

Merrill Enrichment Center Committee
Thursday June 18th, 2026 MEETING MINUTES
MEC Conference Room 303 N. Sales Street 2:15pm
Present: Laura Bertagnoli (Chair) Gene Bebel, Sharon Harvey, Carol Holz,
Elizabeth McCrank, Jay Tlusty, **(Excused)** Mark Weix (Aldersperson), Hallie Savall

Agenda

- I. **Opening (2:15)**
Bertagnoli called the meeting to order.
- II. **Consent Items**
1. Motion by McCrank second by Tlusty to approve May meeting minutes. Motion carried.
 2. Motion by Tlusty second by Holz to approve vouchers.
- III. **Public Comment**
No public comment
- IV. **Operations**
1. Director shared the July newsletter with suggested changes from the previous committee meeting. Committee discussed our last meeting and recommendations were on the agenda for this meeting as to what information would be best. Also discussed were the higher priced class offerings. This allows us to reach a different market of participants. We are offering a few nights now instead of just one a month, based on demand. MAPS evening classes were also discussed. We feel we can both do well as our classes vary.
 - i. Savall recommended top visitor of the month in the newsletter. Bertagnoli suggested highlighting participants with a picture and story. Director agrees but respects those who do not want their photo or full name published.
 - ii. McCrank loves the testimonials and suggested continuing.
 - iii. Bertagnoli recommended making our tree on the front page larger.
 - iv. Director discussed the cost to stuff our newsletters in the Foto News. Committee agreed the cost was excessive and we will forgo this for now and revisit if needed.
 2. Festival of Quilts needs volunteers. Currently we have 4 confirmed and will need entrance volunteers for both days along with raffle ticket sellers. Take down volunteers may also be needed. Holz asked about food this year. We choose to go with Food trucks. Holz agreed that this is the era of food trucks and more importantly it takes the burden off the volunteer committee who plans, organizes and works the event. Committee asked Savall if they charge food trucks to which she replied yes along with requiring insurance. Director shared we do not charge as they are providing a service. They are required to be licensed and insured. We are working on who will provide sweets and snacks. Food trucks and local groups including the high school home economics class were discussed. Bebel recommended informing the high school of this event. Holz recommended reaching out to the high school home economic students to volunteer and possibly enter some quilts. Savall is sharing to many Facebook groups. Including 4H was mentioned.
 3. Harvey mentioned the attendance numbers were not on the front page. Director stated the committee agreed we needed to determine exactly what numbers we wanted, and the July newsletter needed to be published prior to the meeting. Holz recommended the numbers be the total number of visits; Susan came to 5 different classes showing total attendance not just one person. Director agreed this will show the total number of participants for all activities. These numbers are also important for the Common Council to see how much the building is being used and enjoyed by community members.
 4. **Discussion**
Savall discussed how she markets Merrill along with the differences in community facilities; MEC, MARC, Library, etc. Bebel and Tlusty both mentioned that not all people use technology to find information. McCrank added that marketing is rarely one size fits all and you can't market to everyone. Savall discussed our online branding is targeted to 21-45 year olds as the City is wanting to bring in families to the community to live, work, and play here. Tlusty read a report from Wisconsin Department of Administration that our population is projected to be down to 6900 by 2050. People are looking for amenities in a community and Savall is looking to FB to market the differences of each with the slogan, "Discover Merrill: Different Spaces, Different Experiences" She used Chat GPT for a high level list between the MEC, Merrill Fairgrounds, MARC, and the T.B. Scott Free Library, along with tag lines. Result for the MEC was "connect with people." Holz stated she likes it and all committee members agreed. Bertagnoli and Tlusty recommended including 'stop in to reconnect with people and meet new friends' in our newsletter. All agreed this was a great idea. Staying engaged is important for overall well-being. Overall, especially in a smaller community, it seems that 'word of mouth' is one of the most effective marketing tools.
Committee further requested while marketing the Fairgrounds and the MEC, to try to separate us from the Expo. We will continue to work with Hallie on this.
- V. **Adjournment**
Motion by Holz second by Harvey.

The next meeting will take place on July 16th at 2:15pm in the MEC Conference room. Public attendance is encouraged.

Respectfully submitted,

TMrachek - MEC Director

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