

September 12, 2023

City of Marion – Special Meeting

September 12, 2023

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Marion held at the Marion Cultural and Civic Center at 6:00 P.M. The City Clerk was instructed to call the roll and the response was as follows:

PHYSICALLY PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS PATTON, BARWICK, WEBB AND STOECKLIN AND MAYOR ABSHER.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Absher led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Absher expressed his appreciation for everyone attending tonight. He told the audience tonight is a big night for City Council and is the conclusion of a lot of work and the start of a whole lot more. He said the next item on the agenda is a public hearing. He explained here is a statutory requirement to hold a public hearing to inform the public of the STAR Bond plan that is on the agenda tonight. He said he and the Council have worked with the STAR Bond Developer over the last three years to make tonight a possibility. He told the audience he was working to try and bring the mall out of bankruptcy in 2020. A conversation with Rodney Cabaness led to his vision of where and how he wanted to see Marion grow. In looking at an arial map, they saw the words STAR Bond District which led to an aha moment and set in motion conversations with the Illinois Department of Revenue about the STAR Bonds legislation that was adopted by the General Assembly in 2010. He explained tonight is the final step before the Millenium Destination Development Plan becomes a reality.

Mayor Absher introduced important people in attendance tonight. He introduced Illinois Department of Revenue Director David Harris and thanked Director Harris and his team for their efforts and help navigating this legislation. He introduced former State Representative John Bradley who was a member of the General Assembly that adopted the legislation and thanked him for believing in the legislation.

He also thanked Governor Pritzker, Deputy Governor Andy Manar, State Senator Dale Fowler, and local Representatives Paul Jacobs, Patrick Windhorst, and Dave Severin. He thanked City of Marion Economic Development Director Glenn Clarida.

Mayor Absher thanked Rodney Cabaness and his team for their dedication to this project. He said the STAR Bonds legislation was first introduced in 2008. Since 2019, Rodney and his team have been developing their plan.

He told the audience he believes STAR Bonds developments only work when the developer is local and has invested time and resources to making it work. He explained for the local economy to grow consumers must come to the destination. The idea is to get outside money into the destination area. He said Rodney shares this vision with him.

Mayor Absher introduced Rodney Cabaness, Master Developer with Millenium Destination Development.

September 12, 2023

Rodney told the audience this has been a long journey, but he believes Southern Illinois can and will be a destination. He shares Mayor Absher's vision of growth and prosperity. He said the goal of the project is to turn Southern Illinois into a true destination and show why Southern Illinois is a great place to visit, shop, and play. He explained with the many amenities already here, the area needs attractions to draw people to the area. He went on to list the various components of Oasis Outdoors, show on a map where each will be located and explain the destination retailer goals. He introduced Jake Farrant, CEO of Mammoth Sports Construction. Mammoth designed the sports complex and pickleball and golf complex. They designed a similar development in Kansas City.

Mayor Absher told the audience the Illinois STAR Bonds legislation was essentially copied from the Kansas legislation. He introduced attorney Todd LaSala who helped to craft that legislation in Kansas. Mr. LaSala primarily works in real estate development and municipal work. He said the legislation was originally written for an Oz themed amusement park that never happened. The legislation was used to attract a NASCAR speedway to Kansas City. The area around the speedway became the number one attraction in the state of Kansas. People visit the area from all over. The STAR Bonds were paid off in thirteen years instead of the predicted twenty years. Kansas City was able to attract a major league soccer team and build a stadium using STAR Bonds. This has been an enormous success for Kansas City.

Mayor Absher explained the STAR Bonds mechanism. He first explained what STAR Bonds are and the risk involved. He assured the audience that it is not a new tax or tax increase and only the incremental sales tax collected within the district is pledged to pay the bonds. He explained that revenues are committed for twenty-three years to pay off the bonds, but they can be repaid sooner. He also explained the process from creating a STAR Bonds District to issuing the bonds. He told the audience that Millenium Destination Development is charged with executing the plan that was presented tonight by Rodney Cabaness. The bonded funds will be paid to Millenium's contractors for costs associated with executing the Project Plan. Both the State of Illinois and the City of Marion are pledging incremental sales tax within the district to pay back the bonds. He addressed possible questions property owners within the district might have. He also explained who benefits from STAR Bonds. He said all taxing bodies benefit from new development which equals new real estate taxes. The County School Improvement Fund benefits by receiving one percent of any new sales tax generated. The Regional Office of Education will receive fifteen percent of all new incremental property taxes generated. Adjacent businesses and communities will benefit from visitors to Marion. Mayor Absher said it is a win-win-win for our community, our region, and our taxing bodies. He also addressed challenges associated with growth generated from the STAR Bonds District including additional workforce and housing needs; infrastructure improvement needs; and additional public safety needs.

Illinois State Comptroller's Office representative Josh Downs read a letter of support from Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

A resident of Kokopelli Villas asked about a proposed RV Park that will would locate outside her back door. Mayor Absher told her the RV Park is not a part of the Project Plan being voted on tonight. That would be in a future development.

An audience member asked about environmental concerns.

September 12, 2023

Herrin Mayor Steve Frattini expressed support for Marion from the city of Herrin.

A Marion resident expressed her support and excitement for future growth in the city.

Mayor Absher announced this concludes the public comments portion of the meeting as required by state statute at 7:23 P.M. He asked the Council and City Clerk to join him at the Council desk. He announced it was time to move on to item five under Public Affairs.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Ordinance 3914 Approving the 1st Project Plan to the STAR Bond District

Mayor Absher said it was his distinct pleasure and honor to make a motion to approve Ordinance 3914 approving the 1st Project Plan to the STAR Bond District. Commissioner Barwick seconded the motion.

He asked the Commissioners if they had questions.

Commissioner Stoecklin thanked everyone involved with this project and said he is really excited for it to come to fruition and is excited to be a part of it.

Commissioner Patton didn't have questions, but acknowledged the amount of work Rodney, his staff, Mayor Absher, the Council, and Chief of Staff Cody Moake have put in to seize this opportunity, an opportunity that no one else in the State of Illinois has. He said this has been laid at the city's feet and he thinks the city should take full advantage and see where it goes. He thanked Rodney, Mayor Absher, the rest of the Council, and everyone who has put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into this project over the last three years. He appreciates the hard work and looks forward to the opportunity.

Commissioner Barwick said he has been a resident of Marion his whole life. He feels privileged to be a part of this project and he is so excited for the city and to be a part of it and things to come.

Commissioner Webb said he echoed Commissioner Barwick's comments. He said he is a lifelong Marion resident and his kids have also made Marion their home. He's excited to see a future here for his grandkids and the investment that is being made in the community. He appreciates everyone's hard work.

Mayor Absher called for a vote on Ordinance 3914.

ON ROLL CALL VOTE COMMISSIONERS PATTON, BARWICK, WEBB AND STOECKLIN AND MAYOR ABSHER ALL VOTED YEA.

Mayor Absher said before the meeting is adjourned, the last statutory requirement after the hearing is to notify the Illinois Department of Revenue within thirty days of tonight's Council action. He then signed the letter for Illinois Department of Revenue and commented he thought it would be fitting to hand deliver a copy to Director Harris. He acknowledged his Chief of Staff Cody Moake who will be the administrator of the STAR Bonds District and asked Cody to join them on stage. He presented the letter to Director Harris and expressed his appreciation to Director Harris and to the State of Illinois.

September 12, 2023

Director Harris told the audience he truly believes this could be a transformative opportunity for Southern Illinois. He believes this will help not just Marion, but Southern Illinois. He said it is an honor to be here and to participate. He congratulated everyone who has been a part of it.

Mayor Absher thanked the Council for their efforts and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Commissioner Patton seconded the motion.

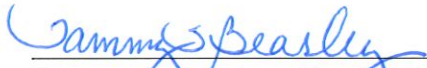
ON ROLL CALL VOTE COMMISSIONERS PATTON, BARWICK, WEBB AND STOECKLIN AND MAYOR ABSHER ALL VOTED YEA.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30 P.M.



Michael W. Absher, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tammy S. Beasley, City Clerk