



MINUTES

City Council Work Session

4:00 PM - Tuesday, April 15, 2025

City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

The City Council of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met in informal work session, Tuesday, April 15, 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, Nicolas AbouAssaly, Randy Strnad, and Gage Miskimen

ABSENT: Will Brandt and Sara Mentzer

Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation regarding the Marion Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Study

Steve Noble with Public Consulting Group (PCG) provided information regarding the above referenced study. In addition to engagement and data, findings and recommendations were shared. Administrative recommendations included countywide EMS protocol update, evaluation of current 28E agreement, planning and coordination for large-scale events, standardized and integrated data systems, standards of cover response zone designation and ambulance response data balanced with community expectations. Operational recommendations included expanding emergency medical dispatch capabilities, explore dispatch consolidation, interagency EMS training and integration of ambulances into the incident command system. Fire Chief Tom Fagan provided next steps. Councilmember Jensen stated when he first started on City Council the City looked into a consolidated call center but it never moved forward. He asked if there was any indication that a consolidated call center is of interest now. Fagan stated there are still discussions with our partners to take place and more work will be done to see if that is something Marion can move toward. Councilmember Harper asked if there are any recommendations that are more critical than others. Fagan stated a couple of the recommendations are currently being completed including protocol alignment and standards of cover. Councilmember Miskimen thanked everyone who had a part in the completion of this study. He asked what components of the 28E agreement stand out as items to renegotiate. Fagan stated this study provides good feedback and intelligence from our community and equips staff with the talking points when discussions occur. Councilmember Miskimen asked if the study being completed by Area Ambulance will be shared with City Council. Keith Rippey with Area Ambulance came forward and stated once he has a draft study he will work with Chief Fagan to present the report to City Council. Mayor AbouAssaly thanked everyone who had a part in the completion of this

study. City Manager Ryan Waller stated all the recommendations will be reviewed to determine which are feasible in the near term or are long term goals.

Presentation from Mayor's Youth Council

Mayor AbouAssaly provided information about how the Mayor's Youth Council was created and how it has evolved over time. Students from the Mayor's Youth Council presented ideas of what the City of Marion should start, stop and continue. Items to continue included well maintained outdoor spaces, after school programs, artwork in the alley, festivals and movies in the parks. Ideas of what to stop or refrain from include any divides between Linn-Mar and Marion Independent School District (MISD). They recommended more events where students from both school districts can gather and meet each other. Ideas to start included activities for teens from ages 13-17, food truck days, teen volunteer programs and social media videos to gain more engagement. Councilmember Miskimen stated he liked the idea of more interaction between Linn-Mar and MISD and encouraged them to brainstorm ideas and present them to the school boards. Councilmember Harper asked out of all the ideas presented, what would they recommend be completed first. The students stated communication directed more towards those aged 13-17 would be the first priority. Councilmember Jensen encouraged the students to determine the top three that the City can facilitate and focus on those.

OTHER DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

Update Regarding Aquatic Center Project and Willowood Park

Parks Director Seth Staashelm provided an update regarding the above referenced project. Themes from the open house held on March 20 were shared and results from the survey were provided. The concept plan for Willowood Park was shown and the layout plan for the Aquatic Center site was discussed. Next steps including the Willowood Pool Open House on May 3 were provided. Councilmember Miskimen stated he is a member of the Aquatic Center Steering Committee and provided input regarding the placement of items on the layout plan. Councilmember Harper suggested the team look at safety and user experience concerns as they finalize slides and equipment. Councilmember Jensen spoke about the trends identified from the tours of other aquatic centers including the need for shade, the need for seating, and that a lazy river is a must-have. Staashelm provided comments the Steering Committee made about the proposed lazy river including width and length. City Manager Ryan Waller stated there is still a lot of work and analysis to be done.

Annual Review of Chapter 229-20 Regarding Use of Fireworks

Deputy Police Chief Chad Nott provided an overview of fireworks related calls and citations from March 2024 to March 2025. Historical statistics between Marion calls for service and Cedar Rapids calls for services were provided. Nott also stated there is legislation pending that includes language that a city council may prohibit or limit the use of consumer fireworks except on July 3, July 4 or December 31. Staff is recommending not to make any changes unless required by State code. Councilmember Jensen stated the biggest issue about this is that the legislature continues to strip home rule rights from cities. Councilmember Miskimen spoke about the past survey results in that residents are 50/50 on whether they support use in Marion or not. He also asked if moving Fireworks and Fireflies to July 4 would help reduce use by residents. Councilmember Harper asked about zoning or fire code requirements and if there will any changes if the pending legislation is passed to allow the sale of fireworks from permanent structures all year. Fire

Chief Tom Fagan stated inspections will continue to be completed. Associate Planner Nicole Behrens stated if the property is zoned as commercial/retail, firework sales must be allowed per State code.

Discussion and Direction on Utility Rates for Fiscal Year 2026

Finance Director Lianne Cairry provided an overview of recommended utility rate changes. No changes are recommended for garbage rates, monthly increase of \$0.15 for both sanitary sewer and sewer rates, monthly increase of \$0.25 for stormwater, and monthly increase of \$1.00 for urban forest. For the average resident using 1,200 cubic feet of water, the total increase is \$3.87 per utility bill. Councilmember Miskimen asked about Marion's share of the wastewater treatment plant and what will happen if the project costs increase. Deputy City Manager Kim Downs spoke about the discussions currently taking place with City of Cedar Rapids and City of Hiawatha. Cairry spoke about next steps including information being shared at City Showcase and in the upcoming Marion Messenger.

Discussion and Direction Regarding Amendments to Chapter 126 Building and Construction Codes

Building Official Gary Hansen provided follow-up to comments shared during the April 3 Council meeting regarding adding structural sheathing when foam board is used on the exterior of the building. Staff is recommending to keep the proposed changes to Chapter 126 for safety and security reasons. Councilmember Harper spoke about damage sustained in a windstorm and that the cost to repair would be greater than installing the structural sheathing from the beginning. He stated he is leaning towards moving forward with the recommendation. Councilmember Strnad stated the insurance industry is looking at this type of construction and is in favor of moving forward with the recommendation. He stated adding structural sheathing, while it is flammable material, does buy time for homeowners. Councilmember Jensen asked if staff has heard from any other builders or contractors. Hansen stated only the person is the one who spoke at the public hearing on April 3.

UPCOMING AGENDA REVIEW

Mayor AbouAssaly relinquished the gavel to Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen at 5:44 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen presided over the meeting.

City Council review of the April 17, 2025 agenda. City Council reviewed the upcoming agenda with no action taken.

ADJOURN

Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen adjourned the meeting at 5:51 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