

REGULAR MEETING- MARION COMMON COUNCIL – SEPTEMBER 7, 2021 – 7:00 P.M. – CITY HALL

The Common Council of the City of Marion, Indiana met in regular session on Tuesday, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2021 at the hour of 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

On call of the roll the members were shown to be present or absent as follows:

Present: Luzadder, Cowgill, Fouce, Cain, Henderson, Fordyce, Brunner and Cline.

Absent: Batchelor.

Prior to approval of the minutes, Councilman Brunner said he'd like to thank everyone in this room that had reached out to him. It means a lot. I'm used to missing maybe one day of work every decade and it's been four weeks today and I finally got the ok to come back into this room so....thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers and um.. hope to be back a lot longer than a lot of people may have thought I was going to be away for a while so, I have a very important meeting tomorrow in Indianapolis, I'm sorry, Fort Wayne and if everything goes well it should be onward and upward so again, thank you all and GOD bless you.

The minutes of the previous regular meeting of August 17, 2021 were presented. On a motion by Cowgill, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Cline, the minutes were approved as presented by the following vote. Aye: Luzadder, Cowgill, Fouce, Cain, Henderson, Fordyce and Cline. Nay: None. Abstained: Brunner.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilman Brad Luzadder stated he was asked by the Let My Light Shine group to announce that they are having a dinner on this Sunday, September the 12<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 to 1:00 at Sunnycrest, it's a Sunday dinner which includes Roast Beef, Mashed Potatoes and gravy, green beans, salad, dessert and drink. It's a fundraiser for them. Every person that walks through the door is another solar light that reflects out on veteran's graves at the National Cemetery coming up the second week of October. So they currently have thirteen thousand lights that are going to be going out, unfortunately we still have more and more veteran's that are passing and so, their goal, when they started ten years ago was to have one on every grave. They're just about a thousand shy, so they're still pushing and wish to do that. Donation for the meal is ten dollars and so, one light is ten dollars so every person that walks through the door that does the dinner, that just means that one more light is going to go out on our veteran's graves, so they just wanted me to announce that and it will be, again, this Sunday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

FIRST RESPONDER SPOTLIGHT/NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT Council President, Deb Cain told the council that she has been trying to find ways to bring the citizens of Marion and the City Council together and trying to show that we care and we do listen. Cain said it's sometimes hard to get that message out when some things that are brought before the council also must have the attention of the city administration, being handled by them, we're dependant on them to respond. I feel that it is very important to show our gratitude to the Police and Fire Officers who risk their lives for our safety, especially in the concerns over increase in crimes throughout (inaudible) across the nation. Two things I decided on with the idea and input of others is to have a first responder's spotlight, and a neighborhood monthly spotlight which I put on the agenda. First responder's is to introduce new and retiring officers to the council and citizens, along with their families being acknowledged and to hear from the presidents of different neighborhood associations. These presidents can speak of events, happenings, new entrepreneurship opportunities along with any concerns if they desire to have additional members and their neighbors to speak, and present. So I had reached out to the Fire and Police Chief to ask if we could do this and received positive responses but um, then I was also e-mailed by the Mayor and his statement was "I recently was informed of the request you made of the Police and Fire Chiefs regarding their attendance at routine council meetings, you proposed firsts responder focus for new hires and retirees would be brought before the council after hours has been denied. Any new hire of the police and fire departments are brought before the board of works for introduction to the governing body, the role of governing public safety lies within the executive branch. Which meets within normal business hours." Cain stated the council by-laws state that no meetings for the city council will convene before the five o'clock hour. This is to afford the working citizen and the working councilmen to be at these meetings to be introduced to fire and police. We don't always have the opportunity to leave our working offices that we work at to drive here at ten o'clock in the morning for board of works. Citizens don't have that time if they're working during the day. I received statements from officers of both departments who wanted to voice their appreciation for this recognition that after the denial by the Mayor, their names will remain anonymous due to their request for fear of adverse domination from the city administration. The statements are (inaudible) appreciates the opportunity to recognize our newly hired police officers in front of our community. Community policing is one of the most important aspects of our job. It is also important that the community and city government recognizes daily sacrifices first responders and their families make each day. Support from the (inaudible) goes a long way and builds long lasting trust between officers, their families and the citizens. The FOP is thankful to the City Council for considering first responders in their already occupied agenda. Then these jobs are special callings, special careers, the men and women are very proud of what they do and it would be honored to be recognized. The fire officers are thankful for this consideration and would be honored to be recognized without expectation and (inaudible), we don't often get these opportunities in front of the public. Cain said saying that and reading those statements, I'm still going to look for ways or opportunities to somehow get recognition of the Police and Fire, because I'm greatly disappointed that this request, I'm just , a five minute time Wednesday night (NOTE TO COUNCIL: I believe Mrs. Cain meant "Tuesday" night), our opportunity to say thank you to our Fire and Policemen who put their lives on the line, to the families who, as they walk out the door pray that they return. We don't have jobs like that, I don't have a job like that. I don't know what it feels like when that alert comes out that you're called to respond to something, either as a police or a fire, you don't know where you're going to, so, that was just something that I thought would

be a awesome gesture we can get them in front of the media, we can get them in front of the citizens, we can get them in front of us. Also, neighborhood monthly spotlight, those will be, as I stated earlier um.. reaching out to the presidents of the neighborhood associations, giving them an opportunity , schedule them, try to get all the neighborhoods in here where they can speak on the good and the bad of their neighborhood. I invited a president of a neighborhood association but he's not here tonight. I do not see him so we will reach out to him again cause I emailed it, again it was a holiday weekend he was going to try and make it but he must have been held up. Saying that, we will go on to unfinished business.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 6A-2021

The City Clerk read Resolution No. 6-A-2021 by title only. Confirmatory Resolution of the City Council of Marion, Indiana, declaring Economic Development Target Area for property tax deductions on real estate for Halstead Development LLC. Executive Director of the Grant County Economic Growth Council, Tim Eckerle spoke to the council on this Resolution. Mr. Eckerle stated that with him tonight is Mike Halstead for the public hearing for Ridley Tower. So tonight we have in essence the public hearing of the granting of property tax abatement for Ridley Tower. As you recall you've had both a development committee meeting as well as a declaratory resolution which was considered at your last meeting. Both have received unanimous support we'd be glad to answer questions you may have, again this is first significant market rate housing in our community in a long time. One of the major factors that people considering our community look at is the per capita income and household income and so it's important to move those numbers in a positive direction. Mr. Halstead and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have. Councilman Mike Cline asked if anything had changed since the last time you guys were in here? Mike Halstead replied that he thought the last time he had seventeen apartments rented, he has nineteen now. Council President, Deb Cain asked if some had moved in. Mr. Halstead replied yes. Some of the Liberty Prep kids have moved in, Liz Wright who is a retiree, a couple of teachers moved in so, yeah. Halstead said he knows they're using the trash cans. Councilman Brian Cowgill ask Mr. Halstead how many total apartments there are in the building. Halstead replied twenty nine. Councilman Jim Brunner said to Mr. Halstead that he mentioned to him when he came in and he'll mention it to the public that I'm so thrilled about what you're doing for our downtown area. I think it's something that can really jumpstart that entire area and every time I drive to work , which I think I'll be doing a lot more now that I'm finally getting some clearance. I drive by there in the morning and it's just a beacon of what can happen in our downtown area. So, publically I'd like to thank you for doing this and anything we can do to help you, let us know. Mr. Halstead thanked Councilman Brunner and asked if he could make announcements on the radio that we're still leasing apartments. At this time Council President, Deb Cain called for public hearing on this Resolution. Linda Wilk, 1016 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street addressed the council. Ms. Wilk said she has had the pleasure to work with Mike Halstead for a long time. He, as a matter of fact created our Flannery-Keal hall, designed it. Wilk said she was so thankful that he continues to invest in our community. She told the council to support him in any way they can, cause he is the magic man! Mr. Eckerle reminded the council that again, the benefit is (inaudible) cause again, when people are looking to invest in our community they look at average household income,

number of new units and where they can live. Council President said she would now entertain a motion. Motion by Luzadder, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brunner to pass Resolution No. 6A-2021. Motion carried by the following vote. Aye: Luzadder, Cowgill, Fouce, Cain, Henderson, Fordyce, Brunner and Cline. Nay: None.

Under new business Council President, Deb Cain spoke to the council on behalf of neighbors regarding properties between Branson and McClure Streets. Cain said they had been contacted more by citizens concerned about their neighborhoods and the properties there in the neighborhood. Cain told the council that she was driving from breakfast one morning and drove down a side street and just was so discouraged. Cain said it was stated by the Mayor in a budget meeting that they quoted in the news paper regarding the significant increase in blight and the council's concerns that we brought up in the budget hearing. He stated that this isn't a government problem, this is a people problem, this is a cultural problem. We need to change people's minds and behavior because government is not going to stop this, we don't have the resources to do that. My question in response would be, why do we have ordinances in place for the government to use as tools to help the culture change their behavior? So my child will continue to throw their tantrum if I don't stop them on the first one. My child would continue to run out in the street in front of a car that's moving if I don't say don't do that. They will continue to do it because they think it's fun unless I discipline them or because they don't care, they don't think they'll be hurt, but I tell them, I'll discipline. How many times do you tell an inquisitive young mind – no that will hurt, or slow down, be careful? If they don't get that message, you enforce them. We have to stand up and say, this is how we expect you to keep up your property. If it takes discipline to get a response, then so be it. We have fines, we have the court system, that's our tools. Let's use them. Start making people take accountability for their actions. Do nothing is just that. Nothing, empty, zero, obsolete. This administration's heard from the citizens and heard from the council. We are dependent on the city administration to respond appropriately and instead of blaming people and culture behavior, own up to taking ownership of the government. The city administration responsibility and the increasing detriment to the citizens of the city before we become a nobody, and a dying city, because blight leads to crime, crime leads to people leaving and I just don't want to see that anymore. At this time President Cain presented pictures of the houses that she drove by on 8<sup>th</sup> street between Branson and McClure Streets. Cain pointed out the blight issue in each of the pictures to council members. Cain said she met a renter of the duplex. The renter told her she makes sure she has somebody across the street or beside her looking out the door as she gets in her car in the mornings when it's dark to make sure she's safe because she does not know who will be coming out of the house across the street. She has lived there for thirty one years. This is what we are trying to fight. This is what we are trying to say to the administration. Please, take responsibility. It's just not coming from me, it's just not from you guys. This is coming from the citizens that are calling us, that are asking us, please help us. As I was speaking with this lady, her landlord spoke with her on the phone and Mrs. Jones asked if she could speak with us tonight. So Mrs. Jones, would you like to come up? Lois Jones addressed the council. Jones stated that she owns numerous properties in Marion and Grant County. Jones said she has called numerous time and found out we do have a weed control law, correct? Why is that not enforced? They say they're tearing down properties. How do they choose? How can they expect people to come and

want to be a part of this community? Jones commented on the trash that runs down toward her duplex, you got the trash can sitting there. You say you don't have to train people to live in a house, sometimes you do! There are people that need to be trained to live in a house. They've never had the opportunity to live decent so they don't know how to live decent. In that case, the landlord needs to come out and find out why they're not putting trash in the trash can. If they can't put it in there then he needs to put it in there but somebody needs to take responsibility for that trash. I'm sure if that had been my trash out there in front of my duplex, I'd have heard from everybody in my community. I saw in the paper where Gas City got a new opportunity to have a medical facility there. Don't you wonder why they skipped over Marion? Let's get with the program here, that's all we have to do, get with the program. Councilwoman Robin Fouce thanked Mrs. Jones for taking her time to come today and thank you to all the people that invest their time and talent toward cleaning Marion up. Fouce said it certainly is a community effort, it's a government effort, it's everybody's effort. Fouce said it's like President Cain said, it's time to start imposing that standard on our citizens and communicating and starting that cycle of communication that we're not going to have that here anymore. Fouce said she will continue to be very vocal until we get a better resolve toward blight. District four, I have a substantial amount but hey, it's not only my district, it's Marion. I'm for Marion being better and doing better and people deserve a better quality of life. People deserve to live in safety in a safe environment and so as leadership, as elected officials, as citizens is our responsibility and we have to hold one another accountable for that. Fouce stated she's disappointed and still believes we have a good opportunity to work with our administration and come to a better resolve to say it's um.. whatever the word is that was said, that may be a piece of it but there's more to it than that and so to do nothing is criminal in my mind, to do nothing is unacceptable. So we have to continue to lift our voices stick together and address the blight that we have in Marion. Fouce said that during the campaign season we were all so vigorous about blight, I'm going to address blight and all of that and now we should be held to the fire on that and produce action. Fouce said she still calls on the Mayor, I demand as a citizen of the city that he address code enforcement, not give us an excuse as to why it's part of our community but take action immediately to help us do better in that area. Councilman Cowgill said he agreed with Councilwoman Fouce. Cowgill said we have a serious issue here and it's just getting worse. The thing is, there's always a solution, it's the ying and yang theory. If there's a problem, there's a solution but you've got to be willing to try to come up with solutions. President Cain, we had a meeting with the Mayor on a couple of ideas to help with that, the Mayor seemed on board, well hopefully he's going to be on board with it. I think it will help tremendously but sometimes you've got to go outside the box, you know. If there's no money, no this and that, that don't mean it can't be done. It's just got to be done a different way. Use the resources you've got already to take care of this. Cowgill told Mrs. Jones that he is sorry that she has to not feel safe in her own neighborhood. That's terrible. Mrs. Jones again addressed the council and commented on the city's ordinance where you pay five dollars for you properties to make sure it's kept up and everything. Ms. Jones asked if the owner of that property shouldn't have been sent a notice or something (referring to one of the pictures of houses Cain had pictures of on the t.v. screen). Councilman Brad Luzadder replied that he would say that that was delivered to the Board of Works unfortunately this board and the executive branch hasn't got along with that just as you've seen tonight with the spotlights that were suggested. This body has been denied multiple times (inaudible) to a appointed board that doesn't really have responsibility, who doesn't have to go through the election

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process and so we're the ones that have straight forward and I hear what you're saying and I'm going to forward it on to the administration and say hey we spent over a year as a body putting together an ordinance to help property maintenance, in fact some members of the board of works were also on the committees that were put together to help with this ordinance. We as this body were given the tools to the administration in which to do the job. We did our job. We put it together legislatively and was given every tool possible into the tool box in which to be able to address this problem. Luzadder said that he was sorry that she had to come this evening but they would forward information to nuisance and would be holding them accountable to take care of this. Mrs. Jones said that sometimes you have to find another way to go around it to be successful. Councilman Steve Henderson stated it's a two-fold problem here. He said when you have a house like this (pictures), other people think it's ok because they see it, but then you have the good people that call and complain about the houses and nothing ever gets done and so you break their back all across the community, and so people are tired of calling, they're tired of complaining, nothing ever gets done. If nothing gets done, it's just going to continue to get worse. We're going to have to take a step one way or the other. We're either going to have to help the good people that are calling and bringing stuff to their attention and get the administration to get up off their tail and get something done or we just need to give up and move out. Henderson said there is no other choice because this won't fix itself. Councilwoman Fouce stated "we're not giving up". Henderson said he's watched in his neighborhood go from nice quiet neighborhood to gun shootings and everything else. It's just not happening in my area, it's happening all across every area. It's everywhere and unless we stand up I don't know how we can get this council to do anything with the administration that doesn't want to cooperate. Councilwoman Fouce said the voice of the people always raised and so with the good work that we're trying to do, we also always want to include the people, encourage more people to want to participate and we know they do. I get calls. Two or three or five a day and I'm sure you do as well. They call downtown often, they say they don't get any response. We're in the sixth year of a property on Selby that I brought to you before, the sixth year in the line of our kids, right by McCulloch. It's in the same state it was if not worse.

Being no further business to come before the council, on a motion by Luzadder, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Fouce, the meeting adjourned. Time being 7:39 p.m.

\* Deborah Cain  
Presiding Officer