

**Official Minutes of  
MARION COUNTY  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

July 23, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN KATHY BRYANT**

Chairman Bryant advised that the workshop was scheduled this morning regarding the fiscal year (FY) 2025-2026 proposed budget.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.

**9:00 AM ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, District 2; Vice-Chairman Carl Zalak, III, District 4; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Matthew McClain, District 3; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5. Also present were Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Angel Roussel, ACA Tracy Straub, ACA Amanda Tart, and Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

**OPENING REMARKS – Audrey Fowler, Budget Director**

Budget Director Audrey Fowler presented a 6 page handout entitled, “Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Adjustments Tentative Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26, Adjustments through July 18, 2025”. She stated notable changes in the General Fund is the reduction of the millage to 3.3700 mills, Community Services budget revisions and the Planning and Zoning position reclassification revision. Staff also received a revised budget from the Department of Revenue (DOR) Property Appraiser budget, which reduced that budget by \$15,000.00 in the General Fund. The update does not include the elected officials’ salary; therefore, approximately \$5,000.00 should be set aside for an expected future revision.

Ms. Fowler advised that the increased expenditure for the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has been added to the Fine and Forfeiture Fund. She stated she balanced out what she could between available, reoccurring and non-reoccurring revenue. Ms. Fowler stated the Cash Carry forward is \$6,200,000.00, which is adequate and covers a little over 2 months of operating expenses. She stated the remaining 00.0400 of a mill would be \$1,448,912.00.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Fowler clarified that the increase to the DJJ was 61.6 percent (%), noting it went from \$2,700,000.00 to \$4,300,000.00.

Ms. Fowler advised that if the County has a flat millage there would be a roughly \$45.00 increase per homesteaded property because the market value will increase 2.9%. If the 00.0400 of a mill remains in the Countywide Fine and Forfeiture Fund it would be a \$51.00 increase, which is a difference of \$6.00. She stated if the General Fund millage is not reduced it would add another \$4.00 for an overall difference between \$45.00 to \$55.00 from where it stands right now.

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In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Fowler advised that 00.0400 of a mill in the Fine and Forfeiture Fund is equivalent to \$6.00 on the tax bill and 00.002 of a mill in the General Fund is equivalent to \$4.00 on the tax bill.

Chairman Bryant stated these numbers are if the Board does not reduce another 00.0200 of a mill to get back down to the 3.3500 mills.

Ms. Fowler concurred, noting the County needs \$475,000.00 in order to reduce the additional 00.0200 of a mill.

County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes presented an 11 page handout. He stated page 1 of the handout shows each entity and how much allocation they are requesting from the Fine and Forfeiture Fund, as well as a breakdown of how much it would cost a single family property if the Fine and Forfeiture Fund went up to 00.8700 of a mill.

Mr. Bouyounes referred to page 4 of the handout containing history of the DJJ funding.

Chairman Bryant commented on the large increase from the previous FY.

### **OPENING REMARKS – William Gladsen, State Attorney**

State Attorney William “Bill” Gladsen appeared to review the Department’s proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 268, Early Intervention Program (page 104); Cost Center 205, State Attorney (page 224); Cost Center 206, State Attorney Technology (page 225); and Cost Center 207, State Attorney LOV (page 227). Also present were Executive Director Cindy Harper, Fiscal Director Kathy Lacorte and Information Technology (IT) Director Brett Smith for the State Attorney’s Office (SAO).

Mr. Gladsen expressed appreciation to the Board and Marion County citizens for their support. He commented on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor expansion and the progress that has been made.

Mr. Gladsen advised that the State Attorney budget is 4.6 percent (%) less than the previous FY. He addressed line item 581101, Aid to Government Agencies in Cost Center 268, Early Intervention Program. This line item shows up in the budget, but funding is not being requested. The State Attorney’s Office has been able to absorb the work by sharing it between all of the attorney’s; therefore, the County is no longer being requested to fund the line item.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Gladsen advised that 7 new judges are being added to the Circuit, noting Marion County is getting 2 of those judges. Mr. Gladsen stated he requested 28 new positions this year, but the positions were not approved.

Commissioner Bryant commented on the huge increase to the DJJ costs.

Mr. Gladsen advised that he was unaware that the DJJ billed Counties. He stated in the last 3 to 4 years there has been a huge spike in violent juvenile crime. Mr. Gladsen advised that a meeting took place with the Marion County Sheriff, the DJJ and himself to address the juvenile violent crime issue, noting some of the offenders are getting out right away and creating the same problems. He stated he also met with the local DJJ representative Randy Reynolds who agreed to inform the State Attorney’s Office of who the prolific offenders are in a timely manner. There has been a noticeable decrease in violent juvenile offenses. Mr. Gladsen advised that Legislative changes were made a few years ago to allow juveniles to be held longer until proper placement can be determined. Mr. Gladsen commented on a recent case involving 3 juveniles, noting he attended the sentencing in the first case and the other two will happen later today.

Chairman Bryant advised that the Public Safety Coordinating Council (PSCC) identified some procedures that could be done better, not within the juvenile system, but within the adult system to move the cases along. She stated there has been a decrease in the jail population as some of those cases move through the system.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Harper opined that it is not certain that the same processes used in the adult system will work in the juvenile system because it is so different.

Mr. Gladsen advised that the juvenile system does not have the same back log in cases as the adult system. He stated the backlog due to COVID-19 was finished with the exception of a few cases. Mr. Gladsen advised that the dockets are leaner and moving quickly.

Chairman Bryant commented on the backlog caused by COVID-19, noting it was no fault of the Court system.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Bryant clarified that the Board does not oppose holding juveniles if it means getting the violent offenders off the streets.

Mr. Gladsen advised that the City of Ocala has not had a homicide in over a year.

Chairman Bryant stated the population growth has stabilized, noting some of the crime can be attributed to the population growth.

General discussion resumed.

Chairman Bryant reiterated that the Board are not trying to find fault for the increase, but instead trying to understand in order to better inform the public.

Commissioner Stone advised that the increase impacts the Fine and Forfeiture Fund and requires decisions by the Board to balance the budget.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the State Attorney's budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Jimmy Cowan, Property Appraiser**

Property Appraiser Jimmy Cowan appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025–26 budget for Cost Center 113, Property Appraiser Transfer (page 37). Also present was Assistant Property Appraiser Lainie Claudio.

Mr. Cowan advised that Marion County's taxable value has seen remarkable growth exceeding \$38,000,000,000.00 in the 2025 preliminary assessment roll, marking a 12.51 percent (%) increase over last year, with \$1,900,000,000.00 in taxable value attributed to new construction.

Each year, on or before July 1, the Property Appraiser's Office (PAO) submits an assessment roll to the Department of Revenue (DOR) for review and approval based on set standards and measures per DOR guidelines. As required by Florida Statutes (FS) 195.087 the PAO submitted its 2025/26 budget to DOR on May 30, 2025 for its review and budget approval. A copy of the budget was also submitted to the BCC. On July 15, 2025 the PAO received provisional budget approval, which reflected a slight reduction from the initial submission due to retirement rates.

Mr. Cowan advised that the PAO's proposed budget for FY 25/26 is \$6,950,940.00, reflecting a 5.39% increase or \$355,183.00. The amount allocated for the General Fund for FY 25/26 is \$5,181,332.00, reflecting a 4.5% increase (\$223,755.00) over last year's budget. The increase in the budget is attributed to the following factors: 1) liabilities; 2) benefits; 3) rising operating costs; and 4) 5% pay increase for employees.

Mr. Cowan stated it was the goal of the PAO to continue to operate in a manner that is fiscally conservative and responsible, while ensuring the Office has adequate resources that will allow staff to execute the duties and responsibilities as required by law.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Cowan advised that raises are given as a one time increase across the board. He advised that house prices in Marion County and interest

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rates are still high compared to several years back, noting there is still a lot of new construction being built. There were 6,700 new homes added to the tax roll this year.

Chairman Bryant questioned if there is report that shows the recorded deeds throughout the year. Mr. Cowan advised that at the height of the market there was about 49,000 instruments being recorded, noting it has decreased to between 42,000 and 41,000.

Chairman Bryant requested a report relating to sales being shared with the Board.

Assistant Property Appraiser Lainie Claudio provided a brief overview of the current market trends compared to the previous year. She stated the PAO does receive monthly reports from the Ownership Department and the Clerk's Office, which can be shared with the BCC.

Chairman Bryant commented on the importance of being aware of the increases needed to sustain recurring costs moving forward.

Ms. Claudio advised that since Mr. Cowan took office there has been an increase in new construction and the market has done well, but their office was able to maintain the same number of full time personnel. There have also been a number of people who have retired. She stated the goal is to continue to leverage technology to ensure that there are ways to improve processes while making sure the demand and needs of the office are met.

Commissioner Curry expressed appreciation to the PAO for their professionalism.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes advised that the reports can be provided to Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no more questions in regard to the Property Appraiser's budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Wesley Wilcox, Supervisor of Elections**

Supervisor of Elections Wesley Wilcox appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 123, Supervisor of Elections – Transfers (page 40).

Mr. Wilcox expressed his appreciation for the relationships between the BCC and other Constitutional Officers in Marion County. He stated he is present today to answer any questions the Board may have relating to his proposed budget.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Wilcox advised that he does pay for performance and provided a brief overview of how he evaluates employees.

Commissioner Zalak expressed concern relating to the City of Ocala election.

Mr. Wilcox advised that he is not the Qualifying Officer for the City of Ocala. He commented on the importance of ensuring that all necessary documentation is received correctly from each candidate.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Wilcox advised that he has approximately 18 staff members. He stated if a registered voter does not participate in 2 general elections the Supervisor of Election's Office is required to mail a notice to the voter requesting they contact the office to remain a registered voter. Mr. Wilcox commented on the fluctuation in the number of registered voters over the last 5 years.

Mr. Wilcox advised that he is requesting roughly an increase of roughly 5% from the prior year. He stated there is a one-time request for electronic replacement because the equipment is reaching its end of life.

Ms. Fowler advised that she has worked with Mr. Bouyounes and this request can be funded by non-recurring revenue and will not affect the millage rate.

Chairman Bryant questioned if there are things in the upcoming year that might create a need to come back before the BCC for additional funds. Mr. Wilcox commented on election cycles and staff time it takes to facilitate elections and special elections. He

advised that staff submits the necessary reimbursement documents to the Secretary of State in a timely manner, noting the State handles reimbursement on a first come first serve basis and those funds have been received. Mr. Wilcox stated hopefully nothing else will occur the rest of the fall.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Wilcox advised that vote by mail requests in the State of Florida expire in December of an even numbered year, noting requests can be made online. He stated staff will send out reminders to those who previously voted by mail to renew if they would like to continue to vote by mail.

Commissioner Curry commented on the convenience of voting by mail.

Mr. Wilcox advised that a person's vote-by-mail ballot can be tracked by signing up for "Ballottrax".

Chairman Bryant expressed appreciation to Mr. Wilcox and his team for all their hard work.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Supervisor of Elections Office budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – George Albright, Tax Collector**

Tax Collector George Albright appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025–26 budget for Cost Center 126, Tax Collector - Transfer (page 41). Also present was Director of Tax Services Craig Silverman.

Mr. Albright advised that he does not do pay for performance, noting raises are given across the Board in his office.

Mr. Albright stated his office will be turning back a minimum of \$50,000.00 to the Board.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Albright commented on compression issues relating to staff pay. He advised that approximately \$161,000 of the increase in line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages, can be attributed to the \$0.60 per hour raise given to address compression issues.

Mr. Albright commented on changes the State has made to required software programs, which requires additional training.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Director of Tax Services Craig Silverman, Tax Collector's Office, advised that the \$33,000.00 in line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, is for two servers and the scanners used to process check payments.

Chairman Bryant questioned the increase in line item 534101, Contract Services Other Miscellaneous. Mr. Albright stated the increase can be attributed to litigation costs.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Fowler advised that the \$50,000.00 non-recurring funds originally planned to be returned to the Board could be used for the machinery and equipment. Then the \$33,000.00 can become recurring funds.

Chairman Bryant expressed appreciation to Mr. Albright for always being so innovative and finding new ways to bring revenue to the County.

Mr. Albright commented on the County's compliance with the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the Tax Collector's Office budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk of the Circuit Court**

Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Gregory C. Harrell appeared to review the proposed FY 2025–26 budgets for Cost Center 110, Clerk to County Commission Transfer (page 36); and Cost Center 110, Clerk to County Commission Transfer (page

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221).

Clerk Gregory C. Harrell expressed his appreciation to the Board, County staff and Administration for their continued partnership

Clerk Harrell advised that his budget does not include any new position requests. He stated there was a request on the court side to the Legislature for additional deputy clerks relating to the additional judges, but the request was not approved. Clerk Harrell advised that there are no proposed new capital projects and there is only a 4.41% increase from the prior years adopted budget.

Clerk Harrell commented on funding issues on the court side, noting some Clerks have made requests to their Counties to subsidize court operations. He stated there are 3 key details relating to his budget. First is the 5% cost of living adjustment (COLA), which is given as a 1 time across the board. Clerk Harrell advised that he only promotes based on performance and not based on tenure. He expressed appreciation to the BCC for doing right by the Budget, Finance, Internal Audit and Clerk to the Commission Records staff, noting he has several court side employees come to him recently relating to financial issues.

Clerk Harrell advised that the second component of the budget is an increase in line item 534101, Contract Services Other Miscellaneous, in the amount of \$50,000.00, which is a one time expense to assist in imaging County records to make it easier to find items on behalf of the County and public. He stated the third component is an additional \$15,000.00 for an outside audit consultant in line item 531109, Professional Services.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Clerk Harrell advised that the additional \$15,000.00 is basically an outflow of two of the CIP construction project related audits, where they are providing outside consultation. He confirmed that the total \$65,000.00 are one time increases.

Ms. Fowler advised that upon review of the budget the Clerk has committed \$100,000.00 in turn back funds, these funds can help offset these one time expenses.

Chairman Bryant requested staff consider the Tax Collector's \$33,000.00 request to be handled with any available one time funds.

Ms. Fowler advised that the \$50,000.00 being returned by the Tax Collector is one time funds and will be applied to that \$33,000.00. She stated there might be a couple of other items that can be reviewed, such as capital expenses that can be addressed with one time funds.

Clerk Harrell commented on the return on investment (ROI) for what the Clerk to the Board does, noting the recent celebration of the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) Triple Crown in excellent financial reporting and budgeting award. He stated the Clerk's office can assist with providing the Board with the number of recordings taking place over recent years and the deeds that factor into that. There has been less of an increase in the last year in terms of the number of overall recordings, including deeds. Clerk Harrell advised that one of the main things the Clerk's office does is help manage the County's investment portfolio, which is approximately \$670,000,000.00. He stated each year GFOA comes up with new auditing standards and at this point the office is helping the County comply with over 102 governmental accounting standards. The office helps maintain a database of over 12,000 real and tangible assets that are valued just under \$3,000,000,000.00. In the last year over \$723,000.00 in payments to vendors and over 50,000 payroll transactions for the 19,000 employees have been made.

Commissioner Curry advised that Clerk Harrell is the incoming President of the Florida

Court Clerks and Comptrollers (FCCC).

Clerk Harrell advised that beginning July 1, 2026 he will be the President for a 1 year period, noting he is currently the President Elect. He stated this gives him the opportunity to advocate for not only Marion County and its issues, but also on behalf of his colleagues throughout the State. Clerk Harrell commented on the benefits of being able to work alongside the previous clerk prior to taking office.

Chairman Bryant opined that it is a testament to the leadership in Marion County when you see how many current and past elected officials step up into leadership positions. She expressed appreciation to the Clerk and his staff.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the Clerk's Office budget.

### **OPENING REMARKS – William “Billy” Woods, Sheriff**

Sheriff William “Billy” Woods, Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025–2026 budgets for Cost Center 116, Sheriff Jail Transfer (page 38); Cost Center 117, Sheriff Emergency Management Transfer (page 39); Cost Center 118, Sheriff Regular Transfer (page 222); Cost Center 119, Sheriff Bailiff Transfer (page 223); Cost Center 120, Sheriff Patrol CID Transfer (page 334). Also present were Finance Director Jeremiah Powell and Budget/Finance Commander Katrina Neumann.

Sheriff Woods advised that Commissioner Zalak was able to see the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program process in person.

Sheriff Woods presented a 36 page handout entitled, “Marion County Sheriff's Office Line-item Budget Request FY 2025-2026”. He stated based on the staffing study previously sent to Commissioners the original budget is exactly what it should be for this County. Sheriff Woods advised that currently, MCSO is short 108 deputies, noting based on population growth roughly 300 more deputies will be needed in 5 years. He stated the budget that was submitted is where it should be to keep the County safe; however, due to budget constraints modifications had to be made. Sheriff Woods advised that questions he might get from citizens is will this compromise the safety and the answer is unfortunately, yes. He noted anytime they are not staying with the population growth it puts a greater burden on enforcement and other areas. Sheriff Woods stated some positions had to be cut. The original plan had 25 patrol deputies, which has been reduced to 12. He advised that Community Service Specialist (CSS) are being utilized to assist, noting they cannot perform all the same functions as a sworn deputy. Sheriff Woods advised that MCSO has never worked crashes, but it will be heading in that direction due to the response time of Florida Highway Patrol (FHP). The CSS will be able to assist in these instances.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods clarified that MCSO has reduced the request for additional deputies to 12 sworn officers and 10 CCS. The original budget only had 4 CCS, but adding the other 6 helped balance the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) side.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods advised that 6 additional positions are being added to the MSTU for Law Enforcement budget, which consists of 1 Dispatcher, 1 Intervention Specialist, 1 IT personnel, 1 Human Resource (HR) personnel, 1 radio personnel and 1 fleet personnel. He stated support staff have been put off in the past to adjust for budgetary needs.

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Commissioner Bryant questioned what the fleet position will specifically be doing. Sheriff Woods advised that it is a mechanic position.

Sheriff Woods advised that there are 6 School Resource Officers (SRO) included in the budget, but revenue does come in for those positions.

Chairman Bryant questioned if the County is being made whole from the Marion County School Board (MCSB) for the SRO positions. Sheriff Woods advised that some of the SROs are for private schools because the Legislation changed the law and now allows private schools to hire SROs. The private school is required to pay in full for the SRO. He stated he charges \$75,000.00 per deputy, which is a reduced rate. This splits the cost between the BCC and MCSB. Sheriff Woods opined that he does not feel either entity should pay 100% of the cost. He stated there is no consistent percentage base across the State, noting SROs are not first year hires. They do not make a starting salary.

Chairman Bryant commented on the cost associated with SROs and opined that MCSB should be paying those costs. She addressed the funding mechanism MCSB has in place such as the 1.5000 mills, 0.5 penny Sales Tax and Impact Fees.

Commissioner Zalak stated he was under the impression MCSB was paying 75% of the SRO costs because the County was utilizing the deputy a portion of the year. He advised that the County was paying for the full command staff, but over time that was supposed to shift.

Chairman Bryant advised that MCSB has created its own policing entity within the schools.

Commissioner Stone stated the vehicles and equipment is also supplied by the MCSO through the Sales Tax. She opined that General Fund and MSTU dollars should not be utilized to fund those positions.

Sheriff Woods advised that he does not support the school having their own police department.

General discussion ensued relating to SROs.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Chairman Bryant advised that there is a request for the following new positions in the Law Enforcement MSTU: 6 SROs, 6 support staff, 12 deputies and 10 CSS.

Sheriff Woods advised that raises within MCSO are given on October 1<sup>st</sup> annually, noting this year the increase is 4%. He stated all of the one time costs have been removed from all MCSO budgets. Sheriff Woods commented on vehicle replacement costs and how they are funded.

Chairman Bryant questioned the amount of the MCSB SRO contract. Finance Director Jeremiah Powell stated approximately \$3,000,000.00.

Chairman Bryant advised that vehicles are considered a capital expense and should be included in the Sales Tax.

Sheriff Woods advised that his portion of the Sales Tax goes predominantly to vehicles, which does not leave much left for other capital expenses.

General discussion ensued relating to legacy costs.

Sheriff Woods advised that all new proposed positions in the Fine and Forfeiture Fund were removed, which included an HR Clerk, IT, and a pilot, as well as the current vacant pilot position. He stated the budgeted overtime was also reduced and the aviation repairs budget was cut by \$120,000.00. Sheriff Woods advised that MCSO conducts all transportation locally between the courthouse and the jail, but out of State and out of County transport is contracted out to another entity. Over time the need for transport has reduced; therefore, the jail transportation budget was also reduced.



Chairman Bryant questioned if the County was receiving any revenue from the television series "Chopper Cops" series. Sheriff Woods advised that his office has not received any revenue from the series. He opined that it would be unethical to accept funds.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods advised that the show does pay for staff to redact information, similar to a public records request. He stated staff who work above and beyond their everyday duties are compensated.

General discussion ensued related to "Chopper Cops".

Sheriff Woods commented on the cost associated with the large animal investigations.

Chairman Bryant questioned how the new farm is working out. Sheriff Woods advised that the site is perfect for the large animals and allows enough room to quarantine animals until veterinary care can be obtained. He stated the horses for the MCSO mounted unit are also being housed at this site.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods advised that MCSO does not have a veterinarian on staff, noting it would not be cost effective to add an FTE for these services. He stated the inmate work farm contains the crops used to feed the jail inmates and it would not be conducive to move it to the new site. The new site does contain the cattle and livestock utilized to feed the jail inmates. Sheriff Woods advised that the inmate work farm on Maricamp Road is 45 acres.

Sheriff Woods commented on other areas that were reduced within the budget such as the training budget, aviation repairs, capital items, ammunition, removal of a health wellness contract, and any equipment under \$500,000.00.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Sheriff Woods advised that the tasers have been removed from the budget, noting they will be addressed in the future. He commented on the high cost of tasers, noting the brand TASER has a monopoly on this equipment.

Chairman Bryant questioned if these can be purchased using Sales Tax revenue. Sheriff Woods advised that they do not qualify.

Mr. Powell stated tasers are leased equipment. He advised that each taser costs \$120.00 per month and there is not an option to purchase them outright.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Curry requested MCSO work with County staff to review the personnel study to determine what is needed to better assist the Board on future planning. He opined that staffing levels will probably never be at 100%.

Sheriff Woods advised that over the next year his goal is to create a 4 to 6 year staffing plan.

Commissioner Curry requested a mid-year one-on-one with MCSO to discuss the upcoming budget and any important updates.

Sheriff Woods stated one-on-ones can be scheduled.

Commissioner McClain out at 11:15 a.m.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Sheriff Woods commented on the starting pay and compression issues, which have been addressed. He stated there is nothing the Department can do about the increased retirement rates or workmen's compensation. Sheriff Woods addressed the cost associated with the Heart of Florida (HOF).

Commissioner Stone out at 11:16 a.m.

Sheriff Woods stated he is reviewing options relating to health insurance for the inmates.

Commissioner Stone and Commissioner McClain returned at 11:17 a.m.

Sheriff Woods advised that once a person is arrested any health issues they have while in custody become the responsibility of MCSO regardless if they are preexisting.

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Commissioner Curry advised that the National Association of Counties (NACo) is pushing for this issue to be addressed at a Federal level. He advised that when arrested the individual loses their Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods advised that the majority of the \$507,000.00 listed under Rentals and Leases is for the building on 40 to relocate people while remodeling is taking place.

Chairman Bryant questioned the total cost of the taser contract. Mr. Powell stated it is \$3,200,000.00 annually. He clarified the contract is for the body worn cameras, the fleet car cameras and the tasers, noting the taser portion is approximately \$1,000,000.00.

Sheriff Woods advised that MCSO will never be able to stop having cameras, noting the Courts now rely heavily on that footage.

Chairman Bryant commented on the possibility of speaking with the State Legislatures to be able to use Sales Tax funds for these types of expenses.

Sheriff Woods advised that there were 15 Detention Deputy positions removed from the Jail budget.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Sheriff Woods stated there are approximately 20 vacancies in Detention Deputies, noting these positions will most likely be filled by the end of the FY.

Chairman Bryant expressed appreciation to MCSO for the great working relationship between them and the BCC.

Commissioner Zalak opined that under the current pressure citizens are feeling he is not willing to raise the millage rate, but will try to find funds while reviewing the budget.

Commissioner McClain concurred.

Chairman Bryant advised that she has spoken with Ms. Fowler and the County Administrator to review all options to prevent an increase to the millage.

Sheriff Woods expressed his appreciation to Ms. Fowler for all her hard work. He stated Marion County is not one of the Counties under the microscope, noting it has one of the lowest millage rates in the State and funds are spent wisely.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes advised that one time funds can be utilized to fund the DJJ expenses, but this cost will appear again next year.

General discussion ensued relating to DJJ funding.

Chairman Bryant directed staff to reach out to DJJ to determine how Marion County is trending from January 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025.

Commissioner Stone advised that 3 of the juvenile offenders are being sentenced and will be moved to a different facility; therefore, they will no longer be on the County's books. Also there has not been any shooting within the City for a year.

Chairman Bryant stated an analysis should be able to be provided showing who is currently in the system and how long before their case is complete.

Clerk Harrell stated the numbers are high and will stay high for the foreseeable future. He advised that Marion County is number 3 in the State and trending to number 1.

Mr. Bouyounes stated this type of analysis will take time, noting trends from the last 6 months could be provided relatively quickly.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff can craft a letter for both the State and Federal level to consider allowing equipment leased (i.e. tasers) to be considered for Sales Tax funds.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if any leases qualify for Sales Tax Funds if they are over 5 years and a certain dollar amount. Clerk Harrell advised that he is unsure.

Chairman Bryant advised that this can be a conversation at the NACo level to see if there is any interest. She stated she will reach out to the Randy Reynolds at the DJJ.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the MCSO budget.

**UPDATE:** Ms. Fowler advised that in the General Fund there is currently non-recurring \$1,472,000.00, noting they will be adding \$17,000.00 of non-recurring. This is the net difference in what is being returned to the Board from the Tax Collector's Office. She stated the \$475,000.00 of that combined with the \$253,000.00 of recurring that is above it would be enough to get the millage in the General Fund to 3.3500 mills. Ms. Fowler opined that the Board should not go below \$1,000,000.00 on the non-recurring reserve for contingencies.

Ms. Fowler opined that she would need to work with County Administration to discuss options.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes presented a 1 page handout entitled, "FY 25/26 Proposed Budget vs FY 24/25 Adopted Budget", which shows the outside agencies requests from FY 2025 compared to FY 2026

Commissioner Zalak advised that outside agencies budgets may need to remain flat.

Ms. Fowler advised that Marion Senior Services Transit is returning funds to the BCC to fund the increase for FY 2026. She stated there are vehicles in the FY 2025 budget that will not be received in time; therefore, they are requesting the funds be carried forward to allow them to take delivery of those vehicles after October 1, 2025. Ms. Fowler advised that she will double check to determine if the entire increase was for those vehicles.

Chairman Bryant commented on the increases to Marion Soil Conservation District and the Small Business Development Council.

Clerk Harrell opined that those are relatively small amounts, noting the increases requested will not get the County to the \$1,000,000.00 goal.

Commissioner McClain advised that last year's increase to the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) from \$175,000.00 to \$200,000.00 was supposed to be a one-time event. He opined that outside agencies should meet with Mr. Bouyounes prior to submitting a budget request.

Commissioner Stone stated in years past those entities would come and meet with the Board members individually, but the only one who did recently was the Small Business Development Council.

Commissioner McClain reiterated that each entity should meet with Administration prior to submitting their proposal.

Commissioner Zalak advised that there have been years in the past where those agencies were told to not to come before the Board with an increase.

Mr. Bouyounes stated he is willing to go through the vetting process with each entity prior to it coming before the Board.

Commissioner McClain expressed support for implementing a vetting process through Administration.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Commissioner McClain advised that the FY 23/24 budget request from ELC was \$150,000.00. Then in FY 24/25 the request was \$175,000.00, but when it came before the Board for budget workshops they requested

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an additional \$25,000.00 for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) program. He stated that additional \$25,000.00 was supposed to be a one time request for that program. Chairman Bryant directed Mr. Bouyounes to reach out to each outside agency prior to them coming before the Board tomorrow.

Commissioner Zalak commented on issues with vehicle orders.

Ms. Fowler advised that she would have the information for the Board relating to the Marion Senior Services vehicle costs at tomorrow's workshop.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if there were any turn back funds from MCSO. Ms. Fowler advised that funds in the Fine and Forfeiture Fund and MSTU for Law Enforcement went into MCSO's Cash Carry Forward Balance and was part of the excess funds in the Fine and Forfeiture. There was money returned to the General Fund that the Sheriff requested to be earmarked for a project. She stated it is approximately \$1,000,000.00.

Ms. Fowler advised that the funds in the Fine and Forfeiture Fund was used to balance the budget to 0.8700 of a mill.

Mr. Bouyounes stated the returned funds can be utilized to assist the Fine and Forfeiture Fund.

Ms. Fowler advised that the turn back funds are \$1,405,231.00 from the Sheriff for FY 24/25, noting the Board did approve earmarking those funds for MCSO. She stated a project has not been brought forward for those funds.

Chairman Bryant advised that she will be reaching out to Randy Reynolds at the DJJ, as well as the Sheriff regarding the turn back funds, Mr. Bouyounes will be reaching out the outside agencies and Ms. Fowler will bring back an update regarding Marion Senior Services.

Ms. Fowler advised that Guardian Ad Litem has a scheduling conflict and is requesting to be heard first at tomorrow's workshop. It was the general consensus of the Board to agree.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:54 a.m.

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Kathy Bryant, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk