



MINUTES

City Council Work Session

4:00 PM - Tuesday, September 2, 2025

City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

The City Council of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met in informal work session, Tuesday, September 2, 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, Will Brandt, Sara Mentzer, and Gage Miskimen

ABSENT: Randy Strnad

Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Discussion regarding Aquatic Center Project

Parks Director Seth Staashelm provided a recap of activities to date relating to Willowood Pool, master planning, visioning committees and surveys. Staashelm also provided an overview of value engineering that has taken place. Finance Director Lianne Cairy provided two funding proposals, one in which the roads are covered by the bond and the other in which the roads are covered by local option sales tax (LOST). Councilmember Harper asked a question relating to the reduction of shade structures. Staashelm stated since decking was removed, that eliminated the need for some of the shade structures. Councilmember Jensen asked the other councilmembers if the pavilion and playground should be included in the total referendum cost. Staashelm stated those items would connect well with the aquatic center but he would not be able to answer if that would bring more people without looking at comparable data. Mayor AbouAssaly stated his opinion would be to have the aquatic center only for clarity purposes. Councilmember Brandt agreed. Councilmember Mentzer stated she's hesitant to put this measure on the ballot and would like more research on project and funding options. Councilmember Miskimen agreed and would like a referendum at a much lower rate. He'd like to explore other project and funding options as well. Councilmember Harper asked if staff has researched a partnership with the private sector to make an attraction that could be used for 12 months instead of three. He stated he would need some more time to digest the operating costs that were presented at a prior meeting. Councilmember Harper asked if there is any risk for increasing our debt capacity. Cairy stated there is always a risk of the City's bond rating decreasing. Councilmember Brandt asked additional questions related to the value engineering. Councilmember Brandt also asked if the referendum passed, if there was a time limit to initiate the bonding. Cairy stated there is not a statutory limit and the City could bond for any amount up to the max in the ballot language. Councilmember Jensen stated he has similar concerns to what has previously been discussed but said it

should be the residents that make this decision so it should be added to the ballot. He stated an information sheet would need to be shared with the residents including information on entrance fees, potential legislative impacts, debt limits and what a higher debt limit means. Councilmember Jensen also stated he would not be in favor of using LOST funds to cover the roads. Councilmember Miskimen restated that he believes this project should be paused until more research can be done. Councilmember Mentzer agreed and stated more time and research is needed. Mayor AbouAssaly agrees that this item should wait. He stated this process from the beginning has been about gathering data and is proud of what has taken place so far but this is a difficult decision and he wants to make sure staff and Council has the time to make the best decision. Councilmember Jensen recommended the decision is pushed until the meeting on September 18. Councilmember Mentzer stated if the decision is pushed the volunteer groups are put into a really tough spot. Councilmember Jensen stated we could add item for Thursday since Councilmember Strnad will be present. City Manager Ryan Waller stated an item will be added for Thursday which could be tabled if needed.

OTHER DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

Discussion Regarding FY 26-27 Budget: Environmental Scan

Finance Director Lianne Cairy provided a review of strengths, areas for improvements, opportunities and challenges for the fiscal year 2027 budget process. Changes relating to taxes, the State commercial backfill and interest rates were shared as well as items that would impact the expenditures.

Discussion Regarding the Sale of a Portion of the Public Basin to the Property Owner of 3470 Montgomery Circle

Grant Harper stated the calculations in the sale amount were accurate and this item no longer needs to be discussed.

UPCOMING AGENDA REVIEW

City Council review of the September 4, 2025 agenda. City Council discussed the following items with no action taken:

- Agreement with Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker, LLC regarding technology planning services
- Updated fee schedule with Lund Fire Protection for fire services plan review
- Set date for public hearing on Urban Renewal Plan Amendment for Collins Road Extension Urban Renewal Area
- Public hearing regarding Airport Land Use and Height Overlay Zoning regulations

ADJOURN

Mayor AbouAssaly adjourned the meeting at 5:30 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