



CITY OF MERRILL

PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES • THURSDAY NOVEMBER 14, 2019

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

5:00 PM

I. Call to Order

Alderman Russell called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Blake	Aldersperson - Third District	Present	
Paul Russell	Aldersperson - First District	Present	
Steve Osness	Aldersperson - Fourth District	Present	

Others in attendance: Mayor Derek Woellner, Public Works Director/City Engineer Rod Akey, Police Chief Corey Bennett, Street Superintendent Dustin Bonack, Transit Director Brad Brummond, City Attorney Tom Hayden, City Administrator Dave Johnson, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Enrichment Center Director Tammie Mrachek, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator Darin Pagel, Library Director Stacy Stevens, Finance Director Kathy Unertl, Facilities Maintenance Manager Nick Wzalek, Alderman Steve Hass (arr. 5:02), Victoria Gaedtke, Brenda Greffe, Jill Bostrom, Greg Hartwig, Kathy Seubert, Cheryl Plautz, Jon Leiskau, Al Wix, LaDonna Fermanich and City Clerk Bill Heideman. Hunter Lane was present to videotape the meeting for Merrill Productions.

II. Agenda items for consideration:

1. Personnel & Finance Committee's role and authority in hiring and firing City employees.

Alderman Osness stated his opinion that the Personnel and Finance Committee would have better control of the budget if they were involved in hiring and firing decisions. In response, City Administrator Johnson questioned why the Personnel and Finance Committee would want to be involved in management decisions. Finance Director Unertl stated that Personnel and Finance Committee involvement in past hiring/firing decisions led to negative consequences.

Alderman Blake suggested that perhaps the Personnel and Finance Committee should be involved in the hiring of management positions, but he does not think the committee needs to be involved in 'general' hires for budgeted positions. Alderman Russell stated his opinion that scopes of hiring/firing responsibility should be further clarified.

Finance Director Unertl issued a reminder that the Police Department, Fire Department and Library would be excluded from any policy changes related to hiring/firing. City Administrator Johnson repeated his position that there is no reason for Personnel and Finance Committee involvement in any hiring decisions.

Finance Director Unertl noted that firing policies are in the Employee Handbook. Alderman Blake suggested that firings should be addressed by the Personnel and Finance Committee and potentially the entire Common Council.

City Administrator Johnson reviewed the current employee grievance process.

City Attorney Hayden will continue to research these issues and they will be discussed at future Personnel and Finance Committee meeting(s). No action was taken at this time.

2. Policy considerations for city project bids/quotes and approvals.

Alderman Russell explained that this was placed on the agenda due to concerns he has related to the handling of recent bids/quotes. One concern relates to two instances within the last year when large-scale project bids were submitted directly to the Common Council, without any prior consideration by a committee. Another concern he has is based on a recent discussion at a meeting, where an appointed official and an elected official referred to vastly different information on the cost of a project. Alderman Russell stated his opinion that there is room for improvement in bids/quotes policies.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Akey explained the City bids/quotes policies. No action was taken.

3. 2020 Budget: Non-union personnel and position considerations.

City Administrator Johnson reported that City staff is currently weighing the options for replacing Kathy Seubert, who is retiring from the Clerk/Treasurer office. The current plan is to hire another employee in that office and restructure the four positions. Carlson Dettmann Consulting would recreate new job descriptions (due to changing responsibilities and job duties). Carlson Dettmann would also provide compensation grade/step assignments for the four positions.

City staff was directed to proceed with authorizing Carlson Dettmann to begin work on new job descriptions and grade/step assignments for the four positions.

4. 2020 Budget: Consideration of non-union employees pay and benefits.

Information was in the meeting packet.

Alderman Blake distributed information related to his proposal to reduce, by 4%, the amount that the City pays for employee's health insurance. He stated that this plan could save the City approximately \$54,000. Alderman Osness replied that he was not in favor of the proposal and he also thought it was too late to implement it.

Alderman Russell speculated that this benefit reduction might make it more difficult to recruit and retain high-quality employees. Alderman Osness asked if "real" numbers could be obtained from the insurance company. Finance Director Unertl remarked that, in the recent past, non-union employees have been offered benefits similar to the benefits offered to unionized Police Department and Fire Department employees.

Alderman Osness had inquired as to the fiscal impact if a wage freeze for management and professional positions was to be put in place.

Various department heads spoke against the proposed wage freeze.

No action was taken.

5. Consider reaffirmation of resolution and approval of memo related to nine tools of civility.

A copy of Resolution #1996 was in the meeting packet. This resolution, which accepted the nine tools of civility, was adopted by the Common Council on July 11th, 2006. A memo from Alderman Russell was also in the meeting packet. The memo stressed the importance of the nine tools of civility.

Alderman Russell read the nine tools of civility.

A copy of the resolution and the memo will be distributed to all City Employees and City Elected Officials.

III. Establish date, time and location of next regular meeting

The next meeting will be at the call of the Chairperson.

IV. Public Comment Period

None.

V. Closed Session:

1. The Committee may convene in closed session pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 19.85(1)(e) & (g) for deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session and to confer with legal counsel for the governmental body who is rendering oral or written advice concerning strategy to be adopted by the body with respect to litigation in which it is or is likely to become involved in, to confer with legal counsel and receive update and recommendation on proposed Police Contract settlement terms.

Motion (Blake/Osness) to convene in closed session. Carried 3-0 on roll call vote. Convened in closed session at 6:10 P.M.

The closed session minutes will be filed separately.

VI. The Committee may reconvene in open session for potential action(s) on closed session issue(s).

The committee did not reconvene in open session. The meeting was adjourned while in closed session.

VII. Adjournment

Motion (Osness/Blake) to adjourn. Carried. Adjourned at 6:34 P.M.