

**CITY OF MERRILL
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2026 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 4:15 PM**

I. Call to Order Roll Call:

Present: Krueger, Malm, Gulke, D8 Alderperson Rutkowski, Kubichek, Hahn

Present Not Voting: Parks Director Dan Wendorf

Excused: Steve Osness

Absent:

Krueger called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

II. Consider approving minutes from the previous meeting

1. **March 2026 Minutes** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/ Gulke) motion/second to place minutes on file. The motion Passed.

III. Approval of Claims

1. **March 2026 Bills** - (Gulke/ Hahn) motion/second to approve. The motion Passed.

IV. General Agenda Items for Consideration

1. **Review & Discuss 10-year capital plan** - Wendorf began the discussion by referring the Commission to the 10-year capital document provided in the packets. He stated that the plan is intended to be used as a guide to try and help plan for future projects, replacements, repairs, etc. Wendorf summarized the 10-year plan by reviewing what has been done over the past few years and what has been partially funded as well as not funded. He said that items that were not funded typically get re-slotted back into the plan for future consideration and the deck gets continuously re-shuffled. Wendorf shared with the Commission that he would like to take a slightly different approach on a few things moving forward regarding a few high-use facilities. He stated that he would like to take the Smith Center and Aquatic Center and create a more comprehensive plan for things that are going to need to be fixed, repaired, replaced. The Smith Center is 30 years old, meaning all the doors, windows, chiller/compressors, sinks, fixtures, boards, locks, etc. are old and some of these things are wearing out and showing their age. At some point, these things will need to be replaced and if we can plan accordingly, we could potentially package them together as building upgrades (repairs) and save money in the long run instead of going one door/door closer at a time and having to continuously do that with funding that we simply do not have anymore. Wendorf pointed out the ice rink chiller system that will need to be replaced within the next few years that has been on the plan for a number of years now. It is a very expensive item, but it is critical to have it to make and keep ice. That item is north of \$800,000 and without it, we wouldn't have an ice arena. Hahn asked if there was a way we could engage user groups and the public to help raise funds for this and Wendorf said yes, but it becomes difficult to raise funds sometimes for things that are operational in nature and

not amenity improvements. Malm asked if there was a way we could take a portion of our ice revenues that we generate and create an account to help offset that cost. Wendorf said he would have to have that discussion with administration to gauge those possibilities. The same thing applies to the Aquatic Center, where we are beyond 10 years and are starting to see some things that need to be repaired/replaced. If we create a more comprehensive plan, it gives better clarity on where we stand and what we need to do and we can plan accordingly. Wendorf stated that there are things at the aquatic center that need to be addressed and if we can package them together, it saves us in the same way he referenced with the Smith Center. Wendorf also pointed out that in 2027 we do need funding to perform our 5-year Outdoor Recreation Plan as we are due for that next year. Kubichek asked how someone gets an item added to the Capital Plan. Wendorf stated you simply need to say it, there is no formal process to add items. Gulke requested moving the connection of Prairie Trails to the City Forest up to 2027 to continue connectivity between parks as well as the Ice Age Trail with all the recent successes we've experienced as an Ice Age Trail Community. Wendorf fielded a few additional questions and asked the Commission to study this plan so we are ready for detailed discussions on the 2027 Capital Budget in late summer/early fall.

2. **Discuss seasonal staffing** - Wendorf informed the Commission that the Parks & Recreation Department is short on lifeguards for the Bierman Family Aquatic Center. He said there is enough right now to open, but we are very thin and without more guards there may be times when we have to shuffle the days/hours of operation to fit guard availability. Wendorf stated they have been, and continue to work with MAPS on lifeguard certification courses (there is one coming up within the next few weeks) as well as promoting our joint needs for guards. Wendorf said if anyone knows people that have a potential interest, contact their office, and we can get them pointed in the right direction. Lifeguard shortages are an ongoing issue across the entire country, and we just need to remain vigilant in our quest to find more guards and retain them. Krueger asked how we stood on our hourly pay. Wendorf said we are still pretty much in line with others in the area but will have to increase those wages in the near future so we can ensure we don't lose staffing to other competing businesses. That will definitely be an item for future consideration.

V. Monthly Reports

1. **April 2026 Parks & Recreation Director's Report** - Wendorf summarized his report and pointed out that bids for the River Bend Trail through the MARC are going out next week and will be due at the end of the month. They will be brought to the Commission at the May meeting.

VI. Date and Time of Next Meeting

1. **Next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 6th, at 4:15 p.m. in the BASEMENT CONFERENCE ROOM at the Merrill City Hall.** - Krueger

confirmed the next meeting on May 6th at 4:15 p.m. and reminded the Commission again that the location will be in the Basement Conference Room at Merrill City Hall due to another meeting in the Council Chambers at that time. Wendorf stated he will remind everyone before the meeting of the location change.

VII. Public Comment There was no public comment.

VIII. Adjournment (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/ Malm) motion/second to adjourn. The motion Passed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.