

The Council Corner

Mayor: Jim Hollenbeck
Commissioners Bob Davis, Jim Buckingham, Gary Lewey, & Bobby Kaminski

~Dedicated in memory of Mayor James Trager~

December 2, 1938 - December 31, 2017



“He never looked at anything as to how it would benefit him, and it was always for the betterment of Marseilles” – City Engineer Mike Etscheid

Marseilles Mayor James Trager is remembered as a dedicated public servant with an unwavering commitment to his community and family. He died at age 79 in his home by the Illinois River, which had to be rebuilt after being ravaged by the 2013 flood where the river poured over the shoreline dike.

A lifelong Marseilles resident, Trager graduated from Marseilles High School in 1956, attended LPO Junior College — the forerunner to Illinois Valley Community College — and embarked on a 38-year career with Caterpillar. Trager, whose father had been the city attorney for Marseilles, was elected to the City Council in 1975, serving for 24 years as the public property commissioner. He was elected to four-year terms as mayor in 2007 and 2015. His notable city service also included 20 years on the city’s Enhanced 911 Board, which implemented the addition of address and identification information to 911 emergency calls. Much of the “addressing” work required tedious attention to detail.

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“He was a great guy to work for — an old school guy who would say it like it was — and I liked him a lot,” Police Chief Hovious said. “If there was an issue he would point it out and talk to me,” he said. “We worked together on many, many issues. He’s going to be missed.”

“I am saddened to learn of the death of Mayor Trager,” said Ottawa Mayor Robert Eschbach, one of the numerous local government officials Trager worked with. Jim’s long service on the City Council was a sign of his love for Marseilles and its people. We will all miss him,” Eschbach said.

“The one thing that sticks out in my mind is his view on fiscal responsibility,” said his son, Shane. “He always kept in the forefront that the taxpayers’ dollars needed to be spent wisely and treated with respect and that their money should not be spent wastefully — that was one thing he always was committed to.”

Although Trager may have seemed stern, he had a warmth he could share. “He had an infectious smile,” Hovious said. “When he smiled he made you laugh. He could be a funny guy.”

Moving forward, the City’s current objectives are to continue with the ongoing projects that Mayor Trager was deeply involved with; Such as the revitalization of the flood area, flood & storm sewer renovations, street improvements, extension of sewer and water to I-80, overall improvement of the city’s appearance with an emphasis relating to the renovation of the business district.

Newly appointed Mayor, James Hollenbeck, stated at the January 17, 2018 Council Meeting, “ I know I have big shoes to fill as Mayor Trager was one of the most knowledgeable persons that I have ever met when it comes to municipal government.”

“Those we love don’t go away, they walk beside us everyday.” – Unknown

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