

**CITY OF MERRILL
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2026 MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 5:15 PM**

- I. Call to Order** Chair Weix called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm
Present: D7 Alderperson Weix Jr., D8 Alderperson Rutkowski, D6 Alderperson Sukow
Present Not Voting: Police Chief Corey Bennett, Fire Chief Josh Klug, Norb "Nubs" Ashbeck, Mayor Hass, City Administrator Akey, City Clerk Anderson-Malm, Heidi Wiedenhof, David Lewis, Nick Wiedenhof, Laurie Thiel, Brandon Schult, Amanda Gryskiewicz, Courtney Daiey, Heather Brownell, Dave Gryskiewicz, Carrie Fowler, Natalie Schult, Hope Engman, Rose Strom, Haley Mohr, Nicholas Stieber, other attendees remote
- II. Public Comment** Heidi Wiedenhof - 400 Wisconsin Street - talked about a neighbor burning and has contacted the police numerous times. The neighbor burns all day and night. Wants to be able to open her windows. She has only filed complaints since the neighbor moved in. She has spoken with the Fire Chief and Police Chief.
Brandon Schult - 310 Wisconsin Street - stated he only burns dry white birch and enjoys a fire with his family and friends.
Rose Strom - 400 Cottage Street - stated this neighbor harasses neighbors and is very disruptive.
Cortney Daley - 1811 E 2nd Street - is friends with the people at 310 Wisconsin St and goes there to enjoy the fire.
Dave Lewis - 400 Wisconsin Street - stated the neighbor burns 4 to 5 days per week and other neighbors burn also. Feels like this is harassment and stated they are not able to open the windows due to the burning.
Hope Engman - 202 East Street - stated her daughter spends time the family who burns. Also stated they have been targeted on Facebook and does not feel safe.
Dave Gryskiewicz - he wanted the committee to talk with the Fire Chief and Police Chief before making a decision. He also asked to make the decision precise and simple.
Nick Wiedenhof - talked about nuisance with a fire. His sister just wants to open her windows.
Amanda Gryskiewicz - 310 Wisconsin Street - She mentioned the house was purchased from Heidi's aunt and have had problems since day one. They are in compliance with the hours for burning and are not doing anything wrong.
- Following the public comment, Heidi Wiedenhof wanted to approach the committee to correct some of the things that were said in public comment. Chair Weix stated that after the ordinance discussion, he would allow her to speak.

III. Minutes from Previous Meeting

1. **Consider placing the minutes from the May 26th meeting on file** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D6 Alderperson Sukow) motion/second to place minutes on file. The motion passed.

IV. Nuisance Complaints and Vouchers

1. **Nuisance Complaints** - The nuisance complaints were discussed.
2. **Discuss and consider approving the vouchers** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D6 Alderperson Sukow) motion/second to approve. The motion passed.

V. General Agenda Items for Consideration

1. **Discuss and consider taking action on a change to the City's open burning ordinance.** - Chief Klug began the discussion and mentioned that when the ordinance was created, there was no recreational burning. Up until this incident, there had been very few complaints regarding burning in the city. In this instance, clean wood has been used and no other violations of the ordinance have been observed. They have worked with law enforcement. Chief Bennett said the complaints of other fires have been the size of the fire. He also said if a change in the ordinance occurs, look at the times and define nuisance and who determines that. D8 Alderperson Rutkowski stated the City of Wausau describes these types of fires as recreational fires, with clean dry, unpainted wood. The times in Wausau are noon until midnight and to be contained in a fire pit. It was further discussed that if there is an issue with the fire size or if it is burning close to a structure, the Fire Department will investigate. She also said she feels nuisance determination is too broad to determine and can be up to interpretation. City Administrator Akey said this comes down to one neighbor having the right to breathe while the other neighbor has the right to enjoy their property. Following further discussion, the following motion was made by D8 Alderperson Rutkowski and seconded by D7 Alderperson Weix: Motion to "change the ordinance wording for the part about recreational burning to be called recreational burning in that section and not the part where you need a permit but just recreational burning and that the times be consistent to 7 days a week it would be 12:00 am until 8:00 am you would be prohibited having a fire, but you could start it after 8:00 in the morning. And I would like the ordinance to take out nuisance. That's hard to determine and to have steady control over it. It should say that instead of all leaves being burned prohibited, it should say only clean, dry or untreated or unpainted lumber is permitted to fuel a recreational fire. If anything else is used, the Fire Department may respond and extinguish the fire and a citation may be issued" (the motion was taken directly from the video footage of the meeting). The motion passed.

Following the motion, Chair Weix allowed additional comments from the public.

Heidi Wiedenhof stated she had not called the police except for the burning issue. She also wanted to talk about the comments made at the earlier public comment period. She said taking the word nuisance out doesn't protect her rights.

Laurie Thiel - 2801 Thielman St - Stated that recreational burning may need to be re-defined.

Amanda Gryskiewicz - spoke about burning and closing windows.

There were no additional comments. Chair Weix proceeded with the remainder of the agenda items.

2. **Discuss and consider a temporary Class "B" beer license for the Lincoln County Fair Association from August 5th through August 9th at the Merrill Fairgrounds from 6:00 am - 12:00 midnight in conjunction with the Lincoln County Fair.** - (D6 Alderperson Sukow/D8 Alderperson Rutkowski) motion/second to approve. The motion passed.
3. **Discuss and consider a temporary Class "B" beer license for Trinity Lutheran Church for August 16th at Normal Part from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, in conjunction with a Trinity Block Party event.** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D6 Alderperson Sukow) motion/second to approve. The motion passed.
4. **Discuss and consider an alcohol beverage license application for The Night Owl LLC, 129 N Prospect St.** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D6 Alderperson Sukow) motion/second to approve. Police Chief Bennett mentioned there are no issues with this application. The motion passed.

VI. Monthly Reports

1. **Monthly Report - Fire Chief Klug** - Chief Klug highlighted some items from the report. He mentioned \$4,000 was received from the Lion's Club for PPE (personal protective equipment). He also mentioned the May 8th First Annual Trauma Survivors event where Fire Fighter/EMT Dylan Schulke was given an award.
2. **Monthly Report - Police Chief Bennett** - Police Chief Bennett highlighted some items from the report. The department has been busy since the school year ended. There was a brief discussion regarding E bikes.
3. **Monthly Report - Lincoln County Humane Society** - The reports were included in the packet.
4. **Consider placing monthly reports on file** - (D8 Alderperson Rutkowski/D6 Alderperson Sukow) motion/second to place monthly reports on file. The motion passed.

VII. Date and Time of Next Meeting Monday, July 27th at 5:15 pm

VIII. Adjournment Chair Weix thanked the public in attendance. (D6 Alderperson Sukow/D8 Alderperson Rutkowski) motion/second to adjourn. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 6:14 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by City Clerk Anderson-Malm
Minutes are in draft form until approved at the next scheduled meeting.