

August 25, 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 5:30 P.M. The City Clerk called the roll, and the response was as follows:

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

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER PATTON

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Barwick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments this evening.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Commissioner Barwick seconded the motion.

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

NEW BUSINESS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MUNICIPAL PLANNING

FY26 TIF Grant Applications Received Through August 22, 2025

Mayor Absher stated that a handful of grant applications were received through August 22, 2025.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the FY26 TIF grant applications received through August 22, 2025. Commissioner Stoecklin seconded the motion.

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

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Participation Agreement with the Hope Trust to Provide Employee Health Insurance Beginning January 1, 2026

Mayor Absher stated there was a special meeting on this topic and an extensive discussion at the last council meeting relating to whether the Council approves a participation agreement with the Hope Trust. He explained the representatives from Snedeker have come back to meet with some departments to answer questions. He stated that he and Chief of Staff Cody Moake have had several conversations with the city's current insurance agent Jon Cavaness who has represented the city for many years. He said Jon has done a great job and does not want to lose the city's business. Mr. Cavaness has provided some questions that he has, and Mayor Absher has in turn asked Snedeker. Mayor Absher said he is confident that Snedeker is confident with the numbers they have proposed. Mayor Absher explained that the next step in the process should this agreement be approved is to meet with small groups of employees to start the process of taking medical applications. This provides detailed information on the health census so the city can proceed toward a January 1, 2026, enrollment.

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Mayor Absher stated that it is his recommendation that the Council approve the participation agreement and move forward. If the health census should yield poor information and Snedeker should determine the proposed numbers will not work, the city is not obligated to move forward.

Mayor Absher asked Alex Snedeker to address some of the concerns that were expressed by employees. Mr. Snedeker told the Council that his company works in a completely different way to try to mitigate risk. They have a network of providers that allows them to drive savings and there is an incentive for the members to use the providers in that network. They can provide significant savings with prescription costs, and they offer multiple plan choices. The Hope Trust representatives will sit down with employees and talk about their specific needs and decide which plan is best for them. Currently, employees are only offered one plan. He said there is not one golden egg that will save the city millions of dollars. He stated they are very happy to answer any and all questions.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve the participation agreement with the Hope Trust to Provide Employee Health Insurance Beginning January 1, 2026. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

Mayor Absher explained that agenda item 6B and 6C are related. He told the Council that he met with many department heads at City Attorney Wendy Cunningham's request since there are many more events happening on the Square now. He explained this was very much planned and the space has been utilized much more since it was redesigned. It has not led to any disasters yet, but it does require more planning for the city. City Attorney Cunningham wanted more of a process in place so that all things that need to be considered for events are being considered.

Ordinance 4058 Concerning Special Events in the City of Marion

City Attorney Wendy Cunningham told the Council the Special Events ordinance and application are needed because there are more events taking place on the Square and in the downtown area. These events require extra preparation and planning and present liability and safety concerns. She explained there has never been a formal process for holding special events before and the Ordinance and permit are the first steps in the process. Mayor Absher added that there is no fee charged for the special event permit. City Attorney Cunningham addressed questions from the Council. She explained that every event is different and will be held in different locations. Each event will be evaluated based on the information included on the application. Mayor Absher stated that this process is needed to determine the demand for city resources when an event is held on public property and the process is intended to be flexible when necessary. After some discussion between the Council and Attorney Cunningham Mayor Absher asked to strike the word residential from section B5 of the ordinance. He also added that the city wants a single point of contact for special events. He said the city has not done the best job of coordinating events between departments. He said the city wants to funnel these events to Marketing Director Rachel Stroud. She has been involved with many of these events and is very intuitive in knowing which departments need to be involved in the planning process. Mayor Absher stated the Council will be voting on the ordinance as presented with the word residential stricken from section B5.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve Ordinance 4058 concerning special events in the City of Marion. Commissioner Barwick seconded the motion.

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

Ordinance 4059 Amending Ordinance 3609 Regarding the Public Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages in the City of Marion

Mayor Absher stated that Ordinance 4059 is amending Ordinance 3609 which is the current ordinance regulating the public consumption of alcohol.

City Attorney Wendy Cunningham explained this came to her attention when a city ordinance violation ticket was issued for this recently. The individual wanted a bench trial and as she was preparing, she noticed the ordinance read that a person is prohibited from this if they were within 100 feet of a school, park, or church. In her opinion, which left a lot of areas of the city still open. She believes this is a loophole in the ordinance that needs to be closed. The amendment to the ordinance closes the loophole and prohibits public consumption of alcohol on any public sidewalk or any public property unless it is on the Square and a special permit has been issued allowing for that event.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve Ordinance 4059 amending Ordinance 3609 regarding the public consumption of alcoholic beverages in the City of Marion. Commissioner Stoecklin seconded the motion.

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

Final Settlement with This Day Forward Ministries, Inc.

Mayor Absher asked City Attorney Wendy Cunningham to explain this agenda item. City Attorney Cunningham told the Council there have been some liens on the Hub Recreation Center property for approximately twenty years. An offer was made to the lienholder and that offer was accepted.

Mayor Absher made a motion to approve final settlement with This Day Forward Ministries, Inc. concerning liens on city property. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Patton

Commissioner Patton was absent.

Commissioner Barwick – Public Health & Safety

Commissioner Barwick had no report.

Commissioner Webb – Streets & Public Improvements

Commissioner Webb reported that the Street Department has repaired a concrete curb on Skyline Drive. They have been working on sidewalks on Vicksburg and Chestnut Streets. They have been mowing right-of-way. They cleaned the detention pond behind Walmart and have completed several trash cleanups requested by the Codes Department. They are still removing brush and street sweeping. He reported all is well at the Cemetery.

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Commissioner Stoecklin – Public Property

Commissioner Stoecklin read the Water Department report since the last council meeting. He reported almost all the landscaping and road patching are completed from prior water leaks. He asked two trivia questions this evening.

Mayor Absher – Public Affairs

Mayor Absher had no report.

MISCELLANEOUS

Chief of Staff Cody Moake announced the Freedom Sings event will be on Saturday, September 6th on the Square. He told the Council the construction was completed at the Senior Citizens Center and encouraged them to stop by and see the finished project. He announced that Captain Mike Boyd retired today from the fire department with thirty years of service.

Commissioner Stoecklin reminded everyone that Veterans on Parade is also Saturday, September 6th at 10:00 A.M.

Police Chief David Fitts reminded businesses that if they sell products containing Kratom the police department will visit them.

CLOSED/EXECUTIVE SESSION

6:07 P.M.

Mayor Absher made a motion to go into executive session under the Illinois Open Meetings Act to discuss personnel matters 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1). Commissioner Webb seconded the motion.

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

6:35 P.M.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn the Executive Session and resume the Regular Meeting. Commissioner Stoecklin seconded the motion.

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

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

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

Meeting Adjourned at 6:36 P.M.



Michael W. Absher, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tammy Beasley Wright, City Clerk