

January 13, 2025

City of Marion – Regular Meeting

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REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Marion held in the Council Chambers at 5:30 P.M. Mayor Absher called the meeting to order at 5:32 P.M. The City Clerk called the roll, and the response was as follows:

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

PRESENT VIA TELEPHONE: COMMISSIONER STOECKLIN

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Assistant Police Chief Jody Wright led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Street Department Superintendent Doug Phillips told the Council he wanted to thank several people. He thanked Commissioner Webb for everything he does for the Street Department to make it possible for them to do what they do. He thanked Mayor Absher and the Council, Chief of Staff Cody Moake, and the other departments that helped during the weather event this week. He said it was a long week, and several employees were without power but continued working to help clear streets for the power companies and first responders. He told the Council it was a great team effort. He thanked Beverly Daniel from a Taste of Bev for providing hot meals for the employees on the days they were working and the City Clerk's office for fielding all the phone calls and helping to relay information. He told them the mechanics started a week early getting the equipment ready.

Commissioner Webb stated it was a tough week, but everything went well and there is plenty of salt left for the roads. Commissioner Barwick told Superintendent Phillips they did a tremendous job, and he received countless comments on how well the roads looked. He gave kudos to everyone who helped the Street Department. Commissioner Patton said he had received many comments about how quickly the streets were cleared and how efficient the city was getting them cleared. He expressed his appreciation to Superintendent Phillips and his staff for getting the job done. Superintendent Phillips reported information on the upcoming limb pick up.

Mayor Absher reiterated Superintendent Phillips' comments regarding the limb pick up. He stated that residents need to get the limbs to the curb and that the Street Department employees will get by to pick them up when they can. Mayor Absher said it was an amazing effort. He explained the preparation that goes into getting ready prior to the weather event is critical as well as knowing when to deploy employees for the event. He also thanked Beverly Daniel for providing meals for the crews.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Absher explained that when the city issues general obligation bonds to fund certain city operations, the city is authorized by law to add that to the property tax bill. Since the city does not levy a property tax, these property tax abatement resolutions basically say the city is not adding those bonding amounts to the property tax bills. This is a technicality the city has to do each year.

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City Attorney Wendy Cunningham gave an update regarding consent agenda item 4 A 2. She told the Council the insurance company has made an offer to pay the city approximately \$7,200 for the traffic signal cabinet that was damaged when a car accident occurred. She said IDOT is willing to share in the remaining cost 50/50. She explained the motorist involved in the accident did not have enough insurance coverage to pay the entire cost. Mayor Absher added the car accident took out the stainless-steel traffic control box and the motorist did not have enough insurance to cover all costs.

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

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

NEW BUSINESS

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Hire Mason Summers as a Patrol Officer at the Agreed Upon Rate per the Collective Bargaining Agreement

Commissioner Barwick made a motion to approve the recommendation of the merit board, Commissioner Barwick, and Chief Fitts to hire Mason Summers as a patrol officer at the agreed upon rate per the collective bargaining agreement with a start date of January 20, 2025. Commissioner Patton seconded the motion.

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

Assistant Police Chief Jody Wright told the Council Mr. Summers is in the Army Reserves. Mr. Summers told the Council he is excited to get started.

City Clerk Wright administered the oath of office to Mr. Summers.

The council meeting paused briefly for photos and then resumed.

Hire Veronica Miles as a Dispatcher at the Probationary 1 Rate per the Collective Bargaining Agreement

Commissioner Barwick made a motion to approve the recommendation of Chief Fitts to hire Veronica Miles as a dispatcher at the probationary 1 rate per the collective bargaining agreement with a start date of January 15, 2025. Commissioner Patton seconded the motion.

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

Assistant Police Chief Wright told the Council that Ms. Miles comes to the Police Department from the Saline County Sheriff's Office, has three years of experience, and was highly recommended.

Ms. Miles thanked the Council and said she looks forward to serving the City of Marion.

The meeting paused briefly for photos and then resumed.

Hire Corey Strong as a Dispatcher at the Probationary 1 Rate per the Collective Bargaining Agreement

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Commissioner Barwick made a motion to approve the recommendation to hire Corey Strong as a Dispatcher at the Probationary 1 pay rate per the collective bargaining agreement with a start date of January 15, 2025. Commissioner Patton seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Strong was not present this evening.

Hire Mark Bundren as a School Security Officer at the Agreed Upon Rate with Marion Unit 2 Schools

Commissioner Barwick made a motion to approve the recommendation of Chief Fitts to hire Mark Bundren as a school security officer at the agreed upon rate between Marion Unit 2 Schools and the City of Marion. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

Sell a 2015 Ford Explorer to the City of Carrier Mills for \$3,000

Commissioner Barwick made a motion to approve Ordinance 3996 authorizing the sale of a 2015 Ford Explorer to the City of Carrier Mills in the amount of \$3,000. Commissioner Patton seconded the motion.

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ordinance 3995 Petition for Disconnection by John and Marjorie Gordon

Mayor Absher explained a petition has been filed to disconnect or de-annex property from city limits. He said that property owner John Gordon met with him, Street Department Superintendent Doug Phillips, Public Works Superintendent Brent Cain, and Glenn Clarida about the property located on the northeast edge of city limits. Mr. Gordon wants to sell his property to a developer who is wanting to develop a subdivision and build affordable homes. Spillertown's subdivision ordinance is a lot more lenient than Marion's, making it less expensive to develop the subdivision. Spillertown plans to annex the property and provide city services because they want to receive the property tax revenue from the development. Mayor Absher stated this is the first disconnection to take place during his administration. Mr. Gordon had no additional comments, but did answer some questions from the Council.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve Ordinance 3995 approving a petition for disconnection by John and Marjorie Gordon. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

BUILDING & CODE SERVICES

Ordinance 3997 Amending Ordinance 1861 Concerning Roofers Working in the City

City Attorney Wendy Cunningham told the Council there are two changes to the code section regarding roofers. One change moves the permit process to the Building & Code Services Department from the City Clerk. The other change increases the bond amount from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

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Commissioner Patton made a motion to approve Ordinance 3997 amending Ordinance 1861 concerning roofers working in the city changing the permit process to the building and codes and changing the bond in force amount to \$25,000 from \$10,000. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

The Commissioners asked questions regarding inspections and permitting. Mayor Absher explained the state licenses roofers and requires them to have a bond but does not enforce the laws. The state leaves the enforcement to municipalities. Hearing no other discussion, Mayor Absher called for the vote.

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

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Proposal from Solar on Earth to Subscribe City Facilities to Community Solar

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve a proposal from Solar on Earth to subscribe each of our city facilities to community solar. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

Mayor's Chief of Staff Cody Moake explained the state allows community solar through the Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act. Community solar is where companies like Solar on Earth build solar arrays and seek out subscribers including residents, school districts, municipalities, and for-profit entities. Most of the community solar for residents is reserved for lower income status households. He explained this is the fourth company he has talked with about community solar. The previous three offered around seven or eight percent savings. Solar on Earth offered twenty percent savings because they are starting a new array, and the city would be the first subscriber. The initial contract term is for a ten-year period. The city would save, on average, approximately twenty percent off the utility bills for all city facilities. He said he has been unable to find a loophole in the agreement. He explained they do not currently have consolidated billing, so Ameren will deliver credits to the city on each bill and then Solar on Earth will bill the city for eighty percent of those credits. He said this process nets out to approximately \$.11 per kilowatt-hour. In the event the city would choose to cancel the contract, they must give 180 days' notice, and they would have to stay in the program until Solar on Earth finds a replacement subscriber. The arrays will be located in Princeton and Dover, Illinois.

Hearing no further questions or discussion, Mayor Absher called for the vote.

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

Ordinance 3998 Amending the STAR Bond Master Developer Agreement

Mayor Absher said hopefully next meeting will authorize the issuance of the STAR Bonds for \$110 million to build out projects. He said the bond counsel has requested some technical changes in the STAR Bond Master Development Agreement.

Chief of Staff Cody Moake explained the amendment makes three changes that were requested by bond counsel. The Preliminary Statements section adds the statement the developer agrees to undertake and complete Project No. 1. All the bond documents require the developer to build out Project No. 1. The Incentives section only initially included sales tax. Hotel tax, gas tax, and amusement tax were not initially considered as sales tax. Currently there are not hotels, gas stations, or amusements located within the STAR Bonds area, so nothing is currently affected. Project No. 1 does include plans for a hotel and amusements. The Assignment section names

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entities that are associated with the development team since these entities may incur costs associated with the development.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve Ordinance 3998 amending the STAR Bond Master Developer Agreement. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Webb – Streets & Public Improvements

Commissioner Webb reported that in addition to the snow and ice removal discussed earlier, the Street Department has been doing drainage tile work on Copeland, Monroe, and Carter Streets. The cemetery had fifteen burials in December.

Commissioner Stoecklin – Public Property, Civic Center, Pavilion

Mayor Absher read the annual Water Department report. He asked a trivia question and reminded everyone the Marion Cultural and Civic Center foundation is hosting a music trivia night.

Commissioner Barwick – Public Health & Safety

Commissioner Barwick read the Police Department report for January 2024 through December 2024. He reported 20,844 dispatched calls; 21,815 911 calls; 46,864 non-emergency calls; and 1,921 ambulance calls.

Commissioner Patton – Accounts & Finances

Commissioner Patton had no report.

Mayor Absher – Public Affairs

Mayor Absher reminded everyone the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King birthday celebration will be held January 20th at the Pavilion. Boyton Street Community Center will present the program from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Smokin K's barbeque is catering the meal, and the CEO of Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is the keynote speaker.

MISCELLANEOUS

Marion resident Carmen Allen Adeoye told the Council and audience Connect 360 is receiving the Chamber of Commerce Award of Excellence Friday night at the Annual Chamber Dinner.

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 he 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.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:37 P.M.

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Michael W. Absher, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tammy Beasley Wright, City Clerk