

# **Marion County 2025 Proposed State Legislative Priorities**

## **Section I. Appropriations Requests**

- 1) Funding the Lowell Municipal Drinking Water Project
- 2) Funding for roadway and utility construction on NW 49th St from NW 70th Ave to NW 44th Ave
- 3) Funding for improvements to the Bradford-Ma Barker House
- 4) Funding for the Florida Department of Health – Marion’s Belleview Clinic

## **Section II. Legislative Language Change Requests**

- 1) Marion County requests legislation requiring municipalities to receive consent from counties when offering services within unincorporated areas
- 2) Marion County requests legislation exempting funds set aside for the completion of inspections on issued permits from Florida Building Code carryforward fund limits
- 3) Marion County requests legislation raising the CCNA continuing contract study cap for professional services from \$500,000 to \$1 million
- 4) Marion County requests legislation allowing insurance coverage for families of firefighters injured during official training exercises

## **Section III. Marion County – Supported Local Priorities**

- 1) Support the project that will allow swimming once again at Silver Springs
- 2) Continued support for funding Septic to Sewer programs
- 3) Coordinate state and local efforts to provide effective natural resource management to Silver Glen Springs

## **Section IV. Marion County – Supported Organizations**

- 1) Continued support for the mission of the Ft. King Heritage Foundation
- 2) Continued support for the mission of Marion Senior Services
- 3) Continued support for the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion
- 4) Support Marion County Honor Guard and other veterans’ organizations
- 5) Support Districts 5 & 24 Medical Examiner Office’s appropriations request
- 6) Support the State Attorney for the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit’s appropriations request

# **Section I. Appropriations Requests**

## **1) Funding the Lowell Municipal Drinking Water Project**

### **Description/Background:**

The Lowell area, located in northern Marion County, includes multiple state-run facilities, including the Florida State Fire College. The area is not attached to municipal services at this time. Instead, residents rely on wells to provide them with drinking water. It has also been identified as having soil contamination above FDEP's provisional cleanup target levels. Marion County has developed a concept plan to extend a centralized potable water system into the Lowell area which would provide clean drinking water to the citizens within the area, including the State Fire College and any other state-run facilities in the vicinity. Marion County received \$3.5 million in state appropriations during the 2024 legislative session that will be used for construction costs and is in the process of securing \$1 million in funding through the State Revolving Fund. Those funds will be used for the planning & design portions of the project.

The proposed 12-inch water line extension is approximately 35,513 feet or 6.73 miles in length with valves, fire hydrants, and a water booster station included, with the goal of extending a centralized potable water system into the Lowell community. This would provide clean drinking water to the residents and state-run facilities within the area, including the Florida State Fire College.

***Request:** Marion County is requesting \$2,500,000 for the estimated remaining construction costs.*

## **2) Funding for roadway and utility improvements on NW 49th St from NW 70th Ave to NW 44th Ave**

### **Description/Background:**

The NW 49<sup>th</sup> Street project as titled above is also known as **Segment A** of the SW/NW 80th/70th Avenue/49th Street corridor which is a 13-mile stretch of roadway parallel to Interstate 75 (I-75) and described in the below section. This segment is planned as a 4-lane divided roadway along an east-west alignment for 3.4 miles, connecting NW 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue (CR 225A) to NW 44<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the new interchange at I-75. Also, included as part of this project is the installation of a new sewer line and a water line to serve future growth, development along this corridor and to provide for much-needed septic-to-sewer connections in the area.

This project already received \$1 million in state funding during the 2023 legislative session for right-of-way acquisition, \$1.5 million in funding in the 2024 legislative session for project design, and this request seeks \$15 million for construction. Any funds received will first be applied to road construction, while the remaining funds will then be applied to utility construction, which consists of 15,000 ft of linear 16" water main and 10" force main, 15 16" gate valves, and fire hydrants, among other improvements.

**The SW/NW 80th/70th Avenue/49th Street corridor is described as follows:**

Marion County is at the forefront of growth in Florida. Not only are nearly 300 people moving into the county each week, but I-75 also carries more than 100,000 vehicles daily through the county, 25,000 of which are trucks and tractor-trailers. The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and the City of Ocala are actively building parallel and alternative corridors to I-75 and other state roads in the area. The BCC has a voter-approved one percent sales tax that has delivered more than \$250 million to roadway improvements over the last 8 years. With this accelerated growth, we find ourselves with a shortfall and are not able to deliver relief to our roads, state corridors, and I-75 fast enough.

The above titled corridor begins approximately half a mile north of SR 200 and consists of a north-south alignment along an existing 2-lane road (SW/NW 80th/70th Avenue) to north of US 27 where it then transitions into a new east-west corridor to meet I-75, **Segment A**, in alignment with NW 49th Street for which we are seeking construction funding. Marion County has also partnered with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to build a new interchange on I-75 with a future road aligning at NW 49th Street. Besides being a funding partner and acquiring the right-of-way for the new interchange (total Marion County contribution of \$20,119,860).

Along this corridor, traveling north from SR 200, you pass the actively developing On Top of the World (OTOW) development of regional impact (DRA), a retirement community with more than 3,100 constructed residential units (10% of what they are historically vested for). Then you pass Calesa Township, also actively developing more than 5,000 residential units by the same OTOW developer but targeting families with a variety of amenities, as well as a charter school and the Florida Aquatics Swimming and Training Facility (FAST). Continuing north you'll pass a mix of developed residential properties and horse farms of varying sizes, and then commercial businesses as you approach the SR 40 intersection. On the north side of SR 40, you'll see the entrance features to the renowned World Equestrian Center (WEC), the largest equestrian complex in the United States. Traveling along the east perimeter of WEC, you'll continue north through the intersection with US 27, and at approximately 0.5 miles this corridor will then transition east through pastureland, where it will intersect the existing 2-lane road called NW 49th Street and reach the new interchange at I-75.

On Top of the World and the World Equestrian Center are both contributing proportionate share funding to this 4-lane corridor. Marion County is contributing +\$20 million to the I-75 interchange for right-of-way acquisition and construction. We have a proven track record of successfully delivering projects and a clear plan to deliver this corridor. Our success will be beneficial not just to our community, but to all of those traveling along I-75, US 27, SR 40, and SR 200 in this area. Funding for the fast-tracking of this project will be beneficial to all.

**Requests:**

**Segment A: 3.4-mile portion of NW 49th St. from NW 70th Ave to NW 44th Ave**

- *Segment A Request: The estimated cost of road & utility construction is \$30,000,000. Marion County has set aside the required local match amount and is requesting \$15,000,000 for the remaining project cost.*

### **3) Funding for improvements on the Bradford-Ma Barker House**

#### **Description/Background:**

The Bradford-Ma Barker house is located in Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area. The home is famous for being the location of the longest gun battle in FBI history. The home was originally located on property owned by Carson Bradford, who bought the real estate in Ocklawaha in 1892. His son, living in Miami, built the house in 1930. It is a two-story Florida cracker-style home with three bedrooms and two baths with a total of 2,100 square feet. The home was quiet, nestled back from the street with a view of Lake Weir, the fifth largest lake in Florida. The Bradford family built the home as a weekend and summer retreat from Miami.

Carson Bradford had never rented his house on Lake Weir when in late 1934, he got a surprisingly generous offer from a representative of Mrs. T.C. “Kate” Blackburn, describing her as “a sweet little old lady” was looking for an out-of-the-way cottage to spend some quality time with her sons. They needed a place to rest and re-coup away from the cold Northern winter. Bradford said the house wasn’t for rent. Not willing to accept no for an answer, the rent offer went up with an offer to pay cash in advance for the entire season. “It is the only time the house was ever rented,” says Carson Good, Bradford’s great-grandson.

Two months later, the Bradford house was riddled with bullets and is the scene of the longest FBI shootout in history. Only when the shooting was over, did Bradford learn the true identity of his tenants. He had inadvertently rented to the notorious gangster, Ma Barker and her son Fred. It was the FBI they were fleeing, who had zeroed in on them as Public Enemy #1 after the FBI caught and or killed John Dillinger, followed by Al Capone, and Pretty Boy Floyd. The Barker-Karpis gang knew Hoover was coming for them next, so finding the hide-out overlooking Lake Weir was a smart move at that time.

The property was sold in 2016 and the new owners did not want to preserve the house. It was to be torn down or moved. Marion County officials decided to preserve the house, accepted it as a gift, and moved it on a barge to its present location across Lake Weir in October of 2016 to its new home at Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area, a county-owned park at a cost of over \$252,000. The county has funded further design and construction repairs on the house as well, including a new porch at a cost of over \$63,000. The vision is for the public to enjoy maximum access to one of the most famous houses in America. Marion County intends to recreate the setting by opening the house to the public and providing abundant exhibits to interpret the history of the house, what happened during the shootout, and how it effectively ended a history of organized crime and gangs in the country.

Funds would be used for infrastructure, permitting, and site preparation for additional buildings, including an interpretive center to comply with ADA requirements. Improvements include stormwater facilities, tree clearing as needed, and conduit for electrical work amongst other improvements.

**Action:** *Marion County is requesting \$950,000 for infrastructure improvements to the Ma Barker House*

### **4) Funding for the Florida Department of Health – Marion’s Belleview Clinic**

#### **Description/Background:**

The current modular building FDOH-Marion utilizes for its Belleview clinic is 25+ years old and is well past its expected life cycle. This project is to construct a new site-built health facility on the existing property to replace the aging modular building currently in use. Marion County's Facilities Management has replaced all the HVAC units once and will need to replace them again in the next 2 – 3 years. The roof has been replaced as well as replacing all the floor decking. Over the years, they have also repaired and replaced many sections of the access ramps and steps leading into the facility.

The current structural condition of the facility is in fair to poor condition and there are minimal possibilities to remodel the building to make it more compatible with current health care facility functions. The new facility will be a modern site-built facility that is designed to provide health care services to the residents of southeastern Marion County. It will be designed to 140 MPH wind loads to allow it to withstand hurricane-force winds and be operational after such an event to aid in the recovery efforts.

*Request: Marion County is requesting \$250,000 for the design of a new FDOH-Marion clinic in Belleview*

## **Section II. Legislative Language Change Requests**

### **1) Marion County requests legislation requiring municipalities to receive consent from counties when offering services within unincorporated areas**

#### **Description/Background:**

##### **FS. 180.02 – Power of municipalities:**

The issue under consideration is the scope of power available to municipalities under Sec. 180.02, F.S., to establish extraterritorial utility zones or service areas within the unincorporated county. Once established, the municipality may require pursuant to subsection (3) that "all persons or corporations living or doing business within said area to connect, when available" with described municipal systems. Sec. 180.191, F.S., provides for a 25% surcharge under paragraph (1)(a) and the possibility, under paragraph (1)(b), that customers of the unincorporated area within such zone or service area may pay rates, fees and charges of up to 50% more than municipal customers pay for the corresponding service. If only the surcharge is imposed over municipal rates, a public hearing is not even required under paragraph (1)(a). A public hearing is required under paragraph (1)(b).

This statutory scheme creates the possibility that customers in the unincorporated area will be paying higher rates to subsidize the lower rates of municipal customers, and the city's elected officials have no political accountability to the customers in the unincorporated areas. This scenario recently occurred in the City of Dunnellon in Marion County, where the city acquired an investor-owned utility in the unincorporated area and, pursuant to the above statute, imposed the surcharges, and other impositions on the customers of that system. This resulted in litigation that was costly to the city and ultimately led to the system being acquired by the Florida Governmental Utility Authority. In addition to the above-described concerns for residents of the unincorporated county, the municipality's unrestricted power under Sec. 180.02 to establish such utility zones or service areas creates a disruptive influence on the planning and system development of County-owned utility systems.

Sec. 180.02 was originally adopted in 1935 and was last revised in 1995. It is suggested that the statute is obsolete, and not reflective of the scope of services provided by county governments in medium and large counties. When originally adopted, and for years thereafter, counties typically did not provide “municipal” services in unincorporated areas. All of that has changed with the advent of the county home rule powers act, sec. 125.01, F.S., and many counties, including Marion, provide a broad range of municipal services. In fact, several of the municipalities in Marion County contract for the county to provide municipal services to their residents. What is most problematic for county utility departments is the ability of cities, under Sec. 180.02, F.S., to create such zones in unincorporated areas, regardless of the impact thereof on county utility operations, and with no agreement or consent required by the county. While a county may file objections under subsection 180.03(2), the city is free to ignore those objections.

It is urged that a reasonable resolution of the above situation is found in Sec. 180.06, F.S. – Activities authorized by municipalities and private companies – where the last paragraph provides: “However, a private company or municipality shall not construct any system, work, project or utility authorized to be constructed hereunder in the event that a system, work, project or utility of a similar character is being actually operated by a municipality or private company in the municipality or territory immediately adjacent thereto unless such municipality or private company consents to such construction.” It is the foregoing requirement for consent that is lacking for counties, they should be afforded the same powers reserved for private companies. It is proposed that legislation be enacted that would provide that where a county has, by ordinance, established one or more utility service areas in the unincorporated area, and within such services, has the current ability to provide service, a municipality may not provide utility services within such county service areas. Within any county service area where the county does have the ability to provide service within 18 months, a municipality may not provide service within such county service area without consent from the county. Counties and municipalities are encouraged to cooperatively establish utility service boundary agreements that will maximize the capacities and efficiencies of their respective systems, with the goal of providing the most cost-effective utility service to system customers.

**Action:** Amend 180.02 F.S. and 180.06 F.S. to provide counties the same affordances as municipalities and private companies. Additionally, to enumerate that where a county has, by ordinance, established one or more utility service areas in the unincorporated area and where the county has the current ability or intent to provide service within 18 months, a municipality may not provide utility services within such county service area(s) without consent of the county.

**180.02 Powers of municipalities.—**

(1) For the accomplishment of the purposes of this chapter, any municipality may execute its corporate powers within its corporate limits.

(2) Any municipality may extend and execute all of its corporate powers applicable for the accomplishment of the purposes of this chapter outside of its corporate limits, as hereinafter provided and as may be desirable or necessary for the promotion of the public health, safety and welfare or for the accomplishment of the purposes of this chapter; provided, however, that said corporate powers shall not extend or apply within the corporate limits of another municipality.

(3) In the event any municipality desires to avail itself of the provisions or benefits of this chapter, it is lawful for such municipality, **with consent of the county**, to create a zone or area by ordinance and to prescribe reasonable regulations requiring all persons or corporations living or doing business within said area to connect, when available, with any sewerage system or alternative water supply system,

including, but not limited to, reclaimed water, aquifer storage and recovery, and desalination systems, constructed, erected and operated under the provisions of this chapter; provided, however, in the creation of said zone the municipality shall not include any area within the limits of any other incorporated city or village, nor shall such area or zone extend for more than 5 miles from the corporate limits of said municipality.

**180.06 Activities authorized by municipalities, counties, and private companies. —**

Any municipality, county, or private company organized for the purposes contained in this chapter, is authorized:

- (1) To clean and improve street channels or other bodies of water for sanitary purposes;
- (2) To provide means for the regulation of the flow of streams for sanitary purposes;
- (3) To provide water and alternative water supplies, including, but not limited to, reclaimed water, and water from aquifer storage and recovery and desalination systems for domestic, municipal or industrial uses;
- (4) To provide for the collection and disposal of sewage, including wastewater reuse, and other liquid wastes;
- (5) To provide for the collection and disposal of garbage;
- (6) And incidental to such purposes and to enable the accomplishment of the same, to construct reservoirs, sewerage systems, trunk sewers, intercepting sewers, pumping stations, wells, siphons, intakes, pipelines, distribution systems, purification works, collection systems, treatment and disposal works;
- (7) To construct airports, hospitals, jails and golf courses, to maintain, operate and repair the same, and to construct and operate in addition thereto all machinery and equipment;
- (8) To construct, operate and maintain gas plants and distribution systems for domestic, municipal and industrial uses; and
- (9) To construct such other buildings and facilities as may be required to properly and economically operate and maintain said works necessary for the fulfillment of the purposes of this chapter.

However, a private company or municipality shall not construct any system, work, project or utility authorized to be constructed hereunder in the event that a system, work, project or utility of a similar character is being actually operated by a municipality, county, or private company in the municipality or territory immediately adjacent thereto, unless such municipality, county, or private company consents to such construction.

Additionally, where a county has, by ordinance, established one or more utility service areas in the unincorporated area and where the county has the current ability or intent to provide service within 18 months, a municipality may not provide utility services within such county service area(s) without consent of the county.

**2) Marion County requests legislation exempting funds set aside for the completion of inspections on issued permits from Florida Building Code carryforward fund limits**



### **Description/Background:**

In 2019, Legislation was passed stating “A local government may not carry forward an amount exceeding the average of its operating budget for enforcing the Florida Building Code for the previous 4 fiscal years.” This portion of the bill does not account for unexpended funds (liabilities) a local government holds for the completion of inspections on permits issued beyond the fiscal year, i.e., if a permit takes multiple years to have all inspections completed. To rebate and reduce building permit fees in cases such as this place local governments in a precarious position of having to use funds associated with open permits to complete inspections. This dollar amount can be significant and has rapidly grown in the last two years because of the upward economy. It is important to clarify that this amount can also be carried forward beyond just the average of the operating budget for the previous 4 fiscal years.

*Action: Marion County is requesting support to modify Florida Statute 553.80(7)(a) to clarify the county’s ability to carry forward funds associated with outstanding inspections at their discretion.*

### **Florida Statutes 553.80 Building Construction Standards - Enforcement**

(7)(a) The governing bodies of local governments may provide a schedule of reasonable fees, as authorized by s. 125.56(2) or s. 166.222 and this section, for enforcing this part. These fees, and any fines or investment earnings related to the fees, shall be used solely for carrying out the local government’s responsibilities in enforcing the Florida Building Code. When providing a schedule of reasonable fees, the total estimated annual revenue derived from fees, and the fines and investment earnings related to the fees, may not exceed the total estimated annual costs of allowable activities. Any unexpended balances shall be carried forward to future years for allowable activities or shall be refunded at the discretion of the local government. A local government may not carry forward an amount exceeding the average of its operating budget for enforcing the Florida Building Code for the previous 4 fiscal years. For purposes of this subsection, the term “operating budget” does not include reserve amounts nor funds set aside for the completion of inspections on issued permits. Any amount exceeding this limit must be used as authorized in subparagraph 2. However, a local government that established, as of January 1, 2019, a Building Inspections Fund Advisory Board consisting of five members from the construction stakeholder community and carries an unexpended balance in excess of the average of its operating budget for the previous 4 fiscal years may continue to carry such excess funds forward upon the recommendation of the advisory board. The basis for a fee structure for allowable activities shall relate to the level of service provided by the local government and shall include consideration for refunding fees due to reduced services based on services provided as prescribed by s. 553.791, but not provided by the local government. Fees charged shall be consistently applied.

(Ord. No. 16-34, § 1, 10-4-2016)

### **3) Marion County requests legislation raising the CCNA continuing contract study cap from \$500,000 to \$1 million**

#### **Description/Background:**

Florida Statutes relating to CCNA (Competitive Consultant’s Negotiation Act) are our largest obstacle in the county-level procurement process. CCNA relates to Architects, Engineers, Mappers, etc. The restrictions set by the State regarding CCNA prohibit the county from bidding these types of services



against each other, and also prohibit the County from asking for the price of a project upfront and require the County to shortlist for interviews/presentations. If these restrictions were lifted it would enable the County to receive better pricing for consultants of this nature as we would be able to bid them against each other. CCNA process takes approximately 3 months to go through; by reducing the restrictions we could shorten the time frame it takes to obtain these consultants thereby saving time for our taxpayers on projects they are waiting on (i.e. road construction, designs for all construction projects, etc.). While we are certainly able to meet and fulfill the requirements of CCNA through our solicitation process; it would be a great benefit to have these small changes made or even revert back to the Brooks Act (Federal Law) governing procurement would be better than following the much stricter Florida Statutes. Additionally, the cap for continuing contracts was raised during the 2024 legislative session from \$4 million to \$7.5 million with an annual CPI increase. However, the continuing contract study activity cap was not raised. This request would bring the study cap more in line with the continuing contract threshold.

**Action:** *Support legislation that would amend 287.055(2)(g)b F.S. that raises continuing contract study activity thresholds to \$1 million for professional services.*

**287.055 Acquisition of professional architectural, engineering, landscape architectural, or surveying and mapping services; definitions; procedures; contingent fees prohibited; –**

- b. Study activity if the fee for professional services for each individual study under the contract does not exceed ~~\$500,000~~ **\$1 million**; or for
  - c. Work of a specified nature as outlined in the contract required by the agency, with the contract being for a fixed term or with no time limitation except that the contract must provide a termination clause.
2. Firms providing professional services under continuing contracts may not be required to bid against one another.

**4) Marion County requests legislation allowing insurance coverage for families of firefighters injured during official training exercises**

**Description/Background:**

Currently, Section 112.91(2)2 F.S. allows for health insurance benefits for spouses and dependent children of firefighters should the firefighter sustain an injury or die, but only under certain circumstances. Marion County is requesting the statute be modified so the benefits are extended if the injury or death occurs as a result of an official training exercise.

**Action:** *Support legislation that allows families of firefighters injured during official training exercises to continue to receive insurance benefits.*

**112.191 Firefighters; death benefits.—**

- 2. In order for the firefighter, spouse, and dependent children to be eligible for such insurance coverage, the injury must have occurred as the result of the firefighter’s response to what is reasonably believed to be an emergency involving the protection of life or property, **during an official training exercise**, or an unlawful act perpetrated by another. Except as otherwise provided herein, this paragraph may not be construed to limit health insurance coverage for which the firefighter, spouse, or

dependent children may otherwise be eligible, except that a person who qualifies for benefits under this section is not eligible for the health insurance subsidy provided under chapter 121, chapter 175, or chapter 185.

## **Section III. Marion County – Supported Local Priorities**

### **1) Allowing swimming once again at Silver Springs**

#### **Description/Background:**

In 2013, the Florida Park Service took control and assumed management of Silver Springs, merging it with the adjacent Silver River State Park, forming Silver Springs State Park. In 2014 the state's Unit Management Plan (UMP) for Silver Springs State Park included creating a public swimming area at the headsprings and the construction of a mooring/convenience dock downriver from the headsprings.

In 2016, Wild Waters Waterpark was closed, and the infrastructure of the park was removed in 2019. Since the state gained ownership of the park almost a decade ago, a host of improvements have been discussed and planned, however, few have come to fruition as the projects, including reopening swimming at the springs, have been mired in bureaucratic processes.

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners, its citizens, and its legislative delegation strongly believe that opening the headsprings to swimming, increasing opportunities for access to the park specifically from Silver River, and increasing the opportunities for public/private partnerships within the park will be key components in the revitalization of the Silver Springs community.

**Action:** *Coordinate with state agencies and delegation members to resolve permitting issues that are delaying the process.*

### **2) Continued support for funding Septic to Sewer conversion programs**

#### **Description/Background:**

In 2016, the Florida Legislature passed SB 552 and the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act (part VIII of chapter 373, Florida Statutes) to protect our water resources in Florida. The policy calls for a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP), which is a comprehensive set of site-specific strategies to reduce or eliminate pollutant loadings and restore particular waterbodies to health. A specific part of this policy is the septic-to-sewer conversion requirement that would help to reduce the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) into the spring shed through the reduction of nitrogen pollution released into the Upper Floridian Aquifer (UFA).

To achieve this, Marion County proposed a program to fund septic to central sewer projects, package plants to central sewer projects, and enhanced septic tanks within the Primary Focus Area (PFA) utilizing a match funding within the program at a 50/50 rate; other funds and in-kind services secured by the County to advance the BMAP initiatives. The septic-to-sewer project will bolster the State's (SJRWMD's,

SWFWMD's, and FDEP's) goal of reducing nutrients by eliminating decentralized wastewater systems and on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems (OSTDS) which will result in a reduction of nutrient loading to groundwater and the springs. By decreasing nutrient loading, the County can decrease the potential of algal blooms and eutrophication.

***Action:** Marion County will continue to implement the developed septic-to-sewer plan through the ongoing Wastewater Feasibility Study with the ultimate goal of reducing the nutrient levels within the Silver Springs and Rainbow Springs BMAP. This will include the reduction of septic tanks and independent package plants through the installation of central wastewater collection systems.*

### **3) Coordinate state and local efforts to provide effective natural resource management to Silver Glen Springs**

#### **Description/Background:**

Silver Glen Springs originates in Marion County and flows via Silver Glen Run into Lake George, which falls into Volusia and Lake Counties. Further, 8 agencies provide oversight of the area, and coordination between the agencies would be beneficial to the continued responsible enjoyment of one of Marion County's greatest natural resources.

***Action:** Support coordination between local, state, and federal agencies to ensure consistency in monitoring, enforcement, and the protection of Silver Glen Springs*

## **Section IV. Marion County – Supported Organizations**

### **1) Continued support for the mission of the Ft. King Heritage Foundation**

#### **Description/Background:**

The Foundation plays a key role in developing the vision and oversight of the Landmark, with much of the success being attributed to the partnership between it, Marion County, and the City of Ocala. This public-private partnership serves as a shining example of how such partnerships can work together to deliver an excellent experience to both our citizens and the out-of-town visitors who frequent the fort.

Marion County passionately supports the unified vision crafted by the County/City/Foundation partnership for Fort King. We also support the request for funding for the vision to become a reality. With the completion of this phase, Fort King will no doubt become a major destination for tourists. There is no other facility in Florida that will provide such excellent interpretative and educational opportunities for visitors to learn about Fort King, the Seminole Wars, and the early years of Ocala/Marion County.

***Action:** Provide the Ft. King Heritage Foundation with any correspondence or other support as needed.*

## **2) Continued support for Marion Senior Services and its programs**

### **Description/Background:**

Marion Senior Services is a nonprofit, charitable social agency providing supportive care services to elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged residents of our county. They help seniors remain living in their own homes independently as long as possible by providing them meals, transit, and in-home support. A variety of public, private, and donor funding enables them to provide services to most people in need, regardless of their ability to pay. Services are provided on a sliding fee basis from no cost to full pay. Marion County supports MSS and its programs, such as the Elder Co-Responder program, a first of its kind in the state designed to identify 911 calls to a residence where someone may have dementia.

*Action: Provide Marion Senior Services with any correspondence or other support as needed.*

## **3) Continued support for the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion**

### **Description/Background:**

An Ocala landmark since 1945, the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion is one of Marion County's premier agricultural showplaces. The pavilion is located on Old Jacksonville Road, east of Highway 441 and north of Highway 27. The Southeastern Livestock Pavilion consists of two covered arenas, one indoor sales arena with stadium seating for 800, a 226 concrete stall barn, a rec hall, and the extension auditorium.

Marion County Parks and Recreation manages the pavilion, which is jointly owned by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The pavilion hosts numerous shows, sales, and special events each year, including the Southeastern Youth Fair, the oldest all-youth fair in the country that continues to operate without a midway, officially beginning in 1978. The steer show, however, which was the genesis of the fair, began in 1941. Additionally, it is the largest all-youth fair event in the State of Florida.

*Action: Provide the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion with any correspondence or other support as needed.*

## **4) Support Marion County Memorial Honor Guard and other veterans' organizations**

### **Description/Background:**

As a war veterans' organization, the Marion County Memorial Honor Guard provides ceremonial funeral honors and assistance to all military veterans and their families during their time of need, as well as any patriotic services when requested. It promotes Americanism, dignity, and respect for the USA's warriors by upholding the utmost professionalism and integrity through its conduct and image at all times. With the responsibility bestowed upon them, they will never forget that it is the Veteran who commands the dignity we protect.

The Marion County Memorial Honor Guard was formed shortly after 9/11. It officially started as a Florida Non-Profit Corporation on September 23, 2002. The IRS approved it in 2003 as a 501(c)(19) war veterans' organization which provides tax-exempt status for the Memorial Honor Guard and allows all

donations and contributions to be deductible under IRC 170(c)(3). They have no employees. They provide their services free of charge to central Florida and have traveled as far as 800 miles to provide veteran memorial services at Arlington Memorial Cemetery in Arlington, VA. Tax-deductible donations and honorariums are their only source of funds.

**Action:** *Provide Marion County Memorial Honor Guard and other veterans' organizations with any correspondence or other support as needed.*

## **5) Support the Districts 5 & 24 Medical Examiner Office's appropriations request**

### **Description/Background:**

The current 9,244 sq. ft. Medical Examiner (ME) building was built in 1999, and despite additions throughout the years, has proven too small and inefficient and is not suited for long-term use. Additionally, expansion on the current site is not possible. The proposed new building will be 30,000 sq. ft. and will include a morgue, as well as an administrative section, and will be expandable in the future. The ME Advisory Committee sent out an RFP for both land and a "build to suit" option. However, based on the submissions that were received, the board determined that directly overseeing the construction was the most cost-effective way to proceed and rejected all the proposals. Two RFQs, one for architecture and one for a "construction manager at risk" went out on 7/31/2023. A Financial/Cost analysis determined the project will cost \$29 million, which includes \$1.699 million in construction contingency costs. To cover the costs, Marion County is expecting to take out a \$29 million bond. Regarding cost allocation, Marion County will be proposing that the cost be split by the population size of each county. Further, one possible site has been identified in the Summerfield area at the intersection of Hwy 301 & 42.

**Action:** *Provide Districts 5 & 24 Medical Examiner's Office with any correspondence or other support as needed.*

## **6) Support the State Attorney for the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit's appropriations request**

### **Description/Background:**

The Marion County Sexual Assault Center is designed to minimize additional trauma after an allegation of sexual assault. Therapeutic Counseling is a critical piece in helping victims receive the support and services needed to become survivors. Establishing a support network is key in the healing process which can begin with establishing a counselor. Our Therapeutic Counseling Program is designed to provide immediate therapeutic services to victims of sexual assault.

The Marion County Sexual Assault Center is seeking funding to hire two (2) Mental Health Counselors. Counselors will preferably hold a master's in psychology, Social Work, Counseling, or other relevant discipline. Counselors will provide crisis intervention counseling using evidence-based treatment modalities. Counselors will advocate for clients by arranging for services to enhance recovery, assist in preparing for court, and engage in ongoing case management to ensure continuity of services.

**Action:** Provide State Attorney for the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit with any correspondence or other support as needed.