

September 25, 2023

City of Marion – Regular Meeting

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Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Marion held in the Council Chambers at 5:30 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 COMMENTS

Marion resident Jimmy Johnson addressed the council and read prepared remarks regarding his concerns about treason in the United States and the collapse of the economy.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Stoecklin made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Commissioner Barwick seconded the motion.

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

NEW BUSINESS

BUILDING & CODE SERVICES

Affirm/Overrule Zoning Board's Denial for a Special Use Permit at 1003 Kimberly Court

Mayor Absher asked if the applicant for the Special Use Permit was here to appeal the Zoning Board's denial of their request. The applicant was not present. Mayor Absher also asked if there was anyone present who was opposed to the Special Use Permit request. There was no one present.

Mayor Absher made a motion to affirm the Zoning Board's denial for a Special Use Permit at 1003 Kimberly Court, PIN # 07-19-431-014 to have a bakery business built in an R-2 General Residential zone. Commissioner Stoecklin seconded the motion.

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

STREET DEPARTMENT

Approve Low Bid for a New ¼ Ton Pickup Truck

Mayor Absher asked Commissioner Webb for the history behind the truck purchase on the agenda. He said some trucks had been ordered from another vendor and they have been unable to get them.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the low bid for two new ¾ ton pickup trucks from Absher-Arnold Motors at a cost of \$47,211 each, a budgeted purchase.

Commissioner Webb asked Street Department Superintendent Doug Phillips to come forward and present the details. Doug told the Council last year the city missed the cut-off to make the municipal bid opportunity. This year they weren't accepting municipal bids for a certain brand of truck, so he went with another brand, and he was able to make the bid. The city received two

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bids, one from Absher-Arnold Motors and the other from Jim Hayes, Inc. Absher-Arnold was the low bid for two new Dodge 2500 trucks. Doug said the next bid was \$47,660 each.

Mayor Absher asked for a second on the motion. Commissioner Stoecklin seconded the motion.

Mayor Absher announced that he would abstain from this vote because the name in that company name implies that he has ownership in that company or an interest in it and he does not. Because that dealership belongs to his brother, he is not going to vote on that item. He reiterated he has no ownership in that company, so he could vote, but he is going to abstain from voting because it is his brother.

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

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Discuss Funding Framework for New Sports Complex in Partnership with Williamson County Government

Mayor Absher said it is the STAR Bonds developer's desire to build a multi-use, multi-field sports complex to promote sports tourism in Williamson County. While this has been in the works for some time, Mayor Absher insisted the city not discuss this until the STAR Bonds Ordinance passed. He explained the reality is the city cannot do this project alone. He said he and developer Rodney Cabaness met with Williamson County Commissioners and there was enough interest on the County Board that Commissioner Marlo is here tonight. He said time is of the essence with this project because the designers are ready to build the sports complex. He said he is asking the city to discuss this tonight and determine if it is compelling enough to discuss in more detail with Williamson County and legal counsel and move forward.

STAR Bonds District Master Developer Rodney Cabaness told the Council and audience the STAR Bonds have created an opportunity to get some state dollars in Southern Illinois. During his trips around the country to research what brings people to a destination, sports tourism kept coming up. He believes the proposed sports complex will add to the experience in and around the mall where various recreational activities will be located. He also believes people from all over the country will travel to Marion to visit the sports complex. He thinks this will take approximately three years. He visited sports complexes in Rocky Mount, North Carolina; Gatlinburg, Tennessee; Hoover, Alabama; and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and reported information on each. Rodney said none of these facilities are as strategically located as Marion. He gave an example of a complex in Cartersville, Georgia that is in an area where there is nothing else except two hotels. Marion already has more attractions. Rodney explained he and his team are looking to maximize this opportunity with the sales tax revenue the state is allowing them to keep. During his research, one of the questions he asked was how to get the most people to travel to Marion. The proposed sports complex will have sixteen ball fields and a 160,000 square foot indoor sports complex. This will all be located on the east side of Sioux Drive. His research indicates there will be 285,000 non-local visitors by year five. Rodney said the Mammoth Sports Construction CEO traveled with his team to look at the various facilities. They looked at the minimum number of fields needed to bring people to an area. The current estimate to build the fields is thirty-five million dollars. They believe the sports complex concept goes hand in hand with a destination development. He said Mammoth has looked at one hundred fourteen locations around the country and Marion is in their top three locations. He believes this is a once in a lifetime opportunity with STAR Bonds and the most powerful solution to maximize the opportunity is a sports complex.

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Mayor Absher passed out materials to the Commissioners, including the STAR Bonds feasibility study. He explained part of the materials include his work product, a series of spreadsheets and cash flow projections.

Mayor Absher said there is a meeting tomorrow with the U S Department of Agriculture to approach borrowing money for the sports complex. He said 1.2 million could be paid annually from hotel use tax and the developer has committed one million dollars and has been asked to donate the land to the city. Mayor Absher walked through the various spreadsheets and analyses with the Commissioners. He explained the goal is to make sure there is enough money in reserves for capital expenditures. For example, all the fields will have artificial turf. He said this is a big deal because the market strongly prefers this. It is estimated that by year twelve the turf will need to be replaced. There needs to be enough money in reserves to do this. Mayor Absher explained the tax levied on hotel stays is used to fund tourism to encourage more hotel stays. Investing the hotel tax to encourage more hotel stays with all the new hotel stays will generate revenue per the feasibility study prepared by SFA. By year five, the study indicates the city will be net positive by \$500,000. Mayor Absher indicated he would like to have a meeting by the end of the week or early next week to get this accomplished. He then asked for feedback from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Patton asked about allowances for increases in labor and materials to replace the turf in the future. He thinks extra funds need to be built into the projection to cover the increase in costs.

Commissioner Barwick commented as inflation drives costs higher, the cost of a hotel stay will also increase which will cause hotel tax revenue to increase.

Commissioner Stoecklin said he and Illinois Department of Revenue Director David Harris had a conversation about the sports complexes they had visited with their kids when they were playing various sports. They had five sports complexes in common they had visited. He also pointed out that teams will consider how much they will spend for travel in non-metro areas versus in metro areas.

Commissioner Patton commented he thinks the region is key regarding proximity to other facilities.

Developer Rodney Cabaness commented he is not a sports guy, but the experts are driving these decisions with the data they have collected. He also pointed out the fields are convertible so there are multiple options to adapt and adjust based on market needs. This offers flexibility.

Commissioner Webb asked if teams would be able to play championship games at Mt. Dew Park. Rodney indicated they would.

Mayor Absher asked Williamson County Commissioner Jim Marlo if he had questions or comments. Commissioner Marlo said the county has agreed to work with the city after hearing Rodney and his team's proposal. He thinks this is a trend that will grow. He said the county has a lot of questions, but they think this is a good opportunity. He said they area willing to work with the city and they think the timing is right.

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Mayor Absher asked Williamson County Tourism (Visit SI) Director Ashlee Spiller if she had question or comments. She reported the sports traveler spends at least one hundred fifty percent sometimes up to three hundred percent more than leisure travelers spend.

Mayor Absher polled the Commissioners about moving forward with a meeting with Williamson County. The consensus was to move forward with a meeting.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Patton – Accounts & Finances

Commissioner Patton had no report.

Commissioner Webb

Commissioner Webb reported the Street Department has been cleaning creeks along Cherry and South Market Streets. They have been working on a wash out on Van Buren Street and have been helping with the move to the new City Hall. He gave a shout out to everyone involved with the move. They have also been weeding, mowing, and cleaning up trash around town. He reported everything is going well with the Cemetery Department and there is nothing to report.

Commissioner Barwick – Public Health & Safety

Commissioner Barwick had no report.

Commissioner Stoecklin – Public Property, Civic Center, Pavilion

Commissioner Stoecklin read the Water Department report since the last council meeting. He announced beginning October 2nd the Water Department will be flushing lines and hydrants. This will continue through November. He asked two trivia questions this evening. Both questions were about Old Route 13 (East/West Main Street). First, he asked what the original purpose was for building the road. The original purpose for building the road was that it was a buffalo trail. Second, he asked a true/false question about whether the original contract for building the road indicated it would be built of wood. The answer is true.

Mayor Absher – Public Affairs

Mayor Absher announced there will be a public hearing Tuesday night at 5:00 p.m. here at City Hall. The city has the opportunity to apply for a grant to construct sidewalks from East DeYoung Street north along Fair Street and west along Morningside Drive to Lincoln School.

MISCELLANEOUS

There were no miscellaneous items to come before Council this evening.

CLOSED/EXECUTIVE SESSION

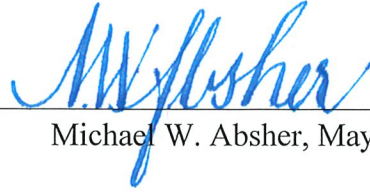
Mayor Absher stated he did not have a need for executive session this evening and asked if any of the Commissioners had a need for executive session. Hearing no need for executive session Mayor Absher entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

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

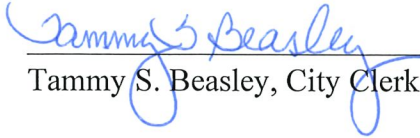
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Meeting Adjourned at 7:00 P.M.



Michael W. Absher, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tammy S. Beasley, City Clerk