

# Merrill Enrichment Center Committee

Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup>, 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, Elizabeth McCrank

Jennifer Clark (ADRC representative)

## Agenda

### I. **Opening** (2:15)

Bertagnoli called the meeting to order.

### II. **Consent Items**

- a. Motion by Weix second by Harvey to approve November '25 minutes. Holz found two spelling issues. Director will fix. Motion carried.
- b. Motion by McCrank second by Tlusty to approve December '25 vouchers. Motion by Tlusty second by Holz to approve Jan '26 vouchers.

### III. **Public Comment**

None

### IV. **ADRC**

- a. Clark and Committee had a lengthy discussion regarding the Meals on Wheels program. There is currently a waitlist in Merrill. This list is due to funding. ADRC staff conducts in-home assessments to see if individuals have a true need to qualify for MOW. *Assessment is extensive and includes person's health issues, disabilities, ability to take care of themselves, and more. Caregiver burnout is a consideration as well.* McCrank asked how many people in the Merrill area are receiving MOW and the average cost per meal. Clark stated approximately 30-40. Tlusty and Committee discussed possible ways the community could help to cover the cost of those on the waitlist. Clark will get that information for us. Tlusty asked if private donations could be given to offset the gap in cost for the Merrill area. Holz stated that many rural people may not even be aware they can receive meals. Committee discussed Dinner at 5 is still available as an option, and FreMarq supplies all the food. Clark did mention the more significant funding available for Gather at the Table, which anyone over 60 years old can attend. They must call to reserve their spot. Please see page 3 for ADRC recap of discussion.
- b. Director shared the MEC will be a location for congregate meals (Gather at the Table), beginning in February of 2026. The meals will be held throughout the year on the first Wednesday of each month in our expo area, beginning at 12:30pm with educational presentations to follow. We are thrilled to partner with the ADRC and offer a dining site at the MEC.

### V. **Operations**

- a. End of Year balances for Enrichment Center accounts were shared. The Center has generated a significant amount of funding to continue offering a variety of services to those 50 and up in our community. Committee discussion centered on these account balances. **The committee all agrees, as does the Director, that fees collected should remain within our department budget to maintain services for our 50+ population for years to come.** Committee also mentioned that the Bierman foundation is also a large financial supporter of the MEC and this facility. The Director has started an endowment fund for this same purpose. Our participants also expect the money they spend remains in this department for the continual operation of the MEC. Committee members discussed encouraging all alderpersons to visit the Center to see everything that happens here on a daily basis.

VI. **Discussion**

Request was made to have Erin and/or Mike from the ADRC attend the next meeting to continue Meal on Wheels discussion.

VII. **Adjournment**

Motion by Holz second by Weix.

**The next meeting will be February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 2:15pm** in MEC Conference Room.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*TMrachek*

Tammie Mrachek

MEC Director

**Enrichment Center Mission**

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

## **Notes from Jennifer Clark – ADRC representative**

**Updates regarding Meals on Wheels Waitlist:** In mid-January, ADRC will begin contacting individuals from the Meals on Wheels waitlist after a pause in adding new customers. Going forward, there will be a maximum limit on the number of individuals they can serve through Meals on Wheels at any given time.

### **Questions by the MEC committee:**

**“How many people were on the waitlist in total? How many are specific to Merrill?”** There were just under 140 people on the waitlist in total across our 4-county region, which includes 21 individuals from Lincoln County (15 individual’s specific to Merrill).

**“How much money would be needed in total to wipe out the waitlist for a year in Merrill?”** This is ADRC’s first time implementing a waitlist, so exact numbers are unclear; Jennifer will ask for a member of the ADRC leadership team to provide more details at the February meeting. \*The total cost of Meals on Wheels to the ADRC is \$13.22 per meal. The suggested contribution for eligible customers on Meals on Wheels is \$6.00 per meal.

**“Can money be earmarked specific to Merrill Meals on Wheels customers?”** The answer to this is complex. Jennifer will ask for a member of the ADRC leadership team to provide more details at the February meeting.

**There was some discussion around what qualifies someone for MOW vs. Congregate/Senior dining.** Jennifer mentions that everyone’s situation is so unique and different and that is why the assessments to enroll individuals is so important. The assessments help to understand the complexity of someone’s situation and get them connected to the right resources (which could be transportation, grocery delivery, Meals on Wheels, other meal options, At the Kitchen Table events and other congregate meal options).

**“There is a group of older adults with disabilities who meet at the old Park City Credit Union Building that are required to move out. Why? Where are they going?”** Jennifer will check in with the ADRC Merrill office to see if there is any additional information.