



June 14, 2017

Mr. Gary Mohr, Director
Ohio Department of Corrections
770 West Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43222

Re: Marion, Ohio Prison Farm

Dear Director Mohr:

As a former resident and student of Marion, OH—and, now, as director of the department controlling the Marion Correctional Institution, you are uniquely suited to understand and, we hope, act upon the following proposal.

We understand that the Ohio Department of Corrections wishes to retire from the prison farm enterprises it has engaged in over many years. To do so requires a plan for the acreage that has been devoted to that enterprise. The obvious solution is simply to sell it and return the proceeds to the State of Ohio.

For a number of reasons, we believe that would be a mistake—at least for Marion. Instead, we would like to propose a solution that puts this land to work for the community and becomes an economic engine for Marion, the surrounding area and Ohio. Marion County is a region seeing an economic resurgence.

Our proposal is to allow the land to be developed into a job-creating business/research park that will provide long-term economic benefits to this area and the State of Ohio. Along with this letter, you will find a map of what we understand to be the Marion prison farm acreage that might be in play. With an eye toward economic development, that site is quite remarkable. From a utility and infrastructure standpoint, the site has virtually everything a site would require. Heavy power (138 kVA) is available on the site. City water and sewer infrastructure are either on, or very near the site. The Norfolk Southern Railroad comprises the western boundary of the site. There is easy access to a U.S. 23 interchange. The site is already within the Marion city limits. Zoned Office/Institutional, the zoning could easily be changed to I-2 (Industrial) since it sits adjacent to land already zoned for industry. In fact, the future development of that area is already in progress as plans are underway to develop several industrial buildings on land along Victory Road.

In Ohio, there are few large, contiguous industrial sites, with all of these assets readily available. Either as a large “mega-site” or a number of smaller industrial sites, this piece of ground could represent hundreds, or even thousands of jobs in this area—as well as many millions of dollars in

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new investment and local and state tax revenue. If the site is simply sold to the highest bidder, it would likely go to an area farmer—or to National Lime and Stone, which has a massive quarry just to the west of the site. To be frank, creating another massive hole in the ground, while beneficial to the quarry owners, doesn't do much for the economy of the region or state. If, instead, the ground is held by a local non-profit development organization such as Marion CAN DO! or, perhaps Ohio State University, or, even, your department, while a development plan is created, it could still be farmed, as it is today, through a cash rent arrangement until new industries are identified and attracted to the site.

In our view, it would be a shame to lose the public potential of this site through a one-time sale to a single entity. Potential uses for the site might include agricultural equipment manufacturing which could use some portion of the site as a test ground for new equipment. Perhaps a portion could be utilized by a food or grain manufacturing plant that would utilize the excellent rail access. Automotive and plastics manufacturing are other potential uses with the rail, highway, and electrical infrastructure associated with this site. As Marion solidifies its workforce development capabilities, this site might offer a unique opportunity for agricultural workforce training, perhaps through Ohio State University or Marion Technical College. The dairy operation on the site could be utilized as an excellent R&D facility for Ohio State's agricultural program.

As business sites are developed and sold over the years, perhaps there could be an arrangement in which dollars realized from the sales to industries are split with local development authorities and the Department of Corrections. In addition, perhaps companies utilizing the site might be encouraged to develop a former prisoner training program in which former inmates are given an opportunity to be trained and employed with the new company. There are many possibilities, but they won't be realized if the site is quickly sold to a single entity.

Since the site is currently owned by the State of Ohio, could that ownership be transferred to Marion CAN DO!, or perhaps with Ohio State University (with its campus in Marion) with either becoming the owner/developer of the park? Other possibilities for ownership and development of the site could be the Marion County Port Authority, or the Marion Community Improvement Corporation—both non-profit organizations focused on the economic development of this area.

We are eager to discuss the possibilities with you or others you think should be involved. As a former Marionite, please consider this request to use the MCI prison farm for the economic future of Marion, the surrounding community, and the State of Ohio. Gus Comstock of Marion CAN DO! would be your best point of contact. His contact information is gusc@marioncando.com or 740-387-2267.

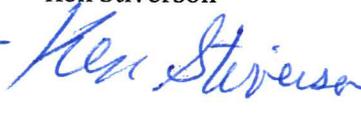
Thank you.

Gus Comstock

Scott Schertzer

Ken Stiverson

Ryan McCall



Director
Marion CAN DO!

Mayor
City of Marion
CAN DO! Board Member

Commissioner
Marion County
CAN DO! Board Member

President
MTC
CAN DO! Board Chair

**MARION, OHIO'S
POTENTIAL
"MEGA-SITE"**

