

COVID

cine is a major step forward in ultimately ending the pandemic, the work to slow its spread continues. On Monday, MGH was at full capacity, with 97 people in a 99-bed hospital. Furthermore, nine people were waiting to be admitted, and several patients had to wait up to 18 hours to procure a bed.

Medical centers and hospitals being overrun has been a major concern since the pandemic began nearly a year ago, and the surging numbers of cases in the hospital has been a strain on MGH over the last several

weeks. With Christmas and New Years just around the corner, Srikanth believes that there will be a new influx of patients right as 2021 begins and stressed that people need to continue to wear masks and practice social distancing in order to quell the spread.

Srikanth stated that the virus will be more under control this coming summer, but the work still needs to be done so a return to normalcy can occur.

“If we can keep the disease down, and if we can keep the numbers down, less people get sick, less

people in the ER, and less people get admitted,” Srikanth said. “I think there is light at the end of the tunnel by summer ’21. I’m not saying the virus will go away, but I think we will have pretty good control.

“This is the stuff that we were always warning people about and always worried about, and it really happened here. This is the typical thing that we knew would happen soon after Thanksgiving, and unfortunately, you can predict this again once Christmas comes around and New Year’s.”

...continued from Page 1

Pay raises

2021 budget. While she is not against raises, Foust stated that she wanted them to be proportionate.

Cain echoed Foust’s sentiments, stating that 25 percent is a huge amount and that no companies ever give raises that large all at once.

Alumbaugh said that these raises are warranted for several reasons. One, the Chief of Staff and City Controller are the second and third most important positions in any city government, and two, many of their subordinates are making more than they are currently making.

“There are two important positions to fill after getting elected Mayor,” Alumbaugh said. “I think most people would agree with that. The first position would be Chief of Staff, and the second would be Controller. Those are the two most important positions in local government. Right now, we have a Chief of Staff who has four department heads making more money than the Chief of Staff, and yet, they report directly to him. The Controller position is, financially, the most important position to a city government, so they should be compensated accordingly

...continued from Page 1



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too.”

Also according to Alumbaugh, other communities have given these raises to their respective Chiefs of Staff and City Controllers, but Marion was not in the position to propose that until this year.

Councilman Gary Fordyce Jr. supported the raises for both Flynn and Flores due to all the great work they have done for the city of Marion over the last several years.

“We need to take into consideration the situation and the status that our financial situation is in because of these controllers and this administration,” Fordyce said. “When they came in, they had a bunch to deal with, and we were so bad off, it wasn’t even

funny. I think it’s admirable that this administration and this Controller’s office and these department heads have been so fiscally responsible that we have the ability to give the police and fire a raise at five percent and three percent. We couldn’t have done that under the Seybold administration, and we couldn’t have done it under the first year of the Alumbaugh administration.

“I think it’s commendable. I think it’s fiscally responsible. And I appreciate the job they are doing and how far they have brought us in this administration.”

After more discussion, Alumbaugh and the City Council reached compromise. The three percent raise to civilians and five percent raise to public safety remained in place, while Faw would also receive a five-percent raise. Potential raises to Flores and Flynn will be tabled until they can be discussed in a future budget meeting before the end of the year.

The Common Council will meet for the final time in 2020 on Tuesday, Dec. 29 at 7 p.m. to finalize the 2020 budget.



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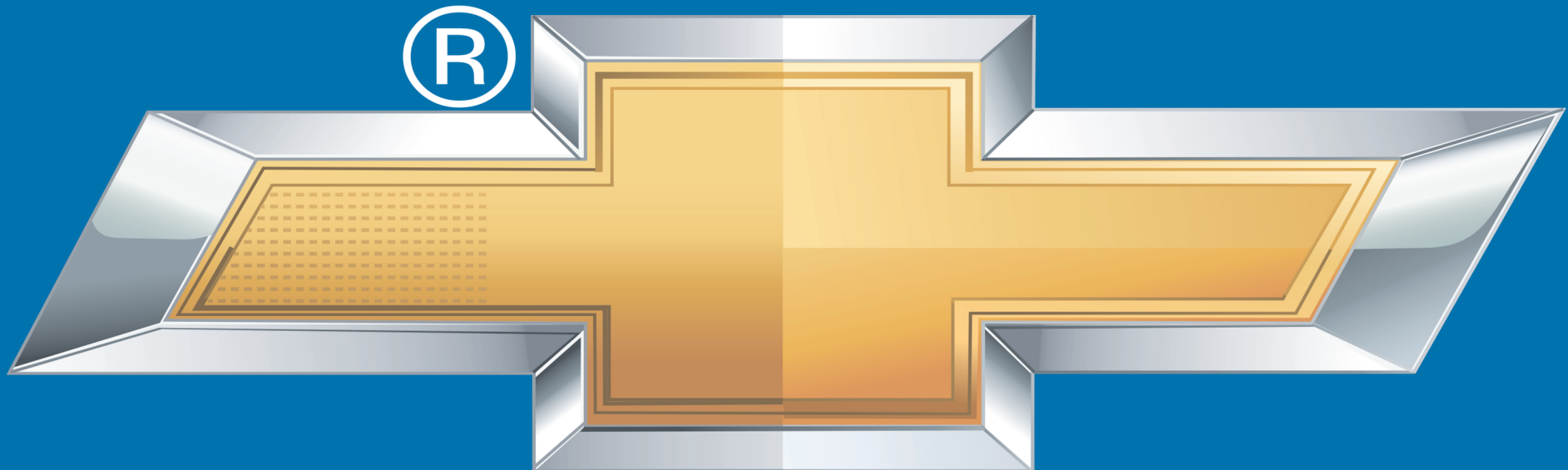
**4725 South Colonial Oaks Drive,
Marion, IN 46953**

www.colonialoakshealthandrehab.com



**Sandi Watson,
Admissions
Coordinator**

BARRY BUNKER CHEVROLET



State Road 15 North 1307 Wabash Ave.

Marion, Indiana

765. 664. 1275 • www.barrybunker.com