



CITY OF APPLETON

Date: April 3, 2026

To: Members of the Finance Committee & Common Council

From: Mayor Jacob A. Woodford

Subject: Recommendation to Acquire Meridian Rapid Defense Barrier System

Appleton is home to a vibrant community event calendar year-round, from the weekly Farmers Market to seasonal festivals, parades, street markets, and gatherings in our parks and public spaces. These events enrich the quality of life in our community and reflect what makes Appleton a great place to live and work.

Over the years, the City of Appleton has taken steps to improve the safety and security of public gatherings making use of available resources. Unfortunately, these steps have been necessitated by examples from other places where casualties have resulted from both accidental and, at times, intentional acts. During the last several months, we have been monitoring a heightening of the general threat environment for large public gatherings. While our local, state, and federal law enforcement personnel and partners have not identified specific actionable threats directed at Appleton specifically, the overarching theme is concerning and suggests a growing risk to large scale gatherings.

One of the most significant concerns for large scale public gatherings is that of vehicle-incursion incidents; that is, vehicles being driven (intentionally or otherwise) into crowds of people. The concern is grounded in the relative simplicity of this method of attack and the difficulty of identifying and preventing such acts without proactive protective measures in place.

To this end, the City of Appleton has enhanced efforts in recent years to place “hard barricades” in the form of municipal vehicles and equipment as well as vehicles provided by willing volunteers to better secure event perimeters from vehicle incursion. While these methods provide a degree of deterrence, they are not purpose-built for hostile vehicle mitigation, they can be slow to deploy and difficult to move in the event of unrelated emergencies, leave gaps where vehicles cannot be placed, and they can detract from the experience of event participants. A dedicated barrier system addresses these issues.

In an effort to address these concerns and enhance Appleton’s security of public events and gatherings, I present for your consideration a recommendation to authorize the acquisition of a Meridian Rapid Defense Group barrier system. The total cost, not to exceed \$1,275,000, would be funded entirely from unrestricted interest earnings accrued on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, leaving approximately \$395,000 in ARPA contingency reserves.

About Meridian Rapid Defense Group Barriers

Meridian Rapid Defense Group is a leading manufacturer of mobile anti-vehicle barriers, headquartered in Pasadena, California, with operations in the U.S., Europe, Asia, and Australia. Meridian's Archer 1200 barrier is the recommended system for Appleton.

The Archer 1200 is SAFETY Act Certified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, representing the highest federal standard for anti-terrorism technology. The barriers deploy rapidly without anchors, electricity, or hydraulics, and a full trailer load can be staged and placed by a small crew, freeing law enforcement and event staff for other duties.

Each unit measures 4 feet long by 2 feet wide by 3 feet high and weighs approximately 700 lbs; retractable wheels allow a single operator to position barriers without heavy equipment. Tested to MASH (Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware) standards, the Archer 1200 is engineered to stop unauthorized vehicles while remaining non-lethal to drivers and minimizing shrapnel risk compared to fixed bollards or concrete barriers.

Barriers can be connected with arrestor cables to create a continuous perimeter or can be spaced for pedestrian flow, and the system accommodates emergency vehicle access gates of 10, 12, or 14 feet, ensuring first responders can enter any secured zone within seconds.

Meridian barriers can also be moved, reconfigured, or stowed after every event, are fully reusable even after an impact, and carry a lifetime warranty. The product is deployed at major sporting events, universities, hospitals, farmers markets, and municipalities nationwide and internationally, including at Super Bowl events, the Australian Open, and numerous city street festivals.

Proposed System for Appleton

The proposed acquisition is designed to provide full perimeter protection for the Farmers Market, which is our largest recurring outdoor public event. This baseline deployment will also greatly enhance security of our largest event – Oktoberfest – while yielding sufficient inventory to support hundreds of smaller events throughout the year, including community festivals, road races, parades, and downtown activations.

The barriers can be transported, staged, and deployed by City staff and event crews with minimal specialized training, reducing ongoing operational costs and reliance on third-party contractors. Their compact, professional appearance is consistent with Appleton's community character and does not project a militarized or unwelcoming presence.

Appleton's system would include 130 Archer 1200 barrier units; eight drop-deck trailers for transport; one beam gate and one rapid gate to facilitate secure access and exit for authorized vehicles, as well as the associated equipment necessary to place and recover barriers. Additional accessories include arrestor cables and ADA-compliant cable protectors to further secure high-speed approaches while maintaining ease of pedestrian access.

Regional Interoperability

A number of neighboring communities in the region have already acquired Meridian barrier systems. Acquiring the same system creates opportunities for mutual aid and resource sharing during larger regional events, emergency situations, or concurrent deployments, an important operational benefit that enhances the overall value of the investment. As such, this recommendation is for a sole-source purchase from Meridian Rapid Defense Group.

Financial Summary

Total Acquisition Cost (Not to Exceed): \$1,275,000

Funding Source: Unrestricted interest earnings accrued on ARPA fund balance

Remaining ARPA Contingency Reserve: Approximately \$395,000

General Fund Impact: Minimal, and related to routine use, maintenance, and storage

Procurement & Operationalization

Should the Common Council approve this purchase, we would immediately proceed with issuing a purchase order. Meridian representatives have indicated that fulfillment would occur within approximately 30 days from the date of order.

Upon placing the order, I would then convene a cross-departmental task force to create an operational plan. This planning work would address training, insurance, risk management, special event policy, storage (short term and long term), associated equipment needs, unit deployment costs for chargebacks, deployment standards and requirements, and any other necessary details.

Recommendation

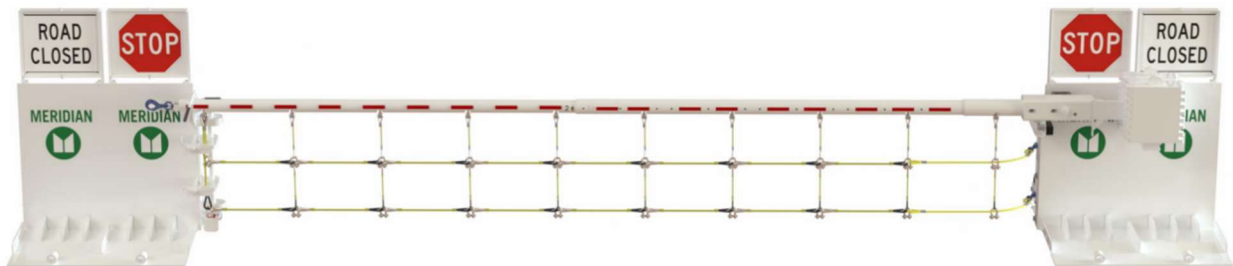
I respectfully recommend that the Common Council authorize the purchase of the Meridian Rapid Defense Group barrier system at a total cost not to exceed \$1,275,000, funded from unrestricted ARPA interest earnings. This recommendation is being made having consulted with DPW Director Jungwirth, APD Chief Olson, AFD Chief Hansen, and the full Leadership Team. Furthermore, extensive research has been conducted by City of Appleton personnel regarding this system and we have field-tested Meridian products at Appleton events in recent years, including during Mile of Music.

While I recognize the somewhat unusual nature of the process for bringing this recommendation forward and the funding mechanism identified, it reflects the urgency of continuing to take proactive steps to ensure public safety.

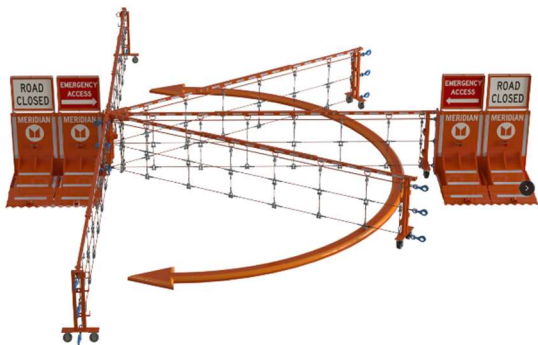
Exhibits – Meridian Barrier System Components



Archer 1200 Barrier – Appleton Field Test



Meridian Beam Gate



Rapid Gate



**Simple storage on
Archer 1200 Barriers**



**Lift 700 lbs. of
steel with ease**

Archer Hauler 2.0



Meridian Trailer (Note – Appleton’s system would not include sign holders or “road closed” signs; we intend to use a combination of existing city-owned barricades or event-provided barricades outside the Meridian barrier perimeter)