



MINUTES

City Council Work Session

4:00 PM - Tuesday, February 18, 2025

City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

The City Council of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met in informal work session, Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 4:00 PM, in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Grant Harper, Steve Jensen, Sara Mentzer, and Gage Miskimen

ABSENT: Nicolas AbouAssaly, Will Brandt, and Randy Strnad

Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen presided over the meeting.

PROCLAMATIONS/OATHS

Police Department Promotion: Officer Michael Pope to Sergeant

Police Chief Mike Kitsmiller spoke about the Sergeant position, shared Mike Pope's accomplishments and recognized his promotion.

Councilmember Strnad arrived at 4:02 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS

Annual Presentation from Cedar Rapids Linn County Solid Waste Agency

Joe Horaney with the Cedar Rapids Linn County Solid Waste Agency provided information regarding 2026 fees, 2024 activity, landfill capacity and recycling services.

Mayor AbouAssaly arrived at 4:14 p.m.

Councilmember Harper asked for additional information about recycling services. Horaney stated recycling is market driven and spoke about the diversion strategies for aluminum and plastics. Councilmember Jensen suggested ongoing education about what can or can't be recycled. Councilmember Miskimen asked if there have been specific conversations with other agencies about the future of the landfill. Horaney stated they are a member of East Central Iowa Council of Governments (ECICOG). At this time items are first offered to other agencies within ECICOG and if no one is interested, they open it up to Illinois. Councilmember Harper asked what will be done in the next five years to plan for the future closure of the landfill. Horaney stated they have been looking at alternative technologies but they are very expensive. He stated a transfer station is most likely the best route.

Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen relinquished the gavel to Mayor AbouAssaly at 4:24 p.m. Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

Annual Presentation from Uptown Marion

Lacey Schroeder with Uptown Marion provided an overview of the Main Street Iowa Program, visitor insights from Place.AI, 2024 accomplishments, and the 2025 work plan. Councilmember Miskimen asked about the biggest takeaway from her first six months. Schroeder stated education to businesses about parking and garbage has taken a large amount of her time. Mayor AbouAssaly asked how businesses are supported if they are struggling. Schroeder stated she visits each business regularly and is in tune with any issues. She provided an example of a business that reached out to her and how she helped with marketing ideas and shared other resources.

OTHER DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

Update regarding Aquatic Center Project and Willowood Park

Parks Director Seth Staashelm provided information regarding the Aquatic Center Steering Committee members, an overview of the Willowood Park Open House, additional considerations and next steps. Councilmember Jensen asked more information about potential pickle ball courts at the Aquatic Center. Staashelm stated those courts will be a better fit at the Aquatic Center because of the noise. Councilmember Harper asked if the existing pool needs to operate longer, he would like the team to be transparent about the potential risks if the pool continues past its recommended life cycle. Staashelm stated the consultant is currently working on financial and safety considerations. Councilmember Mentzer stated the steering committee is tasked with the design but another group is handling the referendum vote. Staashelm confirmed that the referendum vote is not being handled by the City.

Update regarding the Hotel Market Feasibility Study

Deputy City Manager Kim Downs provided an overview of the findings from phase 1 of the above referenced study. Phase 1 indicated a strong market for an 80-90 upper scale hotel in Uptown Marion. Downs stated staff will now proceed to phase 2 of the plan which will assist with determining the best location. Councilmember Miskimen asked if the study includes data from new hotels that may not have trend history. Downs stated the consultant will include new hotels as well as hotels in neighboring communities.

UPCOMING AGENDA REVIEW

City Council review of the February 20, 2025 agenda. Council discussed the agenda items with no action taken.

Councilmember Miskimen left the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

Council continued discussion of the upcoming agenda with no action taken.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion to adjourn to closed session regarding real estate transactions as permitted under Section 21.5(1)(j) of the Code of Iowa

Moved by Jensen, seconded by Harper, to adjourn to closed session as stated above. City Attorney Kara Bullerman stated that she has reviewed the subject matter to be discussed and found it to be an appropriate topic for closed session. A roll call vote was taken.

Approved unanimously

Mayor AbouAssaly left the meeting and relinquished the gavel to Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Mentzer at 5:58 p.m. Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Mentzer presided over the meeting.

Moved by Jensen, seconded by Harper, to reconvene to regular session.

Approved unanimously

ADJOURN

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Mentzer adjourned the meeting at 6:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Rachel Bolender, City Clerk

The undersigned City Clerk of Marion, Iowa certifies that the minutes shown immediately above were published in the Gazette on the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Rachel Bolender, City Clerk