvey, Jay Tlusty, Carol Holz,
Jennifer Clark (ADRC representative) **Excused:** Elizabeth McCrank

Agenda

- I. **Opening** (2:15)
Bertagnoli called the meeting to order.
- II. **Consent Items**
1. Motion by Holz second by Tlusty to approve January minutes. Motion carried.
2. Motion by Bebel second by Tlusty to approve January vouchers.
- III. **Public Comment** – Director shared comments from Strong Bodies participants on how beneficial the program has been for them – notably with the significant reduction to elimination of pain when continuing the program.
- IV. **ADRC**
Clark and Mike Rhea joined us for an extended discussion regarding the Meals on Wheels program. Rhea shared the current challenges of the program including a 40% increase in meal cost, the loss of the short term ARPA money received during Covid, and changes in the older Americans Act which is given to the State and then to counties within the state, based on need. County tax levy provides a small amount as well. Grant dollars were discussed as another source of funding. Committee discussed the Community Foundation (and others) as a possible option and wondered if donations can be directed to MOW's in Merrill. Rhea will check to see if that could be done. Gather at the Table offerings were discussed. The MEC offers the meal on the first Wednesday of each month. Participants are encouraged to sign up. Committee asked if there is a cap on how many can attend.
- V. **Operations**
a. Director discussed the new look to our newsletter coming in April. The change came about with LPI, our publisher, recognizing that Microsoft publisher would no longer be supported. We now will be using Canva as our software, which allows far more creativity. The change will ensure that our followers will still know it is the same MEC but with a fresh look.
b. Director provided the following information regarding our Check-in system.
1. Annual cost is \$1900. We receive a \$300 discount annually.
2. Advertiser cost is \$500/year or \$900/2 years. Maximum of 5 businesses a year. Currently we have 2 spots available. We will try to find local businesses to advertise with us.
3. Value to the MEC is the ability to track everything from demographics to attendance in each offering we provide. This is especially valuable during budget to prove how valuable this Center is to our community to all the populations we serve. In addition we are able to broadcast calls to all of our participants in the event we have to cancel classes and/or provide updates.
c. Events update
1. Our planned Shop & Support events will not run this year despite the efforts of our team in trying to recruit individuals and small business owners for these events. Bottom line is that the market is saturated with too many organizations offering too many events all over our state.
2. Our second DeStash event on March 28th will take place, although it may be a bit smaller than our first. We are currently at 20 tables and are looking for more.
3. We are excited for our second Festival of Quilts taking place on October 2nd and 3rd in the Expo. The theme this year is Americana. We will have a few new surprises this year for our attendees.
- VI. **Discussion**
Director will ask Rod Akey (City Administrator) and Emily Ley (Finance Director) to attend our next meeting to discuss our budget. Weix suggested Committee members to bring questions to address with Rod and Emily.
- VII. The next meeting will take place on March 19th at 2:15pm in the MEC Conference room. Public attendance is encouraged.
- VIII. **Adjournment**
Motion by Bebel, second by Holz

Respectfully submitted, TMrachek - MEC Director

Enrichment Center Mission

To improve lives through social, physical, and educational opportunities.