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March 2025

MARION MESSENGER



**Parks &
Recreation
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Activity
Guide
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Nick AbouAssaly

Help Shape Marion's Future

The year 2025 is well under way and promises to bring tremendous opportunities for continued progress in Marion.

Our city's leaders are, more than ever, driving progress, prioritizing

quality of life and quality of place, and pursuing projects that improve lives, add value and create new opportunities for all who live here.

Understanding that we have one chance to do things the right way, we are giving our best, asking for the best, and always seeking to help our city achieve its fullest potential. In the process, we are building a standout community where people and businesses want to be.

While our city's progress is driven by energized and responsible leaders, it is anchored in a community that is knowledgeable and actively engaged in shaping its own future. We pride ourselves on making fact-based and expert-informed decisions. But we also understand that local government works best when the people we serve are actively engaged in the process.

To that end, in recent years city officials have made great strides in improving communication, information sharing and responsiveness to residents' questions. We actively seek the community's ideas and preferences and use that information to guide our priorities and work plans.

We also provide residents with many opportunities for direct participation in decision-making through service on City boards, commissions and project steering committees.

I encourage Marion's residents to take advantage of opportunities to serve and contribute their energy and talents, whether through a City committee or in the community at large. Diverse participation results in diverse ideas and more potential solutions to our challenges.

There's never been a better time to step forward, volunteer to serve and offer ideas and energy to help move Marion forward.

When an entire community is engaged in achieving a greater vision that serves all people, it becomes an unstoppable force. Let's continue reaching higher, together. I can't wait to see what we'll do!



Learn more at www.cityofmarion.org/boards-commissions



Gary Hansen Named Building Official of the Year

Gary Hansen, building division manager for the City of Marion, was recently named Building Official of the Year by the Iowa Association of Building Officials (IABO). He was recognized among his colleagues and peers in January at the IABO Annual Banquet.

The honor recognizes his outstanding leadership, dedication and significant contributions to building safety and compliance.

Hansen has been instrumental in establishing the Eastern Iowa Construction Code Council which strives to facilitate modernizing building codes, streamlining permitting processes and creating consistency amongst surrounding jurisdictions in the application and administration of construction standards.

His efforts have enhanced operational efficiency and improved community safety and trust.

"Gary's innovative approach and commitment to excellence have made an extraordinary difference," said Luke Maloney, vice president of IABO. "He exemplifies the very best in our field, and this recognition highlights his exceptional impact on our industry and community."

In Memory of Sergeant Mark Kjormoe



The City of Marion extends its deepest sympathy to the family of Police Sergeant Mark Kjormoe who passed away in December following a brief illness.

Sergeant Kjormoe dedicated his 25-year career to serving our community as a member of the Marion Police Department. Most recently, he supervised one of the two evening shifts.

"Mark was a no-nonsense officer, but he treated everyone equally and with respect," stated Marion Police Chief Mike Kitsmiller. "Mark had a great sense of humor, loved being a police officer, but more than anything else, he loved his family and spending time at home. He is greatly missed."

Kjormoe is survived by his wife, Heather, and his three children.



Central Plaza Project Update

Progress continues on Marion's Central Plaza in City Square as excitement builds for the grand opening.

Winter weather and supplier issues have delayed the project slightly. Completion is now anticipated in April with a ribbon cutting to follow in early May.

Highlights from recent months include completion of all ice loop concrete work, the enclosure of the

Depot pavilion, assembly of the ice loop mechanics and installation of all lighting.

Dasher boards for the ice loop, water feature components, donor signage and the art sculpture are in the works.

Site restoration, landscaping and plantings will occur when the weather allows in the spring.

The eastern portion of the site will remain under construction as work begins on Broad and Main on 6th,

adjacent to the Central Plaza. This area will be used for construction access and staging as the second three-story building is built south of Broad and Main on 7th. As a result, the personalized brick pavers will be installed after this project is completed.



Stay up to date on the project's progress at
www.cityofmarion.org/centralplaza



Recycling Bins Repurposed

Last fall, the City of Marion worked with Iowa Waste Exchange to identify options for the 10,000 to 15,000 recycling bins residents could no longer use due to the transition to automated curbside collection.

Collectively, Marion residents diverted nearly 30,000 pounds of plastic from the landfill.

The primary recipient of the old bins was plastics recycler, Cedar Poly (a subsidiary of UFP Industries). Cedar Poly partnered with Marion to take the majority of the bins to their Tipton, IA facility and turn them into pellets that can be used to make UFP's Deckorators traditional composite decking or field drainage tile. The second recipient was Chain Reaction Bike Hub, which used 80 bins for bike parts and other uses. This partnership saved the Cedar Rapids nonprofit more than \$2,000 that can instead be used to support the Hub's community programming.

Marion Chief of Police Mike Kitsmiller Announces Retirement



After five years with the City of Marion, Chief of Police Mike Kitsmiller has announced his plans to retire in April.

Kitsmiller has built an impressive resume through his 38 years in

law enforcement. The first 12 years of his career were spent with the Memphis Police Department followed by 20 years with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In 2004, he was part of the team that put the war crimes case together against Saddam Hussein. In 2019, he retired from the FBI on a Friday and began his tenure as Marion's police chief the following Monday.

As police chief, Kitsmiller was responsible for the administration, coordination and direction of all Marion Police Department activities and a team of 48 sworn officers and six civilian employees.

"Our community is fortunate to have had Mike Kitsmiller as its chief of police," said Marion Mayor Nick AbouAssaly. "He has demonstrated strength, leadership and compassion in times of adversity and made a positive impact in our region through his invaluable experience and service."

During his time in Marion, Kitsmiller helped modernize the 911 dispatch center and records management systems, both of which improved the department's efficiency. He helped lead the City's derecho response and recovery efforts and initiated an online community transparency page to provide greater insight into how the Marion Police Department serves the community. He empowered his team and gave employees a voice in how the department operates.

"I like to think I'll be leaving the department a little better off than when I got here," said Kitsmiller. "I hope the next chief, and the one after him or her, can do the same thing."

"Chief Kitsmiller's approach has been forward-thinking and community-focused since day one," said City Manager Ryan Waller. "His intellect, voice of reason and sense of humor will be deeply missed among our team."

Months ago, Kitsmiller conveyed his plans to retire to Waller. This afforded ample time for succession planning. A recruitment firm has been hired to guide the process. In accordance with Iowa Civil Service laws, Deputy Police Chief Chad Nott will serve as interim chief for the first 90 days.

In retirement, Kitsmiller looks forward to spending more time with his family and possibly dusting off his golf clubs.

"I'm proud of the men and women of the Marion Police Department and humbled to have worked alongside the other members of the City's executive leadership team," Kitsmiller added. "After 38 years I won't miss the work, but I know I'll miss the people I worked with on a daily basis."

Karlene Hummel Retires after 26 Years with Marion Parks and Recreation



Karlene Hummel joined the Marion Parks and Recreation Department in 1998. Since then, she's been a fixture of the department as the City's recreation/aquatics coordinator and recreation superintendent.

When reflecting on her career, Hummel noted, "From a modest start with no structured programs, the department has grown to include over 80 recreation and aquatic programs, bus trips, swimming lessons and art opportunities, all supported by a dedicated team of full-time and part-time staff."

In her first year, she created, developed and managed the t-ball, flag football and youth basketball programs. Another big part of Hummel's job was overseeing the swimming pool. That role included everything from water chemistry and minor maintenance to the hiring, training and supervision of nearly 100 staff members in the summer months.

"The most rewarding aspect of the job has been the relationships developed with the program participants, their families, and our staff," said Hummel. "Over the years, I've had the pleasure of mentoring many young staff members who have gone on to successful careers in education, sports training, engi-

neering, therapy, coaching and recreation management. Now they're getting married, having children and once again participating in our programs."

In retirement, Hummel looks forward to spending more time with her family — her husband, two daughters, their spouses, six grandsons and one granddaughter. She's also considering working part-time as a substitute teacher.

"This journey has been immensely fulfilling," said Hummel. "I bring fond memories of my years serving this community with me as I enter this new chapter."

Jim O'Brien Celebrates His Retirement from the Marion Fire Department



In December, after a 24-year career with the Marion Fire Department, Jim O'Brien retired.

O'Brien joined the City of Marion as a firefighter/paramedic in November 2000. He was promoted to lieutenant in 2012 and for the last three years served as a shift battalion chief for Marion Fire. In addition, he

served as the department's maintenance chief and was responsible for the 14 vehicles in the fleet, maintenance at all three fire stations, and all personal protective equipment as well as respiratory protection equipment.

When reflecting on what has changed the most since he joined the Fire Department, O'Brien said it was the complexity of the fire service, the use of technology in firefighting and the additional firefighters on shift as the community has grown.

His favorite part of the job was interacting with the community. "I loved being able to help our residents with the problems they might be having on any given day," said O'Brien.

He is most proud of his daughters graduating from college and seeing them become adults. O'Brien and his wife have relocated from Iowa to Missouri. His plans include enjoying time with family and life at the lake.

FY 2026 City Budget to Be Adopted by the End of April

The City of Marion's annual budget process begins in July with a series of discussions held at City Council meetings followed by the annual budget work session in January. The process concludes with a public hearing and budget adoption by the end of April. This schedule promotes transparency and offers the community valuable opportunities to engage in shaping the budget. By using a zero-based budgeting approach, the City makes sure resources are allocated to its most important priorities.

Key Highlights of the FY 2026 Budget

The recommended General Fund budget for FY 2026 totals \$34 million in expenses, a 2.48% increase over last year (not counting transfers for equipment reserves).

- **Public Safety** (police, fire, and E911 communications) makes up more than 57% of the budget (excluding transfers). The budget includes the addition of one E911 communications operator to support our goal of maintaining a minimum of two-person staffing in the 911 Communications Center around the clock.
- **Culture & Recreation** (parks, recreation, and the library) accounts for 21% of the general fund expenditures. The Parks and Recreation budget includes funding for a full-time event coordinator and staffing for Central Plaza operations. This is offset by savings from other areas where we have streamlined or reduced costs. The library budget includes the addition of library materials for the mobile library.

Where the Funding Comes From

The General Fund budget for FY 2026 is supported by \$33 million in revenue. Over 75% of this comes from property taxes with 8% coming from franchise fees on electric, gas and cable utilities.

Property Taxes

To support the budget, a property tax rate of \$14.89684 is proposed. If property values stay the same (properties are re-assessed every other year), homeowners can expect about a 3% increase in the City portion of their property tax bill. For example, a residential home valued at \$300,000 would see an increase of about \$62 per year (or \$5.17 per month). A commercial property valued at \$1 million would see an increase of about \$102 per year (or \$8.50 per month).

Please note, the City does not control changes in property values or how the tax burden is allocated among various property classifications.

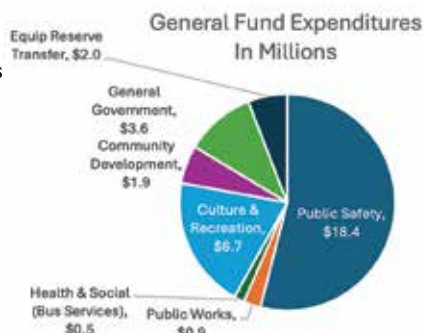
FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program

The FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program budget is heavily focused on transportation needs, making up about 40% of the planned expenditures. Most of the funding in the transportation category goes toward completing Tower Terrace Road and various overlay projects. The second largest category is facilities, which accounts for 17% of the budget. This includes the construction of an elevated water tower and the second phase of the Public Safety Training Facility.

Key Projects Over \$1.5 million:

- **Tower Terrace Road:** completes Tower Terrace Road from I-380 to Highway 13, pending federal funding.
- **Pavement Management Program:** an ongoing annual program that replaces streets in residential areas.
- **Sanitary Trunk Sewer – Projects 4 & 5:** based on a Sanitary Sewer Study, addresses an area southeast of Alburnett Road and west of 10th Street.
- **Lucore Road Elevated Water Tower:** a new one-million-gallon elevated water tower will create a new water pressure zone for current and future developments in the area.
- **Outdoor Aquatic Center:** in the planning phase, \$1 million is set aside for land acquisition and another \$1 million for construction plans. A public vote on the project is expected in November 2025.
- **CeMar Trail:** includes 1.44 miles of 10-foot-wide concrete trail and the construction of three bridges over Indian Creek, creating largely grade-separated bike and pedestrian travel from Uptown Marion to Downtown Cedar Rapids/Cedar Valley Nature Trail.

Dialog will continue between now and April 30, the deadline for filing the FY 2026 budget with the State.



Marion Seeks Feedback on Flooding and Stormwater Infrastructure

City officials are asking the community to help identify issues with stormwater infrastructure in Marion. Residents can report specific areas of flooding, blocked storm intakes, detention basin/pond issues or erosion issues to a digital issues map at www.cityofmarion.org/stormwatermasterplan.

The City of Marion is evaluating its existing stormwater infrastructure and developing a Stormwater Master Plan to guide future investment and maintenance of this critical system. Information from the issues map, public comments and scientific modeling will help build the plan and identify potential areas of concern.

To learn more about the project, visit www.cityofmarion.org/stormwatermasterplan or contact the Engineering Division at (319) 743-6340.

Utility Work in the Easement

Contractors will be out in force this spring and summer, installing fiber and enhancing the area's telecommunications network. They have a right to be in the utility easement, which can extend beyond the sidewalk and into yards. They will most likely be accessing your neighborhood utility boxes. If part of your yard is disturbed, the companies are required to restore it to its original condition. Any questions or concerns may be directed to the City's right of way technician, Chuck Whited, at (319) 743-6340.

Making a Difference: The Joy and Impact of Volunteering

In a world filled with busy schedules, volunteering might seem like a challenge to fit in, but those who take the time find it deeply rewarding. It's not just about lending a hand, volunteering brings a sense of joy, connection and purpose that benefits both individuals and the community.

Volunteering isn't just hard work, it's also fun. Whether helping organize local events, sitting on committees or setting up the farmers market, you get to meet new people, form friendships and feel part of something larger. It's an opportunity to give back and focus on the well-being of others, while setting a positive example for the next generation.

Volunteering in Marion isn't just for adults! When young people volunteer, they create lasting ties to their community. Engaging in local projects fosters a sense of belonging and pride, making youth more likely to stay or return to their hometowns. By working alongside community members, they build relationships, gain a sense of purpose and develop leadership skills that will serve them and their community for years to come.

When choosing where to volunteer, consider your passions, areas you'd like to learn about or community needs you've noticed. Then, look for local organizations that align with your values. Whether supporting businesses, working with youth or enhancing public spaces, finding the right fit ensures your efforts are both rewarding and impactful.

Volunteering brings communities together, creates lasting bonds and makes a real difference in people's lives. By giving a little time and effort, we can all help build a stronger, more connected Marion.

— Contributed by Uptown Marion District

Marion Community Build: Transforming Homes and Lives Through Student-Led Projects



Renovating affordable housing is vital to strengthening communities and providing stable living environments for individuals and families. The Marion Community Build initiative rehabilitates deteriorated single-family homes, turning them into affordable housing opportunities. This approach not only addresses housing challenges but also equips students with hands-on training that prepares them for future careers.

The current project, the third home under this initiative, began in March 2023. Under the guidance of instructor Dennis Fleege, students have made remarkable progress:

- › Concrete flat work was completed during late winter.
- › Flooring in the kitchen, main bath and laundry areas was finished.
- › Drywall, texturing and painting are nearing completion, with approximately 75–80% of painting and trim work done.
- › Bathroom fixtures, including tubs, showers and vanities, have been installed.
- › Kitchen cabinet installation is set to begin soon.

Fleege noted that despite the heavy workload, particularly with painting, the students have made steady strides toward finishing the project. The goal is to complete the house by late March or early April.

This initiative is made possible through a unique partnership between Marion Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO), the City of Marion, Marion Independent School District and Linn-Mar Community School District. Marion Community Build gives students a chance to develop practical skills while making a lasting impact on the community.



Uptown Marion Market is Set for Summer

Uptown Marion Market, presented by the Marion Chamber's Platinum Community Partners, will be held June 14, July 12, Aug. 9 and Sept. 27, from 8 a.m.-noon. Get to know local growers and artisans while enjoying fun, family-friendly activities.

Interested in becoming a vendor? The market is a great opportunity for local farmers and vendors to get to know their customers. It's also a place for entrepreneurs to test the waters on new products and retail. Applications are now open, visit marioncc.org/vendor-information for details or call (319) 743-4723 with questions.

Uptown Marion Market will be held on 7th Avenue and City Square Park in Uptown Marion and will feature vendors, music and family-friendly programming.



Watch for details or visit marioncc.org and facebook.com/MarionIACChamber for the latest.



MARION SPRING/SUMMER COMMUNITY EVENTS

Coffeehouse Nights

Fridays | March 7, April 4 | Lowe Park Arts & Environment Center

These musical performances feature talented local acoustic artists in a relaxed coffeehouse-type atmosphere. Admission is free and doors open at 6:30 p.m. with music starting at 7 p.m. Coffee will be available for purchase.

Red Cedar Chamber Music

Saturday | March 8 | Marion Public Library

Red Cedar is your ticket to travel! "Cultural Passport" is a program of commissioned works inspired by folk music from around the world. Sit back and enjoy stories and music that transport you to other times and places. This free performance begins at noon.

B-I-N-G-O Nights

Fridays | March 14, April 11 | Lowe Park Arts & Environment Center

Join us for Bingo! Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with games beginning at 6 p.m. Bingo will be played for \$0.25 per card, per game.

Wee Parade

hosted by Uptown Snug

Saturday | March 15 | Uptown Artway

Join us for a parade – in miniature! Float registration is at 1:30 p.m., and the parade starts at 2 p.m.

Red Cedar Chamber Music

Wednesday | April 16 | Lowe Park Arts & Environment Center

Red Cedar Chamber Music is a Cultural Leadership Partner in the State of Iowa. Each season, the group brings nearly 100 enlightening and entertaining performances to audiences in Eastern Iowa and beyond. The free "Crossover Quartet" concert begins at 7 p.m.

Healthy Kids Day + City Showcase

Saturday | April 26 | Marion YCMA

From 9 a.m.-noon, City staff will be on hand to visit with residents and share information about upcoming projects. City vehicles will be on display, and several community partners will have a presence. Plus, participate in fun activities and enter for a chance to win door prizes as part of the YMCA's Healthy Kids Day.

Marion Farmers Market

Saturdays | May-Sept. | NEW location: Willowood Park

Visit your neighborhood farmers market throughout the summer. Find produce, baked goods, meats, wine and more between 8-11 a.m. each week.

Migratory Bird Day Celebration

Saturday | May 10 | Thomas Park

Join the Marion Parks and Recreation Department, Friends of the Marion Parks to celebrate all things birds! Activities include educational displays, speakers, bird hikes, children's activities and more! For more information, visit cityofmarion.org/parks-recreation.

Marion Arts Festival 5K & Half Marathon

hosted by Corridor Running

Saturday | May 17 | Uptown Marion

Start the day with the Marion Arts Festival Half Marathon and 5K races, hosted by Corridor Running. The races begin at 7:30 a.m. Register now at corridorrunning.com/marion-arts-festival.

Marion Arts Festival

presented by Farmers State Bank

Saturday | May 17 | Uptown Marion

One day. Fifty artists. Exceptional art. Enjoy hands-on experiences and one-of-a-kind art from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Additional details can be found at marionartsfestival.com.

Great American Kites

sponsored by Summit Pointe Senior Living

Saturday | May 17 | PeeWee Diamonds at Lowe Park

For the fourth year, the Marion Parks and Recreation Department will host Great American Kites at Lowe Park from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Great American Kites specializes in producing the most astonishing and colorful outdoor giant kite displays. Guests should bring lawn chairs or blankets for seating. Outside food and drink are permitted.

Marion by Moonlight

hosted by Farmers State Bank

Thursdays | June 5, 12, 19, 26 | Central Plaza at City Square Park

Gather your people, a cooler and some lawn chairs and kick back to enjoy live music compliments of Farmers State Bank. Music goes from 6-9 p.m.

June 5: Large Midgets

June 12: Birdchild

June 19: 8 Seconds

June 26: Crazy Delicious

BBQ Rendezvous

Saturday | June 7 | Central Plaza at City Square Park

Visit Uptown Marion for this day of music and fun supporting the Kiwanis Miracle League at Prospect Meadows. The fun begins at 11 a.m.

Pop-Up Acts in the Artway

sponsored by Iowa Appliance Center and Affordable Heating and Cooling

Most Fridays | June-August | Uptown Artway

Sit on the patio of a nearby bar and hear local musicians perform on the Uptown Artway stage. Music begins at 6 p.m. Visit cityofmarion.org or facebook.com/CityofMarionIowa for specific artists and dates.

Poker Challenge

Ongoing | June 9-Aug. 10 | Marion Parks

Fifty-two large playing cards have been hidden around Marion's parks and trails. Assemble your best five-card hand (with photo proof) and submit it for a chance to win cool prizes.

Marion Community Band

Tuesdays | June 10 & July 1 | Thomas Park

Bring a lawn chair or blanket and enjoy a nice summer evening listening to our great community band! Wear something red, white or blue to get into the spirit. Music starts at 7 p.m.

Uptown Marion Market

*presented by Marion Chamber Platinum Community Partners**

Saturdays | June 14, July 12, Aug. 9, Sept. 27 | 7th Avenue between 10th and 12th Streets

This festival-style market, hosted by the Marion Chamber, features vendors offering fresh produce, baked goods and artisan items from 8 a.m.-noon.

Music Under the Moon

presented by Veridian Credit Union

Saturdays | June 14, July 12, Aug. 9 | Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park

Enjoy live music at the beautiful Lowe Park amphitheater. Bring a blanket, cooler and lawn chair. Concerts begin at 7 p.m.

Sunrise Yoga

Saturdays | June 7-Aug. 30 | Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park

Enjoy free outdoor yoga each Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m. Participants should bring water and a yoga mat or towel.

*Marion Chamber Platinum Community Partners include Farmers State Bank, ImOn Communications, MercyCare Community Physicians, Summit Pointe Senior Living and Z102.9 with support from the Marion Hotel/Motel Grant.

Event details accurate at time of publication. Consult the website of the event host for any updates.

Moonlit Movie Series

Fridays | June 20, July 18, Aug. 15 | Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park

Join the Marion Parks and Recreation Department for free outdoor family fun. Bring your blanket or lawn chair and enjoy the movie. Activities begin at 7 p.m., and movies begin at dusk (about 8:30 p.m.)

June 20: Inside Out 2

July 18: Mufasa: The Lion King

Aug. 15: Kung Fu Panda 4

Picnic on the Prairie

presented by Marion Arts Council

Saturdays | June 21, Aug. 16 | Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park

Come be inspired by music, art and the beautiful outdoors. Bring your picnic basket, blanket and lawn chair. The concerts begin at 7 p.m.

Summer Rock Series

presented by Uptown Snug

Saturdays | June 21, July 26, Aug. 2, 23, Sept. 20 | Uptown Artway

Enjoy hits by some of your favorite local musicians in the Uptown Artway this summer. Keep an eye out for additional information and band dates.

Movies on the Move

Fridays | June 27, July 25, Aug. 22 | Marion Parks

Join the Marion Parks and Recreation Department as it brings cinematic adventures right to your neighborhood. Bring your chairs/blankets for seating.

June 27: The Fall Guy at Lininger Park
July 25: Twisters at Thomas Park
Aug. 22: Wicked at Hanna Park

Fireworks & Fireflies

Wednesday | July 3 | Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park

Bring your lawn chair, blanket and cooler and enjoy live music before the fireworks show. The event starts at 6 p.m. and fireworks begin at dusk.

Eat. Drink. & Be Marion: Pub Crawl Fundraiser

Thursday | July 10 | Various stops in Uptown Marion | Must be 21+

Enjoy a night out for a good cause! The Pub Crawl features live entertainment, exclusive deals and extended shopping hours as you walk to each participating establishment. Have fun while supporting the ongoing revitalization and beautification efforts of Uptown Marion – A Main Street Iowa District. (Ticketed event)

Uptown Getdown

*presented by Marion Chamber Platinum Community Partners**

Thursdays | Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28 | Central Plaza in City Square Park

For over 25 years, Uptown Getdown has been the best way to wind down the dog days of summer! Grab your chairs and coolers and meet your neighbors for a party in Uptown. The festivities get underway at 6 p.m. each Thursday.

Marion Sprint Triathlon

Saturday | Aug. 9 | Linn-Mar Aquatic Center

Swim, bike and run for fun! Challenge yourself or your whole family in this sprint triathlon right here in Marion. Register by June 30. More information available at cityofmarion.org/parks-recreation.





Swimming Pool Safety at Home

With summer just around the corner, it is time to start thinking about swimming pool safety. According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, 80% of all drownings in 2022 happened in a residential swimming pool and 75% of those were children ages 1-4.

Pool safety is a priority of the Marion Building Division therefore a **permit is required** when installing pools and hot tubs. The City of Marion has adopted the 2021 International Swimming Pool and Spa Code and is in the process of updating to the 2024 code. Both include provisions for pool safety, including the following items:

- › All outdoor swimming pools, 24 inches or more in depth, (including in-ground, above-ground, or on-ground pools) shall be surrounded by a barrier measuring 48 inches in height.
- › In place of a barrier, in-ground pools are allowed to install either an automatic or manually operated, approved safety cover to completely block access to water in the pool, spa or hot tub. The covers shall comply with ASTM F1345. Never allow anyone to stand or play on a pool cover.
- › Barriers can have limited openings. They should not be climbable and may be fences or buildings.
- › Make sure all pedestrian gates in the barrier fence for your pool are self-closing and self-latching. Other gates should be padlocked.
- › Remove all chairs, tables, large toys or other objects that would allow a child to climb up to reach the gate latch or enable the child to climb over the pool isolation fence.
- › Reaching and throwing aids like poles should be kept on both sides of the pool. These items should remain stationary and not be misplaced through play activities.
- › All pool and hot tub drains (suction outlets) must have a cover or grate that meets industry standards for suction fittings marked to indicate compliance with ANSI/ASME A112.19.8 2007 or the successor standard ANSI/APSP-16 2011. Check to see that these covers are not broken or in disrepair, and that they are anchored firmly over the drain openings. The pool should be closed immediately when broken, missing or noncompliant suction outlet drain covers are discovered.
- › Install a pool alarm to detect accidental or unauthorized entrance into the water. While the alarm provides an immediate warning, it is not a substitute for the barrier fences, door alarms and safety covers required by the code.



For more information on the safety requirements, feel free to call and speak with the building inspectors of the Marion Building Division or check out the swimming pool handout on the City of Marion website at www.cityofmarion.org. For more information and tips on swimming pool and spa safety visit www.poolsafely.gov.



Rainscaping your Yard

Rainscaping your yard means implementing a design that reduces stormwater runoff from your property. Slowing down this water lets it infiltrate into the soil instead of all of it running off and causing erosion or contributing to local flooding. Installing a rain barrel collects water from your roof and allows you to use it later for landscaping. Other options include creating rain gardens by planting native plants in shallow depressions in your landscape or using permeable pavers if possible.

City Hall

1225 6th Avenue
Marion, IA 52302
cityofmarion.org

Administrative Offices

City Manager
319-743-6301
citymanager@cityofmarion.org

Deputy City Manager
319-743-4738
kdowns@cityofmarion.org

City Clerk
319-743-6327
cityclerk@cityofmarion.org

Community Development

Building Division
319-743-6330
buildingpermits@cityofmarion.org

Planning Division
319-743-6320
planning@cityofmarion.org

Engineering

319-743-6340
mbarkalow@cityofmarion.org

Finance

319-743-6350
lcairy@cityofmarion.org

Human Resources

319-743-6329
lsperflslage@cityofmarion.org

IT Department

319-743-4735
itdepartment@cityofmarion.org

Water Department

3050 5th Avenue | 319-743-6310
tsteigerwaldt@cityofmarion.org

Parks & Recreation

Lowe Park, 4500 10th Street
319-447-3590
sstaashelm@cityofmarion.org
Thomas Park, 343 Marion Blvd.
319-447-3580
bneighbor@cityofmarion.org

Public Works

(solid waste, sewer, streets)
202 44th Street
319-377-6367
public-works@cityofmarion.org

Marion Public Library

1101 6th Avenue
319-377-3412
info@marionpubliclibrary.org

Fire Department

100 Irish Drive
Emergency – 911
Non-Emergency – 319-377-8237
tfagan@cityofmarion.org

Police Department

6315 Highway 151
Emergency – 911
Non-Emergency – 319-377-1511
Records – 319-200-7714
Administration – 319-200-7727
administration@marionpolice.com



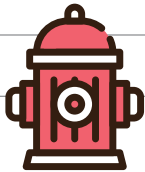
New Billing & Payment Portal

The Water Department's new billing and payment online portal is live.

- › Online payments can now be accepted for such things as deposits, bulk water bills and other miscellaneous bills.
- › Current users will see a new look and will have to bookmark the new URL.
- › Customers on autopay by recurring credit card must re-enroll if they were enrolled through the former payment portal.
- › A new automated phone payment service (IVR) will take utility payments over the phone at 1-888-459-8550.



Access the system at
www.cityofmarion.org/billingoptions.



Adopt a Hydrant

The Marion Water Department and Marion Fire Department ask residents and community businesses to keep fire hydrants closest to residences and businesses clear of snow. It is best to have a 3-foot clearance on all sides of the hydrant. The number of house fires typically increases during the winter. Significant snow accumulation and drifts can hide fire hydrants, making them impossible to find quickly. In the event of a fire, firefighters often must locate and shovel out fire hydrants before being able to connect to them, losing precious time. Always use caution and beware of street traffic when clearing snow.



Plans for New Elevated Water Tower

The Marion Water Department has completed plans to construct a new one-million-gallon elevated water tower at 6301 Lucore Road. Bids will be considered at the March 11, 2025, Water Board meeting. The engineer's estimated cost is \$5 million with a completion date of Oct. 1, 2026. This tower will increase pressure on the north and east sides of Marion and provide additional water storage for our growing population.

2025 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

City of Marion Garbage & Recycling Collection

Date	Holiday	Day	Pick-Up Schedule
April 18	Good Friday	Friday	Regular collection schedule
May 26	Memorial Day	Monday	One day late all week
June 19	Juneteenth	Thursday	Regular collection schedule
July 4	Independence Day	Friday	One day late starting Friday
Sept. 1	Labor Day	Monday	One day late all week
Oct. 13	Columbus Day	Monday	Regular collection schedule
Nov. 11	Veterans Day	Tuesday	Regular collection schedule
Nov. 27	Thanksgiving Day	Thursday	Collection on Friday
Nov. 28	Day after Thanksgiving	Friday	Collection on Saturday
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve	Wednesday	Regular collection schedule
Dec. 25	Christmas Day	Thursday	One day late starting Thursday
Dec. 31	New Year's Eve	Wednesday	Regular collection schedule
Jan. 1	New Year's Day	Thursday	One day late starting Thursday

Bold indicates City of Marion holidays, Yard Waste Facility and City offices are closed.

MARION MESSENGER

The Marion Messenger is published quarterly to keep Marion, Iowa, residents informed of City policies, new developments and community events. If you have comments or suggestions concerning this or future issues, please contact:

Amber Bisinger, Editor
Marion City Hall | abisinger@cityofmarion.org

Marion's Snow Removal Program

The Public Works Department is responsible for providing snow and ice control for City streets.

Each year the Marion City Council approves the Snow and Ice Control Program that outlines the policies and procedures for City snow removal operations for the Public Works Department. This includes the level of service and expectations for winter maintenance operations.

Parking Restrictions

During significant weather events, parking restrictions on City streets can be implemented in an effort to minimize hazards associated with snow removal operations.

Parking restrictions associated with winter weather events will be displayed on the City's website and local media sources.

The Police Department shall be responsible for the enforcement of the parking provisions, including ticketing and/or towing of illegally parked vehicles.

Winter Storm Parking

When the National Weather Service predicts snow accumulations of at least three inches or an ice storm event or either of those conditions occur, winter storm parking shall automatically take effect.

On-street parking is prohibited on any City street when Winter Storm Parking is in effect. Winter Storm Parking shall remain in effect through the duration of the snow storm or winter weather event and for 48 hours after the snow stops.

Street Classifications

PRIORITY ONE. Includes all snow routes within the City as established by the City Council. Plowing generally begins when the accumulation of snow exceeds one inch.

PRIORITY TWO. Includes the Central Business District and certain streets serving business/commercial areas. The Central Business District streets and alleys are within the boundaries of 9th Street, 9th Avenue, 13th Street and 6th Avenue. Plowing generally begins when accumulations of snow on the roadway itself exceeds one inch and after all priority one streets have been plowed.

PRIORITY THREE. Includes streets in residential areas with cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets being finished last. Plowing operations begin on these streets when the accumulation of snow on the roadway itself exceeds two inches and after the completion of priority one and two streets.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT. Snow will be cleared from the Central Business District when there is sufficient accumulation that constricts parking and/or available sidewalk area. Snow will generally be removed during an overnight shift, one- or two-days after all other plowing operations are completed. In locations where snow has been piled in parking spots, or in furrows in the middle of the road, it will be hauled out as soon as possible after the storm has ended and all other areas have been plowed.



To view the Snow and Ice Control Policy, visit www.cityofmarion.org



Automated Collection In Full Swing

Marion residents and City staff made a smooth transition to automated curbside collection last fall. Help us, help you by following these protocols:

- › Have your City-issued carts at the curb by 7 a.m. on collection day. Carts set out after 7 a.m. will not be collected.
- › Keep a minimum of 3 feet between carts and other obstacles.
- › Lids on all carts must be closed — overfilled carts will not be collected.
- › Place the carts right at the curb, the truck's mechanical arm can only extend 10 feet.
- › If you have an extra bag, place it on top of your garbage cart, with an extra bag sticker visible from the street.
- › Any extra cardboard or bags next to a container will be left behind. Continue to cut up boxes and larger pieces of cardboard. Boxes that are shoved into the cart get stuck and then block the other recyclables from being emptied.
- › Be sure the front of the cart faces the street and the wheels face the sidewalk/home.
- › Carts must be placed on a flat surface, not on a snow bank. If necessary, place in the driveway or in the street next to the curb. Any carts placed on a snow bank will not be collected.

Carts that are in violation will be left and not collected until the following week. Violations are recorded electronically using the Angel Trax camera system, which is installed on each truck. If your garbage or recycling isn't collected, please call the Public Works Department at (319) 377-6367 to inquire within 24 hours.



Marion Fire Department Studies Underway

The Marion Fire Department is working to implement its 2023-2028 Community-Driven Strategic Plan, which is rooted in feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. Two major studies are underway to help provide clarity in the scope and level of service provided by the department: the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Study and Standards of Cover Study. These two projects will be completed in 2025.

The mission of the Marion Fire Department is to protect lives and property

through rapid response, community risk reduction and emergency preparedness. This spectrum of service is broad, ranging from advanced emergency medical care to fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous materials and emergency management.

Marion is rapidly evolving and the Fire Department is committed to providing reliable and quality emergency services – aligning with community expectations. As such, the department is implementing a quality practice model

to guide data-driven decisions on program changes.

The model includes the evaluation of nearly 250 performance indicators and several program appraisals to inform how Marion Fire can provide more efficient and effective service. These measures align with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International model for how quality fire and emergency service organizations do business.

CONTACT CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Nicolas AbouAssaly

1225 6th Ave. | (319) 743-6305
marionmayor@cityofmarion.org

At-Large – Randy Strnad

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marionatlarge1@cityofmarion.org

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marionatlarge2@cityofmarion.org

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2551 Pleasantview Dr. | (850) 361-7181
ward1@cityofmarion.org

Ward Two – Grant Harper

2522 Vaughn Dr. | (319) 389-3385
ward2@cityofmarion.org

Ward Three – Will Brandt

2745 4th Ave. | (319) 389-9918
ward3@cityofmarion.org

Ward Four – Sara Mentzer

2305 Timber Creek Dr. | (319) 538-8296
ward4@cityofmarion.org

Send the same email to all members at:
council@cityofmarion.org

Marion's City Council meets in work session (no action taken, just discussion) on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 4 p.m. Regular session meetings are held the Thursday following the Tuesday work session at 5:30 p.m. Meeting information can be found at www.cityofmarion.org.



Marion Public Safety Training Facility Under Construction

Quality training is a critical part of providing excellent public safety programs. Following a donation of \$900,000 by the DeVault family in 2014, the department has been planning for a training resource to support public safety in Marion.

In 2024, the plan became official with matching funds from the City of Marion to construct a Public Safety Training Facility. This project is on track to be completed by the end of 2025 and will be a regional training facility that supports a broad range of services. The training facility is located adjacent to the Marion Public Works building off 44th Street in Marion.



While records indicate dogs were being used for guard duty and tracking in the 14th century, it wasn't until the late 1800s that we first started seeing the beginning of what we consider today to be the modern police K9 model. The movement started in Belgium and was born out of a need to supplement a shortage in officers.

Today there are approximately 50,000 working police dogs in the United States. They are used for apprehension, narcotics detection, explosive detection, human detection and to locate forensic evidence. Marion's K9 program began in 1998 with Yuri and Lieutenant Phil Fort. The department has had eight other teams since then.

The current program consists of two K9s, Silas and Taj, who work alongside their handlers Sergeant Adam Paulsen and Officer Aaron Stark. Both dogs are Belgian Malinois. Silas is six years old and Taj is three. All previous K9s on the Marion Police Department were either Malinois or Dutch Shepards and most K9s can work until they approximately 9-10 years old.

Silas is trained for patrol and explosive detection while Taj is trained for patrol and narcotics. Both dogs and their handlers attended six weeks of training before being certified to work the street. They train monthly and are recertified every year by a third-party trainer. They work the same 12-hour shift schedule as their handlers and live with the handlers and their families when they are off-duty. The handlers are paid a monthly stipend to care for their K9 partners, and many choose to keep their K9 upon the dog's retirement. In those instances, the officers pay the City \$1 to purchase the dog, but if the dog is not ready to retire it will be assigned to another handler.

Currently we pay approximately \$16,000 for a trained K9 and an additional \$4,000 to \$6,000 to outfit vehicles for the teams. The vehicles are alarmed, have ample room for the K9, have thermostats that turn on the air conditioning automatically if the handler is away from the vehicle and alarms that notify the handler when the automatic air comes on. The back doors to the vehicles can be remotely opened by the handler in the event they are fighting with a suspect and need assistance from the dog. Like officers, K9s are taught to go towards the sound of gunfire and trouble.

If you happen to see a Marion K9 vehicle out in the county or another jurisdiction's unit here in town, it is because we have agreements with area agencies that allow us to share resources. If another department needs a K9, and doesn't have one on duty, they'll call for one of our on-duty teams to respond and vice versa. We have found this to be an efficient and effective way to utilize these assets.



Marion Launches File of Life Program

The Marion Fire Department recently introduced the File of Life initiative, which is designed to enhance the safety and preparedness of residents, particularly the elderly and those with medical conditions. The program provides individuals with a simple and effective way to store their medical information. Participants can complete a confidential form detailing their medical history, allergies, current medications and emergency contacts, which is then placed in a magnetic pouch and kept on their refrigerator. This ensures that in the event of an emergency, vital information is immediately accessible to emergency personnel.

The program is free of charge and available to all residents. Those interested in participating can obtain a File of Life kit at Fire Station No. 1, Marion City Hall and the Marion Public Library or online at www.cityofmarion.org/file-of-life.



MARION FARMERS MARKET TO RELOCATE TO WILLOWOOD PARK

Over the years, the Marion Farmers Market has been held in multiple locations throughout the city, most recently at Taube Park. The Marion Park Board decided to relocate the market to Willowood Park in the spring of 2025. The new location will offer enhanced pedestrian safety, more vendor spaces, increased customer parking and permanent restrooms. This relocation will not interfere with pool operating times at Willowood Park. The market is currently accepting lease applications. Contact the Marion Parks and Recreation Department at (319) 447-3590 to inquire.

RECASSIST FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

RecAssist is a financial assistance program designed to make recreation and swimming programs available to all Marion residents.

Those who are experiencing financial hardship are eligible to apply for assistance. If you need help but do not meet the income guidelines, you may attach a letter to your assistance application stating your circumstances. These special circumstances will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Financial assistance forms are available online or at the Thomas Park and Lowe Park offices.

If approved, the applicant will be required to pay a 50% co-payment of the recreation program cost and a 50% co-payment for a swimming pool pass and pool programs. Visit www.cityofmarion.org/parks-recreation for additional information.

FRIENDS OF OAK SHADE

Daniel Levier died in 1879 – almost 150 years ago. Shortly after his death, his widow and three children moved on and no further Leviers were buried in Oak Shade Cemetery. For the next 150 years, his monument suffered the effects of wind and rain, derechos and ice storms, moving earth and falling trees, with no family to care for it in his memory. At some point, the base was split and the marker lay on its side. Last year, thanks to the generous contributions of many, and the help of Weber Stone Company, Friends of Oak Shade restored the memorial of Mr. Levier as pictured.



Before



After



Aquatic Center Update

Since its construction in 1986, Willowood Pool has been a cherished recreational facility for Marion residents. However, after nearly four decades of service, the pool is approaching the end of its useful life, facing ongoing and increasing maintenance challenges. Concurrently, Marion's population has experienced significant growth, underscoring the need for updated recreational amenities.

In response, the City of Marion conducted an Outdoor Aquatic Center Feasibility Study in 2021. This study evaluated the condition of the existing pool and gathered community input on preferences and priorities for outdoor swimming facilities. The study recommended the development of a modern, family-friendly aquatic center designed to serve all ages and abilities, accommodating the city's growth and attracting visitors from surrounding areas.

The proposed aquatic center is envisioned to feature a variety of amenities, including:

- A leisure/kids pool
- A lazy river
- Large waterslides
- A wave pool
- A 25-yard lap pool with an obstacle course
- A diving platform

A 24-acre parcel of land near 31st Street and Munier Road, has been identified for the aquatic center, parking and additional recreational amenities. This location was selected based on factors such as accessibility, proximity to households and the placement of existing aquatic facilities.

As part of this initiative, the aging Willowood Pool is expected to close once the new aquatic center becomes operational. The Willowood property will then be redeveloped into a neighborhood park, providing new outdoor recreational opportunities. The additional land shared with the new aquatic center is also slated for development into a community park, potentially featuring amenities such as a pickleball complex and other recreational facilities.

Community engagement is crucial in determining the specific amenities and features of these new park spaces. The City will be seeking resident input through public meetings, surveys and discussions with key stakeholders to ensure that the developments align with community needs and preferences.

A referendum is scheduled for November 2025, allowing residents to vote on funding for the construction of the new aquatic center and the redevelopment of Willowood Park. If approved, construction is anticipated to begin in 2026.

All community members are encouraged to participate in this process and stay informed about upcoming opportunities to provide feedback. Together, we can create modern, accessible and engaging recreational environments that will serve Marion residents for generations to come.



For more information and updates, please visit www.cityofmarion.org/aquaticstudy



All Aboard the Bookmobile!

Marion Public Library's new bookmobile hit the road in December. This resource provides education, entertainment and library services to our community, especially to those who do not have the means to make it to our main location. All members of the community are welcome and encouraged to use the bookmobile and its services!

Bookmobile Fast Facts

Q: What is a bookmobile?

A: The bookmobile is Marion Public Library's mobile service. This large vehicle will be driven to locations around Marion and has its own dedicated collection.

Q: What kind of materials can I check out on the bookmobile?

A: The bookmobile will have popular, newly released adult books, large print, young adult materials and a wide selection of children's

materials. As the bookmobile serves the community, we'll be able to fine-tune what people are looking for.

Q: Can I place a hold for materials to be brought on the bookmobile?

A: This is not a service the bookmobile is offering at this time. We are working through the logistics for this capability and hope to offer it in the future.

Q: Where will the bookmobile go?

A: The bookmobile will provide services at a variety of locations in our community. These locations include parks, grocery stores, recreational facilities and more. Dates, times and routes will change and expand as we grow this service.



For more information, scan the QR code or visit marionpubliclibrary.org/bookmobile

Join Our 2025 Reading Challenge

Is reading more books in 2025 one of your New Year's resolutions? Using our online resource, NoveList, we are offering a 2025 Reading Challenge for all readers!

It's simple: each month, we will share a new theme to inspire your reading. You can browse a list of suggested picks, visit our 2025 Reading Challenge display table, or browse on your own! Digital sites like Libby and Hoopla are two great resources to browse, too.

Challenges for the upcoming months include:

- March: Stay up to date with a book about current social issues
- April: Read a science fiction or futuristic book



Ready to get started? Visit marionpubliclibrary.org/news for more information and to download a tracking sheet.



New Year, New You, New Library Card!

There's no better time than the New Year to sign up for a library card. We have resources to help you continue your resolutions, start planning for spring, be creative in our MakerSpace or perhaps just relax! The power of a library card is in your hands. Sign up for a card online at marionpubliclibrary.org or visit with a staff member to register in-person.

Life Happens, Late Fines Don't.

Did you know: the Marion Public Library (and all other libraries in the Metro Library Network!) went late fine free in 2020? This means we no longer charge patrons for late items! Bring any items in and charges will be removed from your account. You can return most items to our walk-up book drop on 6th Avenue or our drive-thru book drop on the south side of the building. Materials can also be returned to the book drop inside the south entrance or one of our staff desks during library hours.

Visit the Friends of the Marion Public Library Book Sale

We've got books for you! Join the Friends of the Marion Public Library for their upcoming book sale - great books at great prices! Friends' members shop early on Friday and get the first selection of books. Not a member yet? No problem - you can join at the sale. The sale will be held in the library's Community Room on:

Friday, April 4 from 4-5 p.m.
(Friends members only)

Saturday, April 5 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sunday, April 6 from 2-4 p.m.
(Grab a bag of books for \$5!)

Pricing for the sale is: Hardcover - \$3, Paperback - \$2, Children's books - \$1



1225 6th Avenue
Marion, IA 52302
www.cityofmarion.org



Sponsorship Opportunities

Fireworks & Fireflies

Generous support from businesses makes many of Marion's events possible. The annual fireworks event would not be possible without our valued sponsors.

Marion will be hosting its annual Independence Day fireworks display, Fireworks & Fireflies on July 3, 2025, at the beautiful Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park.

In addition to the fireworks show, attendees of this free event enjoy live music, food trucks, children's activities and more. Well over 7,500 people attended the event last year and we only expect it to continue to grow in popularity.

As logistical needs grow, so do our expenses. We would love to be able to have an even bigger fireworks display, but we can only do so with

additional sponsorship support. Is your business or organization able to contribute to this signature Marion celebration?

Reach out at events@cityofmarion.org or visit www.cityofmarion.org/sponsorships to learn more.

Banners

Marion Parks and Recreation is once again offering area businesses the opportunity to sponsor advertising banners that will be displayed on our pool or athletic field fences. Show your support for community recreation programming and promote your business in the process.

Sponsoring a banner has the potential to reach 48,000 Lowe Park visitors or nearly 20,000 pool patrons over the course of a year. Sponsors will also be listed on the City website and mentioned on the Marion Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

Not only will your sponsorship help keep programs affordable and offset ongoing maintenance and operational costs, but it will also help support the RecAssist program for families who qualify for reduced registration fees.

To receive the benefits of a full season, the deadline to participate is April 1, 2025.

Questions may be directed to Allie Waterman, Recreation Coordinator, at (319) 447-3590 or awaterman@cityofmarion.org.

