

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

September 23, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners met in special session in Commission Chambers at 5:35 p.m. on Monday September 23, 2024 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

The meeting opened with invocation by Chairman Stone and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

The Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 22 page Agenda packet to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Chairman Stone advised that this meeting is being held to discuss the Declaration of a State of Emergency due to Tropical Cyclone Nine.

Deputy Clerk Mills-McAllister presented proof of publication entitled, "Sunshine Notice", published on the Marion County Florida website on September 23, 2024. The Notice states the Board will consider the necessity of a Resolution to declare a State of Emergency regarding Tropical Cyclone Nine.

**1. AGENDA ITEM PUBLIC COMMENTS: NONE**

**2. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR:**

**2.1. Updates from James Bowlin, Director of Emergency Management**

County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: A tropical disturbance over the northwestern Caribbean, now identified as Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine, due to abnormally warm waters in the western Caribbean, could quickly develop into a tropical depression, or possibly a hurricane, with possible landfall as early as Thursday September 26, 2024. Staff will provide updates on various procedures for readiness and preparations for the days leading up to the storm and plans for after the storm.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information and Board discussion.

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Emergency Management Director Preston Bowlin, MCSO, commented on Tropical Cyclone Nine, noting it is anticipated it will become the next named storm (Helene). He stated the storm is predicted to become a hurricane around 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, while located between the Yucatan Peninsula and Cuba. Mr. Bowlin stated the storm is expected to be parallel to Tampa at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday as a hurricane. He commented on the spaghetti models of the storm, noting the difficulty in predicting the exact path prior to the system becoming organized. Mr. Bowlin commented on Governor Ron DeSantis' Executive Order issued this morning and requested adoption of a Resolution to declare a Local State of Emergency.

Mr. Bowlin advised of preparations including calls with stakeholders and partners, briefings with the National Weather Service (NWS), the National Hurricane Center (NHC) this morning, and the latest briefing is occurring at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) currently. He stated there should be more definitive information tomorrow relating to the track of the storm and decision making for all municipalities and the County Government.

In response to Chairman Stone, Mr. Bowlin advised that there are no unmet needs in the County at this time. He stated Alert Marion provides notifications (email, voicemail, and texts) to Marion County residents when there are any life threatening situations including storms, active shooters, hazardous materials, etc., noting individuals can sign up at <https://alertmarion.com>.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the County will likely begin sandbag operations around noon tomorrow at 6 locations including the City of Dunnellon. He stated if the storm's projected path remains the same and the speed does not fluctuate, the County may close offices on Thursday.

Mr. Bowlin advised that the City of Ocala will be opening sandbag locations at ED Croskey Recreation Center and Tuscawilla Park beginning at noon tomorrow. He requested individuals keep sandbags they receive rather than depositing the sand elsewhere after a storm passes, noting they can be reused for storms that occur throughout hurricane season.

In response to Mr. Bouyounes, Mr. Bowlin provided a schedule for upcoming briefings.

### **3. COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

#### **3.1. Request Approval of Resolution Declaring a State of Local Emergency**

County Attorney Matthew G. Minter presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: A well-defined tropical wave identified as 97L could develop into a tropical depression, or stronger storm system, and has the potential to produce severe weather in Marion County, including severe thunderstorms and strong winds. Advance preparation and planning are critical to an effective county-wide response in the event of severe weather, which justifies the adoption of this declaration of state of local emergency.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and authorize the Chair and Clerk to execute Resolution declaring a state of emergency regarding Invest 97L. County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes advised that the first action the Board should take is to adopt a Resolution declaring a Local State of Emergency.

In response to Chairman Stone, County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, Legal, advised that he has prepared a Resolution for the Board's consideration and adoption, noting the

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document contains the Governor's Executive Order and incorporates those portions of the Order that pertain to Local Governments as part of the Resolution.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner McClain, to adopt resolution 24-R-458 declaring a State of Local Emergency relating to Tropical Cyclone Nine. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (4-0).

Resolution 24-R-458 is entitled:

Marion County Declaration of State of Local Emergency  
Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

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Michelle Stone, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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