

**CITY OF MERRILL
COMMON COUNCIL
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 MINUTES
Regular Meeting City Hall Council Chambers 7:00 p.m.**

- I. **Call to Order:** Mayor Hass called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following elected officials, department heads and residents were in attendance:

Elected Officials and Department Heads present: Mayor Hass, City Attorney Hayden, City Clerk Anderson-Malm, Finance Director Unertl, Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey, Library Director Ollhoff, Utility Operations Manager Steinagel, Facilities Maintenance Manager Wszalek, Fire Chief Klug, Information Technology Manager Brown, Street Superintendent Bonack, and Transit Director Brummond. Enrichment Center Director Mrachek, Park & Recreation Director Wendorf, Police Chief Bennett were remote. Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Pagel was excused.

Others in attendance: Sister Celine, Sister Kathy, Captain Bacher, Emily Ley, Todd and Renea Frederick and Merrill Media Communications.

- II. **Invocation** – Sisters Celine and Sister Kathy from Sisters of Holy Cross sang a blessing

- III. **Pledge of Allegiance** was recited.

- IV. **Roll Call** was taken and the following alderperson's were in attendance:

Paul Russell – First District	Absent
Michael “Gus” Caylor – Second District	Present
Nathan Meyer – Third District	Present
LaDonna Fermanich – Fourth District	Present
Dick Lupton – Fifth District	Present
Mike Rick - Sixth District	Remote
Mark Weix – Seventh District	Present
Steve Sabatke – Eighth District	Present

- V. **Public Comment** – There was no public comment

- VI. **Public Hearing on proposed 2024 Budget:**

City Attorney Hayden read the public hearing notice. Alderperson Caylor made a motion to open the public hearing. Alderperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried.

There was no one to speak on the 2024 Budget.

Alderperson Meyer made a motion to close the public hearing. Alderperson Lupton seconded and the motion carried.

- VII. **Minutes from previous meeting:**

Alderperson Caylor made a motion to place the minutes from the October 10, 2023 Common Council meeting on file. Alderperson Weix seconded and the motion carried.

VIII. Revenue and Expense Reports:

Alderson Fermanich made a motion to place the October revenue and expense reports on file. Alderson Meyer seconded and the motion carried.

IX. 2024 Budget:

Finance Director Unertl updated the Council with the budget information. Alderson Fermanich inquired about borrowing in 2024 and asked how Moody's downgrading will impact borrowing. Finance Director Unertl explained the borrowing will be unrated and a local bank has expressed interest.

Alderson Sabatke made a motion to cancel the repaving the city parking lots. The motion died for the lack of a second.

Alderson Sabatke made a motion to eliminate the administrative assistant from the Fire Department. The motion died for the lack of a second.

Alderson Fermanich stated 73% of the budget goes to wages and benefits. She wanted to go on record that going forward this will need to be reviewed and citizens need to understand this will mean cutting services or staff. Mayor Hass thanked her for bringing this to everyone's attention.

X. General Agenda Items:

1. Employee Years of Service Recognition – Joseph Weckwerth 15 years – Parks & Recreation
Mayor Hass thanked Joseph Weckwerth for his dedication to the City.

2. Consider lifting the hiring freeze to replace the administrative assistant at the Street Department – Alderson Caylor inquired about consolidating positions; discussion followed. Mayor Hass stated hiring would help with the transition to a new person considering the last day of employment is December 28, 2023. Interim CA Akey informed the Council this will be posted internally for 5 days before posting outside.

Alderson Meyer made a motion to approve lifting the hiring freeze in the Street Department in order to replace the administrative assistant. Alderson Weix seconded and the motion carried on a 6/1 voice vote. Alderson Sabatke voted no.

XI. Personnel & Finance Committee:

1. Consider approving the candidate for the Finance Director position – Alderson Meyer made a motion to approve the candidate for Finance Director. Alderson Caylor seconded and the motion carried.

Mayor Hass introduced Emily Ley (pronounced Lee) to the Council. Her start date is January 2, 2024.

XII. Board of Public Works:

1. Consider and approve the high bids for city owned property – Alderson Sabatke made a motion to approve the high bids for city owned property. Alderson Lupton seconded and the motion carried.

- XIII. Marketing & Communications Committee:**
1. Consider and approve the Midwest Communications marketing agreement of \$29,808 –
Aldersperson Sabatke made a motion to approve the marketing agreement. Aldersperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried on a 6/1 voice vote. Aldersperson Rick voted no.
- XIV. City Plan Commission:**
1. Consider and approve the Conditional Use Permit for Wisconsin Public Service –
Aldersperson Sabatke made a motion to approve the CUP for Wisconsin Public Service. Aldersperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried.
- XV. Health & Safety Committee:**
1. Consider a change of agent for S&S Bar (Merrill Social & Sick Benefit Society) to James Helman –
Aldersperson Caylor made a motion to change the agent of S&S Bar to James Helman. Aldersperson Lupton seconded and the motion carried.
- XVI. Consider placing the committee reports on file –**
Aldersperson Meyer made a motion to place the committee reports on file. Aldersperson Lupton seconded and the motion carried.
- XVII. Ordinances:**
1. City Attorney Hayden read the Ordinance adopting the 2024 City of Merrill Budget and establishing the tax levy for year 2023. Aldersperson Caylor made a motion to suspend the rules and give the second and third readings by title only. Aldersperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried. City Attorney Hayden gave the Ordinance the second and third readings by title only.

Aldersperson Lupton made a motion to adopt the Ordinance. Aldersperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried on a 7/0 roll call vote.

2. City Attorney Hayden read the Ordinance amending Chapter 38, Division 2, Section 38-149 Sewer Service Charges. Aldersperson Caylor made a motion to suspend the rules and give the second and third readings by title only. Aldersperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried. City Attorney Hayden gave the Ordinance the second and third readings by title only.

Aldersperson Meyer made a motion to adopt the Ordinance. Aldersperson Lupton seconded and the motion carried on a 7/0 roll call vote.
- XVIII. Mayor's Appointments:**
Aldersperson Caylor made a motion to approve Nathan Meyer to the Tourism Commission with a term to expire 05/01/2024. Aldersperson Lupton seconded and the motion carried.
- XIX. Mayor's Communications:**
Mayor Hass read the following communications:
November 17 and December 1 and 8 is Wiggle Giggle and Shake at 10:30-11:30 at the Library
November 22 – 1:00-3:30 Critic's choice movie at the Library
November 25th – Shop Small, Shop Local
November 29 – Family Story time at the Library
December 2 – Christmas Parade and Park Lane Luminaire
December 2 and 3 – O'Tannenbaum Tour at St. Stephens

December 5 – Gingerbread edible house craft at the Library

December 9 – Craft and vendor sale at Les and Jim’s

December 13 – City of Merrill Tour of lights – register online or call Transit to reserve your seat on the bus.

The City of Merrill is continuing to look for Transit drivers.

With the upcoming deer hunting season, I wish everyone a safe and successful hunt and a Happy Thanksgiving

- XX. Adjournment** - Alderperson Lupton made a motion to adjourn. Alderperson Meyer seconded and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 pm.

The complete Ordinance is available on the City of Merrill website: <https://www.ci.merrill.wi.us/>

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lori L Anderson-Malm – City Clerk