



MINUTES

City Council Regular Session

4:00 PM - Tuesday, December 2, 2025
City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

The City Council of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met in regular session, on Tuesday, December 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, Gage Miskimen, Nicolas AbouAssaly, Sara Mentzer and Will Brandt

ABSENT: Randy Strnad

Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance and Council observed a moment of silence.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation regarding the Winter Lights Program

Jim Atty and Mary Francik, members of the 2025-2026 Marion Leadership in Action Class, presented information regarding their fundraising efforts to purchase igloos for the Uptown area. The initial purchase will be for up to two igloos, associated improvements and furnishings. The class is asking for matching funds up to \$20,000. Councilmember Jensen asked where these would be placed and the size of the igloos. Fire Chief Tom Fagan stated he does not have the dimensions but they would have a capacity of up to nine people. Fagan also stated the location is still to be determined and will be based on electricity requirements. Councilmember Jensen stated he has concerns that the more we put in the central plaza, the more congested it will appear. Parks Director Seth Staashelm stated once potential locations are determined, those will be brought back before Council for final determination. Councilmember Harper asked if these would be for winter only and if they will be the open door concept that was shown. Fagan stated the members will be working with the Fire, Building and Parks Department to make sure what is purchased meets any code requirements. Per Code, temporary structures shall only be up for a maximum of 90 days.

Councilmember Strnad arrived at 4:15 p.m.

Councilmember Miskimen also shared similar concerns regarding the location and congestion in the central plaza. Francik stated members of the leadership class had similar questions and more policies will need developed to address those concerns. Councilmember Brandt asked for the timeline of when policies will be finalized. Fagan stated fundraising has been the current focus but policies will be in the next few months. Councilmember Brandt would prefer policies be finalized before anything is purchased.

Mayor AbouAssaly asked how igloos were selected. Francik stated this was an idea presented by the Chamber of Commerce. Councilmember Harper asked if there is a Plan B in case this project doesn't work out. Atty stated they will discuss that as a class.

PUBLIC FORUM

No one came forward to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

Administrative Services

Minutes of the November 18 and 20, 2025 City Council meetings

Motion accepting the following resignations:

- Carol Golden from Zoning Board of Adjustment effective immediately
- Chelsea Nunn from the Library Board effective December 19, 2025

Liquor licenses as follows:

- New - Tuscany Grill
- New - Pitchers Bar
- Renewal - Naso's Pizza Marion

Mayor AbouAssaly's recommended reappointments:

- Civil Rights Commission - Heather Cordon-Croskrey and Katie Tanner, terms expire 12/31/28
- Construction Code Review Board - Bethany Jordan, term expires 12/31/29
- Historic Preservation Commission - Bethany Jordan and Kathy Wilson, terms expire 12/31/28
- Nuisance Enforcement & Property Maintenance Advisory Board - Jeff Tipton, Austin Spooner and Robert Scott, terms expires 12/31/28
- Park Board - Kyle Martin and Bryan Fiscus, terms expire 12/31/29
- Planning & Zoning Commission - Destiny Hastings, term expires 12/31/30

Payments as presented in the amount of \$4,480,173.61

Resolution No. 32650 Setting a Date of Meeting at which it is Proposed to Approve a Development Agreement with Squaw Creek Crossing, Inc., Including Annual Appropriation Tax Increment Payments

Resolution No. 32651 approving an amended agreement with the City Manager

Resolution No. 32652 approving additional incentive to wellness program

Public Safety

Resolution No. 32653 approving the completion and acceptance of the live burn training structure constructed by Drager as part of the Public Safety Training Facility capital project

Resolution No. 32654 approving an updated 28E agreement with Marion Township for Fire and Emergency Services

Parks

Motion to approve project calendar regarding the Marion Disaster Recovery Tree Project as follows:

- Motion approving Resolution of Necessity and to retain the City Arborist as Project Engineer regarding the Marion Disaster Tree Project
- Motion approving filing of plans, specifications, form of contract and estimate of cost, advertising for bids by posting notice to bidders, and authorizing City officials or designees to receive and open bids regarding the Marion Disaster Recovery Tree Project
- Motion setting public hearing and directing publication thereof for the Marion Disaster Recovery Tree Project

Public Works

Resolution No. 32655 approving change order no. 2 with Rathje Construction regarding the 8th Avenue Bridge Repair and Boyson Trail Improvement Project in the amount of \$29,685.31

Resolution No. 32656 accepting the 2025 8th Ave Bridge Repair and Boyson Trail Improvement Project (ANN-25-003)

Resolution No. 32657 accepting the Indian Creek Trunk Sewer Segment 11 Improvements Project (SWR-17-026)

Motion to receive, file and refer to Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) a petition regarding a request to add speed limit signs on Peridot Drive between the intersection of Gemstone Road and Brookside Drive, and Peridot Drive at the intersection of Gemstone Road

Motion to approve project calendar regarding the Indian Creek Access - Site 1 Project (REC-18-054) as follows:

- Motion approving Resolution of Necessity and to retain the City Engineer as Project Engineer regarding the Indian Creek Access - Site 1 Project (REC-18-054)
- Motion approving filing of plans, specifications, form of contract and estimate of cost, advertising for bids by posting notice to bidders, and authorizing City officials or designees to receive and open bids regarding the Indian Creek Access - Site 1 Project (REC-18-054)
- Motion setting public hearing and directing publication thereof for the Indian Creek Access - Site 1 Project (REC-18-054)

Motion to receive, file and refer to Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) a petition regarding a request to add flashing beacons to the roundabout at Echo Hill Road and Alburnett Road

Moved by Brandt, seconded by Mentzer, to approve the consent agenda as shown above.

Approved unanimously

Mayor AbouAssaly relinquished the gavel to Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen at 4:39 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen presided over the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA WITH MAYOR ABOUASSALY'S ABSTENTION

Administrative Services

Liquor licenses as follows:

- Renewal - Giving Tree Theater

Parks

Resolution No. 32658 approving payment to Murdoch Funeral Homes Inc regarding the Oak Shade Cemetery Crypt Wall Project in the amount of \$16,915

Public Works

Resolution No. 32659 accepting the 2025 Highway 13 and Highway 151 Traffic Signal Cabinet Replacement Project (ANN-25- 002)

Moved by Strnad, seconded by Brandt, to approve consent agenda with Mayor AbouAssaly's abstention as shown above.

Approved unanimously

REGULAR AGENDA

Administrative Services

Public hearing on a proposed development agreement with McGrath Automotive Group, Inc.

Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen opened the public hearing regarding item referenced above. Finance Director Lianne Cairy provided a staff report. No comments, written or verbal, were received. Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen declared the public hearing closed.

Resolution No. 32660 Approving Development Agreement with McGrath Automotive Group, Inc., Authorizing Annual Appropriation Tax Increment Payments and Pledging Certain Tax Increment Revenues to the Payment of the Agreement

Moved by Jensen, seconded by Strnad, to approve Resolution No. 32660.

Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Harper, Jensen, Miskimen, Mentzer, Brandt, and Strnad

Abstained: AbouAssaly

Mayor Pro Tem Miskimen relinquished the gavel to Mayor AbouAssaly at 4:42 p.m. Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

Community Development

Ordinance No. 25-31 amending Chapter 340-11.1 of the Marion Code of

Ordinances related to Zoning Board of Adjustment (City of Marion) (final consideration)

Moved by Harper, seconded by Jensen, to approve the final consideration of Ordinance No. 25-31.

Approved unanimously

Ordinance No. 25-32 amending Chapter 340, Zoning Regulations pertaining to definitions, district use tables, and specific use standards of the Marion Code of Ordinances related to auxiliary dwelling units (ADUs) (City of Marion) (final consideration)

Moved by Miskimen, seconded by Harper, to approve the final consideration of Ordinance No. 25-32.

Approved by the following votes:

Ayes: Harper, Jensen, Miskimen, Mentzer, Brandt, and Strnad

Abstained: AbouAssaly

OTHER DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

Discussion and direction regarding commercial business fire inspection fees

Deputy Fire Chief Jason Hansen provided an overview on proposed changes to commercial inspection fees. Comparable data was provided in addition to the recommendation to change initial inspection fee to \$300. Councilmember Jensen stated having a flat rate seems unfair for larger businesses compared to a smaller retail store and would encourage a tiered rate. Hansen stated this recommendation is a starting point and also mentioned smaller retail spaces are inspected every three years where larger manufacturing businesses are inspected annually. Councilmember Brandt stated he is not opposed to increasing the fee as he doesn't feel that taxpayers should be funding this service. Councilmember Strnad agreed with Councilmember Brandt. Councilmember Strnad also shared concerns on if the tenant or property owner is responsible for these charges. Hansen stated inspections are based on the tenant and the fee is invoiced to the tenant. Councilmember Mentzer asked if this would be reviewed in a year to see if there are any issues with the increased fee. Hansen confirmed fees would be reviewed annually. Councilmember Harper asked if churches or non-profit entities can be looked at separately. Fire Chief Tom Fagan stated churches are inspected annually as they have large assemblies of people. City Manager Ryan Waller asked for feedback on the tiered approach. Finance Director Lianne Cairry would recommend starting with a single flat rate to gather data and then look at a tiered approach for a future update. Councilmember Strnad recommended considering tiers of 0-5,000, 5,000-15,000 and 15,000 square foot and up. Council was in consensus with starting with the flat fee of \$300 for the inspection fee. Fagan stated more research will be completed and data will be gathered regarding a tiered fee approach.

Discussion and direction regarding Parks and Recreation Fee Schedule

This item was removed from the agenda.

PUBLIC FORUM

No one came forward to speak.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Mentzer commented on the exceptional work of the City team and the snow removal efforts this past weekend.

Councilmember Miskimen also thanked the City team and the snow removal this past weekend.

Councilmember Jensen stated he received positive comments from a relative who is a civil engineer on how the Central Plaza project was constructed.

Mayor AbouAssaly invited everyone to attend Christmas in the Park event on Friday, December 5. He also shared he's received many comments about how beautiful the Central Plaza and Uptown area is. He stated it's taken a lot of work and contributions to get where we are. He also thanked the City team regarding the snow removal this past weekend.

ADJOURN

Mayor AbouAssaly adjourned the meeting at 5:29 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