



MINUTES

City Council Work Session

3:00 PM - Tuesday, February 2, 2021
City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue

The City Council of the City of Marion, Linn County, Iowa met in informal work session, Tuesday, February 2, 2021, at 3:00 PM, in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1225 6th Avenue, with the following members present:

PRESENT: Grant Harper, Colette Atkins, Steve Jensen, and Will Brandt

ABSENT: Nicolas AbouAssaly, Rene Gadelha, and Randy Strnad

Based on COVID-19 guidance from Linn County Public Health and the State of Iowa to limit the size of groups gathering, this meeting was held electronically. The agenda and City's website provided instructions on how others could participate in the meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Atkins presided over the meeting.

PRESENTATIONS

Laura Kessel with RDG Planning and Design provided a high-level overview of the Uptown Master Plan Update. Kessel stated the process started back in April 2020 and was done concurrently with the 7th Avenue Streetscape design. Kessel reviewed the plan document which includes information about the process, existing conditions, recommendations for the public and private realms, and a phasing and cost summary. Council Member Jensen asked if this planning document is complete. Kessel stated it is intended to be the final version. Council Member Harper asked how long the redevelopment is from start to finish. Kessel stated some of the long term elements are for 2027 or later. There are some other phases that the City should keep an eye on but not necessarily a priority.

AGENDA

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Mayor AbouAssaly arrived at 3:24 p.m.

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Mayor Pro Tem Atkins relinquished the gavel to Mayor AbouAssaly at 3:26 p.m. Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Council Member Gadelha arrived at 3:33 p.m.

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Council Member Strnad arrived at 3:57 p.m.

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Mayor AbouAssaly relinquished the gavel to Mayor Pro Tem Atkins at 4:03 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Atkins presided over the meeting.

Council discussed items for Thursday night's agenda with no action taken.

Mayor Pro Tem Atkins relinquished the gavel to Mayor AbouAssaly at 4:14 p.m. Mayor AbouAssaly presided over the meeting.

OTHER DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

7th Avenue Reconstruction Project

City Engineer Mike Barkalow provided information regarding fire sprinkler water services and ADA entrance improvements for the 7th Avenue Reconstruction Project. Barkalow stated some decisions will need to be made on Thursday in order to keep this project moving forward. Barkalow stated the first item to be discussed is regarding fire sprinklers in Uptown businesses. Barkalow stated there are 38 properties impacted. Council Members Atkins, Jensen, Brandt and Harper all stated they were in favor of protecting the investment in Uptown and doing this project while the area is under construction. Barkalow asked Council their thoughts about funding this project. Staff is recommending 50% being paid by the City and 50% being paid by the business. Council Member Gadelha likes the idea of paying for half and would also be in favor of paying upfront and then creating a payment plan for businesses to reimburse the City. Council Member Jensen agreed. Council Member Brandt asked if the City was putting in new water lines in residential area, would we require the homeowner to pay. Barkalow stated that water lines in residential areas are only for drinking water lines and this project would be for fire sprinkler lines. Council Member Brandt is hesitant to charge half as it is an improvement we are making businesses do but they may never need. Brandt is leaning towards the City paying for it all. Barkalow also stated the building owner could have their portion of cost assessed and then make payments over 10 years with interest or they could choose to pay in one lump sum. Council Member Harper is worried that an un-sprinklered building could impact an adjoining structure whether it has sprinklers or not. Harper was curious if there was an incentive to have owners install sprinklers. Barkalow stated there is a tax incentive in place but that is only if entire system is installed. Council Member Gadelha asked if there would be some benefit to the business owner for installing sprinkler systems related to lower insurance premiums. Council Member Strnad stated businesses could see a 10-15% discount on their policy if they installed a sprinkler system so there would be a 15-20 year return on investment.

Barkalow provided information regarding ADA compliant entrances to Uptown businesses and stated staff is proposing a program to contribute up to \$5000 for ADA improvements. City Attorney Kara Bullerman stated if there is any renovations to these buildings that would meet a certain threshold, they could be required to do additional repairs to make entire building ADA compliant. Council Member Gadelha would be in favor of offering an incentive for ADA improvements. Council Member Harper also agreed. Council Member Jensen stated there are some buildings that are larger and is wondering if there is a way to make it more equitable. Council Member Brandt is also in support and stated it would be a great program to extend to all businesses in Marion.

Barkalow asked Council about their thoughts on salvaging the brick pavers on 7th Avenue which are under HMA and stated staff is in favor of salvaging only bricks that are currently exposed. Council Member Brandt asked if there is a way to start the process and see what is found under the HMA and if they can be salvaged. Barkalow stated the HMA would be removed with an excavator and so everything will be removed all at once. Council Member Harper stated it would be easier to plan not to recover the bricks under HMA. Council Member Gadelha agreed. Council Member Jensen stated it should be discussed where salvaged bricks would be used which may determine if we need to try and salvage more. Barkalow stated that salvaging the exposed bricks will be an alternate so Council can see the amount to do so. Mayor AbouAssaly would like to explore the possibility of putting the bricks back on the block of 10th Street where they are exposed now. Council Member Brandt agreed. Barkalow stated he was involved with a similar project previously in Montezuma and they removed three blocks of bricks and put back on one block due to damage of bricks salvaged. Barkalow stated Council would need to be okay with possibly supplementing Marion brick with similar brick. Mayor AbouAssaly was okay with that. Council Member Gadelha would like to see the cost but would rather see the Marion bricks placed in a public area that is not driven over. Council Member Harper stated he is generally not in favor of brick streets but does like Gadelha's idea of using the bricks into some decorative structure. Council Member Jensen also agreed. Council Member Brandt would like to see them used somewhere even if it is a small portion of a street. Council Member Brandt asked about installation of boardwalk sidewalks and would like to see it in front of Draper building.

Barkalow asked about parking options in Uptown and stated the current plans are to implement 2-hour parking. Council Member Brandt stated he would like longer parking available. Council Member Gadelha stated she doesn't have a problem with 2-hour parking but agrees that some businesses have longer parking needs. Gadelha also had concerns regarding enforcement of parking limits. Council Member Brandt stated maybe metered parking would be the better option. Barkalow stated this is a two year project so we could always take parking specifics out of the project and issue later as a change order. Council Member Gadelha stated she would be in favor of metered parking. Council Members Atkins and Brandt also spoke in favor of metered parking. Barkalow stated he will remove parking regulations and implement that as a separate project later on. Council Member Jensen would like to delay decisions on parking until a parking study can be completed. Brooke Prouty with Uptown Marion stated there are currently concerns with restricted access to businesses.

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Discussion

Budget Manager Zach Wolfe and City Manager Lon Pluckhahn provided information regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. Wolfe stated a tentative budget presentation will take place at the February 16 meeting and a public hearing regarding the maximum property taxes will be on February 18. A final budget will be presented at the March 16 meeting with adoption on March 18.

ADJOURN

Mayor AbouAssaly adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Nicolas AbouAssay, Mayor

Rachel Bolender, City Clerk

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

Rachel Bolender, City Clerk