

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

July 16, 2025

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 9:01 a.m. on Wednesday, July 16, 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.

**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 Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Angel Roussel, ACA Tracy Straub, ACA Amanda Tart, and Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

The Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 46 page Agenda packet and a 162 page document entitled, "2025/26 Budget Talking Points".

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

Budget Director Audrey Fowler presented the following documents: a 6 page Budget Workshop Agenda, which lists the dates and times for each department to present their proposed budget; a 5 page handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Adjustments Tentative Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26, Adjustments through July 15, 2025"; a 1 page handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Schedule of Approximate Salary Adjustment Costs by Fund Estimated Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26 at 1% Salary Adjustment"; a 1 page handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Schedule of Approximate Salary Adjustment Costs by Fund Estimated Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26 at 5% Salary Adjustment"; an 18 page handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Position Changes FY 2025-26"; and a 37 page document entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Workshop Proposed Budget Overview". She noted copies of the "Proposed Line Item Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26", and "Proposed Capital Improvement Program Fiscal Years 2025/26 – 2029/30" are available online through the Clerk's website at [www.marioncountyclerk.org](http://www.marioncountyclerk.org).

Ms. Fowler advised that there has been a lot of activity going on in relation to information from the State, Federal and local governments, which will provide significant changes to the proposed budget.

Ms. Fowler referred to page 3 of the document entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Workshop Proposed Budget Overview", which provides a

comparison of Rolled-Back and proposed tax levies for FY 2025-26. The Countywide taxable value is \$38,129,247,803.00. The Rolled-Back rate is the millage rate that will generate the same amount of revenue on the same properties that existed in the prior year. The Rolled-Back millage rate for the General Fund is 3.1516 mills and the proposed/tentative millage rate is 3.4700 mills. The Fine & Forfeiture Rolled-Back millage rate is 0.7809 of a mill and the proposed millage rate is 0.9600 of a mill. The Rolled-Back millage rate for the Health Unit Trust Fund is 0.1035 of a mill, and the proposed millage rate is 0.1100 of a mill, for a total Countywide difference of \$19,217,141.00 above the Rolled-Back rate.

Ms. Fowler addressed non-Countywide Special Districts, noting for the Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) for Law Enforcement, the Rolled-Back millage rate is 3.5015 and the proposed millage rate is 4.0700 mills. She advised that the Fire/Rescue MSTU Rolled-Back millage rate is 1.0440 mills with a proposed millage rate of 1.1100 mills.

Ms. Fowler addressed the Rainbow Lakes Estates (RLE) MSTU for Recreation, which has a Rolled-Back millage rate of 0.7760 of a mill and a proposed millage rate of 0.8500 of a mill. She stated the Marion Oaks MSTU for Recreation has a Rolled-Back millage rate of 0.9534 of a mill and a proposed millage rate of 1.0200 mills. Ms. Fowler advised that the Silver Springs Shores (SSS) MSTU for Recreation has a Rolled-Back rate of 2.7693 mills and a proposed millage rate of 3.0000 mills and the Hills of Ocala MSTU for Recreation has a Rolled-Back millage rate of 0.1672 of a mill with a proposed millage rate of 0.1800 of a mill. She noted the total increase for Countywide and non-Countywide combined is \$37,803,535.00. The RLE Municipal Service District (MSD) is a stand-alone separate District with the Rolled-Back of 1.1401 mills to 1.2500 mills.

Page 4 is a Comparison of a Simple Majority Maximum and Tentative Tax Levies. Ms. Fowler noted the State Legislature enacted a maximum millage rate that addresses the maximum that can be proposed with a simple majority vote. She provided an overview of the process used to determine the maximum levy, noting 4 Commissioner votes are required to go 10% above the maximum levy and anything higher than that requires a unanimous vote. Ms. Fowler advised that for non-Countywide Special Districts, (which is cumulative), a single fund can be over as long as the cumulation of all other funds together is below the maximum rate.

Page 5 contains several graphs of the Countywide Certified Taxable Property Values, Millage Rates and Property Tax Levies for FY's 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. This is Countywide and is a \$4,000,000,000.00 increase over the 2024/25 levy as far as the taxable value.

Page 6 provides an Estimate Of The Taxable Property Value for FYs 2021-22 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler stated the percentage change of estimated taxable property values peaked in FY 2024 and have lessened since that time. She stated new construction values may also have peaked in FY 2024 going from \$2,058,550,815.00 down to \$1,971,389,354.00 in FY 2025.

Ms. Fowler referred to pages 7 and 8, which reflect an Analysis of Change in Millage Rate for the General Fund for FY's 2024-25 adopted and 2025-26 Tentative, including the increases/decreases in revenues, as well as the increases/decreases in expenditures by Organizational Units as of July 15, 2025. She commented on the column "Revenues by Organizational Unit", which provides information as to whether there is an increase or decrease in revenues for that Organizational Unit. Ms. Fowler stated cost allocation reimbursement was moved from the County Transportation Maintenance Fund to the

General Fund for some of the Organizational Units (County Attorney's Office, Clerk of Court, and several miscellaneous revenues).

Ms. Fowler noted "Other General Revenue" decreased by \$2,961,656.00 due to decreases in interest income, as well as decreases in State Shared Revenue and the Half-Cent Sales Tax Revenue of 2.8%. She commented on expenditures by Organizational Unit, noting there is a large increase in County Commission Capital Improvements that will be funded through Fund Balance Carry Forward one-time monies. Ms. Fowler addressed a change in the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) budget and presented a 1 page handout from MCSO entitled "Budget Certification as of 5/30/25" and a revised 1 page handout from the MCSO entitled "Budget Certification as of 7/9/25". She stated the change in funds that are no longer going to the MCSO are currently reflected in the Reserve for Contingencies Fund.

Page 8 reflects budget impacts on the General Fund millage rate. Ms. Fowler clarified that in the Countywide budget, one hundredth of a mill in the General Fund equates to \$362,000.00. She stated the increase in Tax Levy at 95 percent (%) is 0.1200 of a mill. The net increase in the proposed millage rate equates to \$4,346,734.00 in the General Fund.

Ms. Fowler advised that page 9 addresses an Analysis of Change in Millage Rate for the Fine & Forfeiture Fund for FY's 2024-25 adopted and 2025-26 tentative, noting the proposed millage rate increased from 0.8300 of a mill to 0.9600 of a mill and reflects the changes in the MCSO revised budget. She commented on expenditures for the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), noting staff does not have enough information relating to this expenditure. Ms. Fowler clarified that the DJJ sends a statement to the County advising them of what amount they have to pay each year, noting over the past 2 years that amount has increased by \$50,000.00 per month. She noted staff included a proxy (increase) in the amount of \$600,000.00 because the DJJ has not yet provided the County with the 2025/26 payment obligation. This would be a recurring impact of 0.0200 mill.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Fowler advised that the DJJ billing is based on their salaries and the number of juveniles being housed during pre-disposition. She commented on the MCSO increase of 10% and stated there is some excess Fund Balance from prior years that the County may be able to use to mitigate part of this problem (approximately \$600,000.00). Ms. Fowler stated there is a gap of approximately \$1,200,000.00 with the changes made by the MCSO.

General discussion ensued.

Page 10 contains information relating to the Fire Rescue and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler noted the millage rate is again proposed at 1.1100 mills. She stated the taxable property values went from \$26,300,000,000.00 to \$29,600,000,000.00.

Page 11 contains information relating to the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 - Fire Rescue and EMS Fund Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26.

Page 12 addresses the Analysis of Change in Millage Rate for the Fire Rescue and EMS Fund FYs 2024-25 adopted and 2025-26 Tentative. The millage rate is proposed to be the same as the previous year at 1.1100 mills.

Page 13 addresses the Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy from FY's 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative for the MSTU for Law Enforcement. Ms. Fowler stated this Fund contains an increase in taxable property values over the prior

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year from \$25,600,000,000.00 to \$28,800,000,000.00. The millage rate is proposed at 4.0700 mills.

Page 14 Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 - MSTU for Law Enforcement Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26. Ms. Fowler noted the chart reflects a slight increase in new construction over FY 2024.

Page 15 addresses the Analysis of Change in Millage Rate for the MSTU for Law Enforcement FY 2024-25 adopted and 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler stated the Sheriff's Office did provide for some additional revenue in this fund in terms of contracts with Marion County Public Schools (MCPS), some private schools, as well as from the City of Dunnellon. She advised that with the Board's consent staff can bring down the millage rate to 3.7200 mills, which is the same as the previous year. Ms. Fowler stated the Reserves would be adequate to support the Cash Carry Forward that is needed.

It was the General consensus of the Board to direct staff to lower the millage rate in MSTU for Law Enforcement Fund to 3.7200 mills

Ms. Fowler expressed her appreciation to Sheriff Wood's and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Jeremiah Powell, MCSO, for working with Budget staff to bring this millage rate down.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Ms. Fowler stated the revenue generated from the MCSO contracts with the schools and the City of Dunnellon is approximately \$4,000,000.00; however, she is unsure if that amount offsets the operating costs for those services.

Page 16 addresses the Average Tax Levies - Single Family Properties Countywide & Major MSTUs (all housing regardless of whether they are homesteaded or not).

Ms. Fowler stated there is a combined 0.6000 mill increase between the MSTU for Law Enforcement and the Fire Rescue MSTU. She noted the tax levy as proposed is an increase of \$199.00 to the average single family home. Ms. Fowler stated the average homesteaded property value went from \$122,945.00 to \$131,339.00, with an average increase of \$8,394.00. She provided an overview of a homestead single family property, noting the average property tax levy increase is \$157.00.

Page 17 provides a Comparison of Tax Levies - Selected Property Categories Countywide & Major MSTUs 2024-25 Adopted and Proposed 2025-26.

Page 18 addressed the Average Tax Levies - Single Family Properties Countywide & Major MSTUs FY 2025-26 at FY 2024-25 Adopted Millage Rates. Ms. Fowler advised that if there are no increases in any millage or in any fund, the total increase (2.9%) for a homesteaded single family home would be \$45.00 (\$3.75 per month).

Page 19 provides a Comparison of Tax Levies - Selected Property Categories Countywide & Major MSTUs FY 2025-26 at FY 2024-25 Adopted Millage Rates.

Page 20 addresses the Marion Oaks MSTU Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler stated the millage rate remains the same at 1.0200 mills.

Page 21 addresses the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 - Marion Oaks MSTU Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26. Ms. Fowler stated the current taxable value for Marion Oaks is \$2,000,000,000.00 compared to FY 2008 where the taxable value was \$1,300,000,000.00. She advised that in 2014 the taxable value had dropped to \$375,000,000.00 and it took until 2024 for the values to recover from the foreclosure crisis. Ms. Fowler noted all of these MSTU funds cut services, maintenance, routine operations, etc. in order to stay within the resources and funds that were available during that time period. She stated there is an accumulation of Fund Balance as the MSTUs start

collecting monies for maintenance and other needs these communities have deferred over the past 10 to 15 years.

Page 22 addresses the Marion Oaks MSTU for Recreation Financial Forecast Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29. Ms. Fowler stated the expenditures are growing with inflation.

Page 23 contains graphs relating to the SSS - Special Tax District Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler noted an increase in taxable property values were at \$357,000,000.00 in FY 2008; \$167,000,000.00 in 2014 and are now over \$400,000,000.00 in 2024.

Page 24 addresses the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 - Silver Springs Shores Special Tax District Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26.

Page 25 addresses the Silver Springs Shores Special Tax District Financial Forecast Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29. Ms. Fowler advised that this Fund Balance is coming up at a slower rate because they are capped at their maximum millage rate of 3.000 mills.

Page 26 contains charts relating to Hills of Ocala MSTU for Recreation Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler stated there has been a dramatic increase in new construction over the past 4 to 5 years as reflected on page 27 relating to the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 for Hills of Ocala MSTU for Recreation Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26. She advised that in FY 2008 taxable property values were at \$353,000,000.00; and in FY 2014 those values were at \$100,000,000.00, noting values finally recovered in FY 2024.

Page 28 provides the Hills of Ocala MSTU for Recreation Financial Forecast Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29. Ms. Fowler stated this MSTU has built up some Fund Balance, noting there is a projection to complete a capital project this year that will use up some of that Fund Balance.

Page 29 addresses RLE - Municipal Service District (MSD) Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative.

Page 30 reflects the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 for Rainbow Lakes Estates MSD Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26. Ms. Fowler noted the property value increase is due to new construction.

Page 31 addresses RLE MSD Financial Forecast Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29. Ms. Fowler stated the Fund Balance is growing as there are some facility Maintenance projects that are forthcoming.

Page 32 reflects RLE - Comm Res Facility MSTU Certified Taxable Property Value, Millage Rate and Property Tax Levy Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler advised that in FY 2023-24 there was a shift in the millage rate in the RLE MSD, which decreased by 1.0000 mill, and an increase in the millage rate in this Fund from 0.4700 to 0.8500. She noted the millage rate at 0.8500 of a mill will sustain the Fund. Page 33 reflects the Estimate of Taxable Value as of June 1 for RLE MSTU Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26.

Page 34 relates to RLE - Comm Res Facility MSTU Financial Forecast Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2028-29.

Page 35 provides a Comparison of State Shared Operating Revenue Estimates - General Fund Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2024-25, and 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler referred

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to the chart at the bottom of the page, noting the combined total for FY 2024-25 was estimated at \$48,400,000.00; whereas the 2025-26 estimate is at \$46,700,000.00. She stated there was a reduction in the Infrastructure Surtax; however, there are enough funds in Reserves so it will not affect any active projects.

Page 36 provides a Comparison of State Shared Operating Revenue Estimates - Transportation Fund Fiscal Years 2016-17 through 2024-25, and 2025-26 Tentative. Ms. Fowler noted the State has not published their schedule for its estimates, so the amounts could change. She advised that there is a reduction that is anticipated for FY 26 based on the receipts that the County has for the first 6 months of this year.

Page 37 reflects the Revenue Adjustment for Certified Taxable Values at 95% FY 2025-26.

Ms. Fowler referred to the revised 1 page handout from the MCSO entitled "Budget Certification as of 7/9/25", noting the total reduction from his original proposed budget was \$13,500,000.00.

Ms. Fowler referred to the handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Adjustments Tentative Budget Fiscal Year 2025-26, Adjustments through July 15, 2025", noting the handout contains information relating to any increases or decreases in revenues and expenditures from the time the budget was proposed. She stated it reflects an increase in Certified Taxable Value over Estimated Value of \$1,500,000.00 for the General Fund. Ms. Fowler advised that there is \$3,600,000.00 in Recurring Revenue in the General Fund in excess of what is needed, which equates to 0.1000 of a mill. She clarified that it is an option of the Board to direct staff to reduce the millage rate from 3.4700 to 3.3700 today, which would leave a gap of 0.2000 of a mill (approximately \$600,000.00) to get back to the prior year's millage rate.

It was the general consensus of the Board to direct staff to reduce the millage rate for the General Fund from 3.4700 to 3.3700.

Ms. Fowler advised that the County would still have \$1,400,000.00 of non-Recurring Reserve for Contingencies revenue, noting the Supervisor of Elections returned his monies from the loan the County made to cover the cost of the Special Election, which is being added to Carry-Forward to next year. She advised that there was an increase in taxable values in the Fine & Forfeiture Fund, which provided for an extra \$398,000.00 and along with the MCSO reduction of \$3,000,000.00, represents 0.0900 of a mill of recurring revenue in the Fine & Forfeiture Fund. Ms. Fowler noted this would reduce the millage to 0.8700 of a mill, which would leave the County with 0.0400 of a mill to find for this Fund. She stated there is \$600,000.00 of excess Fund Balance from the prior year (approximately 2.000 mills) and noted she has no concerns using this money to help bring down the millage rate. Ms. Fowler expressed concern about reducing this below the additional 0.0400 of a mill until she receives documentation from the DJJ that the estimated cost of \$600,000.00 for their services is not too low.

Ms. Fowler advised that altogether the County needs approximately \$600,000.00 in the General Fund and \$1,200,000.00 in the Fine & Forfeiture Fund.

Chairman Bryant expressed her appreciation to everyone who worked hard to help reduce this budget.

To review the proposed 2025-2026 budget, please refer to the following link: <https://www.marioncountyclerk.org/departments/budget/bocc-budget/>

## **BUDGET PRESENTATIONS AND BOARD DISCUSSION**

**OPENING REMARKS – Mounir Bouyounes, County Administrator**

County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes stated it was his pleasure to present the proposed FY 2025/26 budget as it relates to all BCC Departments. He referred to a binder presented to Commissioners, which contains the talking points from each Department and other budget related information, as well as a 39 page handout entitled, "Stantec FY 2025 Utility Revenue Sufficiency Analysis Final Report". Mr. Bouyounes referred to the Stantec Analysis, noting based on this report the utility rates will remain flat for the proposed budget year.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that he would like to highlight few global items that will be included throughout the budget: the budget includes a 5% set aside for pay adjustment, noting his recommendation is to provide 2% across the board on October 1, 2025 and 3% be used for "pay for performance" at the employee anniversary date in alignment with performance evaluation as shown in attached Exhibit A.

Chairman Bryant opined that the County needs to go ahead and give employees their raises now, especially with what is happening with inflation and the cost of living.

Commissioner Stone stated she could support that if all employees are going to be reviewed at the same time and it is strictly on a "pay for performance" basis.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes stated his recommendation would be to provide a 2% across the board and utilize the 3% as "pay for performance".

General discussion resumed.

Mr. Bouyounes noted another option would be to follow what the State is doing this year by providing a 2% across the board, but with a minimum of \$1,000.00, which helps those employees on a lower pay scale.

Chairman Bryant requested staff bring back an analysis similar to the State. She further requested staff to bring back more information relating to what, percentage wise, the County ends up giving out to employees, over the past several years.

Mr. Bouyounes stated the County's self-insurance plan is doing very well, and the Reserve is funded to the level that an employee clinic can be established with minimal impact on the General Fund or any other Enterprise Fund. Therefore, this budget reflects a 5% increase in health insurance premium. He addressed the need to ensure the Fire Rescue Department is staffed appropriately as the County's population continues to grow, as reflected in Exhibit B, which details the personnel changes being requested. Mr. Bouyounes noted there was an amendment to the Talking Points, noting it now includes 16 new positions (13 in the General Fund and 3 in the Fire Rescue Fund). He clarified that also included in the BCC General Fund budget are 9 new positions in addition to the 13 mentioned above, several reclassifications and a few salary adjustments as shown in the attached Exhibit C.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Bouyounes stated the Public Relation (PR) Department is not getting any additional positions; however, there will be some reclassifications and pay adjustments.

Mr. Bouyounes noted Exhibit D provides the list of machinery and equipment in the General Fund Departments proposed for FY 2025/26 at an estimated cost of \$1,875,960.00.

Chairman Bryant noted Exhibit D reflects the purchase of a 2,000 Gallon Fuel Tank for Fire Station 30 and questioned why this item is being purchased through the General Fund. Mr. Bouyounes stated he would look into this and bring back more information.

Mr. Bouyounes stated other items to bring to the Board's attention include the increases

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in the Solid Waste and Fire Rescue Assessment rates. He stated there is a request in the Fire Rescue Fund (Fund 1120 on page 351 of the proposed line-item budget) that proposes \$538,500.00 in Capital purchases, noting his request is for the Board to allow him to delete these items from this Fund and allow Administration to work with Budget to add them to the 5-Year Sales Tax Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated those Capital Purchases are funded from the Fire Rescue assessment rate and the 1.11 millage rate. He clarified that those 2 funds are combined, noting staff does not break down the amount coming from the assessment and the amount coming from the millage. Chairman Bryant opined it would be helpful if the Board knew that information.

Mr. Bouyounes opined that Property Management Work Unit (on page 186 of the proposed line-item budget) needs to be reinvented. The Cost Center is currently in the General Fund and the staff of 1 employee is housed in the Office of the County Engineer (OCE). He requested the Board allow him to review this matter further and bring back a recommendation next year as to whether the County should leave that Unit there, if the workload requires more than 1 position, etc. Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of the responsibilities of this position.

Chairman Bryant concurred that the position may not belong under OCE, noting the matter may need to be addressed this year.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Bryant requested staff bring back a detailed list of responsibilities for that position. Mr. Bouyounes clarified that the position is responsible for all County leases including at the airport. He advised that the Dunnellon Airport and the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion (SELP) are both under the Parks & Recreation Department, noting questions have been raised as to whether that is the appropriate placement for those work Units.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes commented on the Country's upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, noting staff is looking for Board guidance on this matter. He stated the next Legislative Session will conclude on March 13, 2026, noting Marion County Day is also held in March. Mr. Bouyounes questioned if the County wanted to celebrate the Country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary between the end of March and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Commissioner Zalak noted there are some State and Federal grants available, noting he is willing to work with staff on this matter.

Commissioner Stone opined that the BCC may want to forgo Marion County Day this year and utilize those fund for this event.

General discussion ensued.

It was the general consensus of the Board to appoint Commissioner Zalak as the liaison to work with staff and the municipalities on this event.

Commissioner Zalak opined that Commissioner Stone is correct and the County should focus its efforts on celebrating America's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Mr. Bouyounes addressed Cost Centers 700 through 722 as reflected in Exhibit E, as well as pages 190-204 of the proposed line-item budget relating to the General Fund CIP. He advised that the amount proposed in the upcoming budget for these projects is \$4,238,550.00, which will include the Administration building expansion (adding wings going east of the building) to provide more room for staff. There is also a project to improve gate 2 entrance at the SELP at a cost of \$391,400.00, as well as a roof replacement at the Library headquarters at a cost of \$925,000.00. Mr. Bouyounes advised



that another project proposed is the Fleet CIP project (consolidated building) at a cost of \$7,305,000.00, noting there is already \$4,970,000.00 set aside for this project. He stated the County has the site and funds available for design; however, it does not have all the money needed for construction (approximately \$20,000,000.00). Mr. Bouyounes advised that there has been enough interest earned (approximately \$7,400,000.00) from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that could be used for this project if the Board so chooses.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated the original estimate for this project was approximately \$13,000,000.00 to \$15,000,000.00 and now it is up to \$20,000,000.00. He stated staff are refining the project as to what needs to be done in Phase 1 to make it functional for what is needed at this time. Mr. Bouyounes noted the property is located on Martin Luther King (MLK) Boulevard just south of 35<sup>th</sup> Street.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Bouyounes advised that previous direction from the Board was to liquidate the current facilities property on Maricamp Road and that the proceeds from that sale would go into the General Fund. He stated an appraisal on the property was performed one year ago (approximately \$4,000,000.00 to \$5,000,000.00); however, the Fleet Department is not ready to vacate until there is another place to go.

Chairman Bryant questioned whether the County should get a bond in order to move this project forward. Mr. Bouyounes clarified that if the Board utilizes the ARPA interest received to date, there would be no need to bond this project.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Bouyounes stated a contamination study has not yet been performed on the Maricamp property.

ACA Angel Roussel advised that the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) facility is located on the Maricamp site, noting there is 7 years left on that lease so the County would have to hold onto that property for the next 7 years. Commissioner Zalak opined that the lease could be sold with the property.

General discussion ensued relating to other projects that could also utilize the ARPA interest funds.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated the new site contains approximately 18 acres.

Commissioner McClain commented on the proposed Administration building expansion project (adding wings to the existing building), noting he is unsure how much money the County wants to keep investing in this project knowing there needs to be a long term solution.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Facilities Director Jared Goodspeed advised that the cost associated with the proposed new Government Complex is approximately \$150,000,000.00 to \$180,000,000.00.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated there is a need for at least another 2 or 3 offices for the County Attorney, as well as a need for more room for the PR Department.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes commented on the old attorney's building next to the Courthouse and opined that it would offer enough space to house the Community Paramedicine program. He commented on the old tire shop next door to that, noting it could be demolished to add a parking lot for the Tourist Development Council (TDC) Department and the Clerk's

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Office or it could be utilized as a "pay to park" parking lot for those visiting the downtown area.

General discussion resumed.

Mr. Bouyounes stated there is also a request of \$2,000,000.00 to remodel the Information Technologies (IT) building. He commented on the possibility of swapping the spaces for IT and Human Resources (HR) Departments.

Commissioner Stone commented on the manufactured spaces utilized at Marion County fire stations and questioned if that could be a small fix until a solution is reached.

Commissioner Curry addressed the maintenance costs associated with 50 year old buildings that are wearing out.

General discussion resumed.

ACA Amanda Tart advised that staff have already set up one-on-ones with Commissioners starting next week; wherein, Mr. Goodspeed and she will provide an update on the proposed Government Complex Master Plan.

Mr. Bouyounes addressed the Sales Surtax projects for Cost Centers 731 through 740 (pages 612 through 627 of the proposed line-item budget), and the 5-Year revised schedule as shown in Exhibit F-1. He referred to the highlighted projects and requested permission to allow Administration to work with Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain and the Budget Department to make changes to the 5-year Sales Tax CIP as highlighted in Exhibit F-2. Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of several of the proposed project's staff would like to move up, including the Marion Oaks fire station in FY 2025/26 and the Orange Lake fire station in FY 2026/27. He advised that he has spoken with the MCSO, noting the Marion Oaks fire station property may also be a good place to co-locate a sheriff substation.

It was the general consensus of the Board to concur.

#### **OPENING REMARKS - Matthew "Guy" Minter, County Attorney**

County Attorney Matthew G. Minter appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025-2026 budget for Cost Center 103, County Attorney (page 29).

Mr. Minter introduced County Attorney Office Manager Heather Flynn. He noted the budget being presented is an almost flat budget. Mr. Minter stated there is an increase of \$33,000.00 in line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages. He provided an overview of the 10 full time employee (FTE) positions that comprise the County Attorney's Office, noting there are 5 attorney positions currently filled, 1 Office Manager, 2 Paralegals, Public Records Coordinator James Blevins and Legal Assistant Ashlyne Tuck, who will be leaving the County shortly to go back to the private sector.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Minter stated all office space in the Legal Department is currently occupied.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Minter provided a brief update on the Case of AZ Ocala Ranch, LLC vs. Marion County lawsuit, noting it has recently gone to the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals. He advised that the appellants filed their brief and the County has filed an answer brief, noting it will be another 2 weeks before the appellants filed their reply brief. Mr. Minter noted it is his hope that a final ruling will be reached by the end of this year. He commented on land use hearings that come in front of the BCC, noting they are becoming more confrontational as time goes on as it relates to legal challenges. Mr. Minter addressed the annual modifications being made to State Statutes, noting many times those changes are ambiguous and there is no case law to guide the County on how to deal with claims under those new Statutes.

Mr. Minter advised that the Legal Department deals with almost every issue the County faces, except for very specific Bonds, Impact Fee Ordinance drafting, etc. He stated the Department usually handles any employee discrimination issues, workers compensation cases, procurement and contract issues, etc., in-house. It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the County Attorney budget.

**UPDATE:** Mr. Bouyounes advised that the proposed budget/recurring costs for the County's BCC Department is projected to increase by 4.5%, noting it is well within the 5% maximum increase as directed by the Board.

**OPENING REMARKS – Mike McCain, Executive Director Internal Services**

Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain appeared to review the proposed FY 2025–26 budgets for Cost Center 105, County Administrator (page 31) and Cost Center 153, Industry Development, which can be found on page 53. Also present was Director of Public Relations (PR) Bobbi Perez.

Mike McCain, Executive Director of Internal Services, advised that FY 24/25 was the first year that the County Administrator and Public Relations budgets were separated, so the FY 23/24 actuals combined the 2 budgets, so they appear inflated. The proposed budget for FY 25/26 has no changes in Personnel and just a few changes in Operating. He advised that one of the changes relates to line item 548101, Promotional Activities, noting earlier this year staff moved 3 projects from the Employee Morale and Recognition Fund (EMRF) program to Operating Projects. Mr. McCain stated the \$5,000 budgeted for FY 25/26 is for Marion at the Capital, the County's annual event in Tallahassee, noting any sponsorship donations received will go towards that amount.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the County Administrator budget.

Mr. McCain addressed Cost Center 153, Industry Development, noting changes have been made in the Industry Development budget to help balance the General Fund. Line item 534101, Contract Serv Other Misc, and line item 582101, Aid to Private Organizations, have historically been budgeted to fund midyear projects, but have been zeroed out for FY 26. He referred to line item 582183, Aid to Private Org EDFIG, which is where staff budgeted current agreement obligations. He referred to the bottom of page 17 of the Budget Talking Points handout, which contains the list of obligated Economic Development Financial Incentive Grant (EDFIG) companies.

Commissioner Curry out at 10:49 a.m.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. McCain advised that if the Department does not receive the necessary reports from any of the companies receiving the grant funding, then the company will not get paid for that year. He stated if the company does not reach its targets, it will not get paid.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated there is only one company on the list that has not yet complied; however, he wanted to include the funding in the budget should they comply.

Commissioner Curry returned at 10:52 a.m.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. McCain clarified that if there is a contract that has not fully met all of its requirements, then the EDFIG funding would be reduced to only the obligations (i.e., number of FTEs, infrastructure requirements, etc.) that they did meet. General discussion ensued.

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Ms. Fowler advised that the \$500,000.00 in line item 582101, Aid to Private Organizations, is projected in the current FY and could be carried forward as one-time money if it is not spent this year.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Industry Development budget.

**OPENING REMARKS – Bobbi Perez, Director Public Relations**

Public Relations (PR) Director Bobbi Perez appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budgets for Cost Center 106, Public Relations (page 33) and Cost Center 250, Crime Prevention, which can be found on page 231. Also present were Lieutenant Paul Bloom, MCSO, Director of the Public Information Office (PIO), and Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

Ms. Perez advised that as the County approaches the end of the fiscal year, the PR team has been busy with lots of outreach events and projects. This year the Department completed nearly 2,000 projects for the County Departments, helping them to share their stories and accomplishments with the public. This includes the production of multiple award-winning initiatives including the Safety Matters Video Series in partnership with the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), the Florida Housing Coalition Housing Storyteller Award with Community Services, multiple photography awards at the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC), as well as 2 Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the Gov 101 video series and the Safety Matters series. Also, this year, the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Citizens Academy proudly graduated alongside the Alumni Academy participants. Both programs are designed to give residents an inside look at the vital services, programs, and daily operations of Marion County's Departments and Constitutional Offices, helping build stronger connections between local government and the community it serves. The Department also led several impactful educational campaigns, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month campaign, which united first responders, veterans, and patriots from across the community to shine a light on this critical mental health issue. Thanks to the incredible sponsors and strong support through shirt sales and the community, this year's event raised more than \$20,000.00 to provide local mental health resources, making it a record-breaking year. On the Fire Rescue front, the PR team has been hard at work building stronger connections with the community by boosting its social media reach by more than 150% over the past year. She advised that the media reach included live fire demonstrations and station visits to personnel spotlights and the release of the annual Rescues & Rescuers Calendar, noting staff made it a priority to highlight the dedication and bravery of our first responders. Ms. Perez stated 2024/25 also marked a milestone with the launch of the first Annual Medal Day for the Fire Rescue Department, which is a special event created to honor the men and women of the Department who go above and beyond the call of duty. The response was incredible, with more than 500 attendees showing their support and appreciation. She stated these are just some of the highlights of this year's accomplishments rounded out by the Chairman's Annual State of the County Address, designed to educate our community about the progress with purpose County Departments are making every day.

Ms. Perez referred to Cost Center 106, Public Relations (page 33), noting in this year's budget staff are requesting the addition of \$26,000.00 dollars in line item 548101, Promotional Activities, which will cover advertising and expenses for Marion County Day, as well as the Citizens & Alumni Academies. Although \$26,000.00 is budgeted for this

event, the team works with local businesses and organizations actively to obtain sponsorships, which will then reimburse this account. This year the team worked to collect just under \$22,000.00. She advised that this year's budget includes a proposed increase to line item 552106, Computer Software, to account for the \$89,250.00 associated with the Public Input Engagement Platform software. Year one of the contract was funded by the Information Technology (IT) Department, while years two and three will be covered by the PR Department's budget and cost-allocated appropriately where feasible. Ms. Perez noted the implementation of the Public Input software is now complete, positioning the Department to enhance community engagement and feedback collection moving forward. She advised that unlike social media, which is broad and sometimes chaotic, this platform offers dedicated tools for gathering feedback built specifically for citizen engagement, offering features like surveys, polls, real-time translation, and data insights. The first Department to utilize this software is Municipal Services. The plan is for this software to be a cost-savings to the Department by replacing the need for certified mail for petitions. Additionally, this software enables Departments that utilize outreach tools such as surveys and newsletters to streamline their efforts and eliminate redundancies associated with other platforms, resulting in improved efficiency. Ms. Perez stated this year's budget also includes an increase in Line Item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages, increasing the Public Relations Specialists positions by \$2,000.00 each, as well as a reclassification of the Multimedia Technician position (pay grade 106) to a Multimedia Coordinator at a pay grade 112. Staff are also proposing to update the pay grades of the PR Manager and Multimedia Manager positions from pay grades 112 and 113 to pay grade 114. Although their salaries were updated as part of the 2023 Evergreen Study, the associated pay grades were not revised at that time.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Perez provided a brief overview of how the funds are expended for line item 548101, Promotional Activities.

Mr. McCain stated staff will bring back more information on how much the County spends, overall, on promotional items (trinkets, event giveaways, etc.).

General discussion ensued with regard to promotional items.

Commissioner Curry questioned with all the upcoming events and other work related projects, does staff feel there are enough PR employees to cover those type of projects. Ms. Perez stated she is confident that her team can and will handle the amount of work required by the Department. She commented on the limited amount of work related space the Department has for its current employees.

Commissioner McClain out at 11:10 a.m.

Chairman Bryant noted the importance of remembering that the PR Department should only cover County related work and not PR related work for outside agencies.

Ms. Perez advised that out of the 2,000 projects PR staff worked on this year, the majority are projects for County Departments, noting the PR Department also maintains and designs the County's website.

Commissioner McClain returned at 11:12 a.m.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes clarified that with the current workload PR staff are busy all day, every day, and sometimes even on weekends, noting if the Board is considering adding additional events or volunteering the PR team to do other things and help other agencies, then additional staff will probably be needed.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Curry requested a list be provided for him, so it is made clear what other

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agencies or events are acceptable to have work with the PR team.

General discussion resumed.

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

Ms. Perez advised that the Crime Prevention Fund is Cost Center 250 can be found on page 232 of the line item budget book. She stated this fund supports programs and initiatives aimed at reducing crime and improving community safety. Staff have collaborated with the Sheriff's Office to revise the initially submitted budget, adding items that will help further prevent crime in the community. Staff are asking to revise the budget to remove \$240,218.00 from line item 549990, Other Current Charges and Misc. Expenses, and move \$110,913.00 into line item 552108, Operating Supplies, to cover the cost of 2 pole cams, a quick deploy camera system and an IO Node system for the network operation of the MCSO Intelligence Unit. Staff are also proposing moving an additional \$115,805.00 to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, to cover the cost of a surveillance trailer and monitoring systems for the MCSO Intelligence Unit allowing technicians and analysts to coordinate crime-related activities. She advised that staff are also requesting the creation of line item 555501, Training and Education, to this Fund, noting once created, she would like to move \$13,500.00 from line item 549990, Other Current Charges Misc. Expenses, to this new line item 555501, to help cover the cost of Replicating Adverse Dynamics (RAD) training. This includes 4 aggressor suits at \$1,800.00 each, 5 suits at \$500.00 each and training classes for 4 officers to become certified instructors. Ms. Perez referred to pages 24 through 27 of the Budget Talking Points handout, which provides a breakdown of the purchases relating to this budget.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Lieutenant Paul Bloom, Director of PIO for the MCSO, advised that the pole cameras, surveillance trailer, monitoring systems, etc. were placed in this Fund as crime preventative items, noting it is utilized to help prevent crimes rather than responding to the crimes after they occur. He stated the MCSO utilizes both types of camera poles, one is out in the open (highly visible) to deter crime and the others are used for surveillance (hidden cameras).

Commissioner Zalak requested Lieutenant Bloom bring back data associated with crime prevention that will reflect/measure whether the items purchased through this fund is working to deter or track crime.

Lieutenant Bloom advised that RAD training is a self-defense course to help protect women from sexual assault or other violent crimes, noting these courses fill-up immediately.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Bryant passed the gavel to Commissioner Zalak who assumed the Chair.

Commissioner Bryant out at 11:31 a.m.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Ms. Perez advised that the County was able to help the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) purchase several cameras utilized to record illegal dumping through this Fund.

Commissioner Zalak commented on the ankle monitor bracelets purchased through this Fund to help keep domestic violence abusers away from the victims. Lieutenant Bloom stated this program has helped many victims of domestic violence.

Commissioner McClain commented on the need to get the safety message out, especially in the summer months, to parents who are leaving their children in cars. Lieutenant Bloom stated the MCSO does have a program that supplies a hang tag to be placed on the rearview mirror to help remind distracted parents to check the backseat of their vehicles.



Commissioner Bryant returned at 11:35 a.m.

Chairman Zalak returned the gavel to Commissioner Bryant, who resumed the Chair.

Chairman Bryant stated after the completion of the budget workshops, the BCC will consider the possible addition of a new employee for the PR Department.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Crime Prevention Fund budget.

**OPENING REMARKS – Sara Caron, Human Resources Director**

Human Resources (HR) Director Sara Caron appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budgets for Cost Center 170, Human Resources, which can be found on page 54; Cost Center 172, Employee Health Clinic, which can be found on page 56; Cost Center 161, Employee Health, which can be found on page 676; Cost Center 162, Risk and Benefit Services, which can be found on page 677; and Cost Center 163, Employee Wellness Program, which can be found on page 679. Also present were Benefits Manager Mikayla Hamilton, Risk Manager Dan Fraleigh, and Assistant HR Director Jessica James. HR Director Sara Caron advised that staff have increased their efforts in recruiting to reach a wider audience by elevating the Department's presence on social media platforms, as well as promoting Marion County through community partnerships. The Department has grown its internship program into a strong pipeline, especially in the area of IT. Staff are tracking how applicants found the job, got to the site, and applied. Additionally, staff are advertising positions on a weekly rotation as a "spotlight" position, and have seen an increase in applications when this has been done. She stated retention continues to be a focus as the County strives to retain and grow its workforce in Marion County. As promised last year, staff have increased the Customer Service Boot Camp and supervisory trainings to quarterly. The Employee Academy continues to be successful with many staff applying each year. Ms. Caron provided a brief overview regarding advertisements and recruitment as follows: the number of jobs advertised last FY was 363; this FY was 249; number of people hired last FY 341, this FY was 249; average days of advertisement last FY 28 days, this FY was 19 days; average days from interview to hire day for year to date (YTD) 37 days; average number of days for HR processing hiring packet to start date is approximately 12 days.

Ms. Caron addressed Cost Center 170, Human Resources, which can be found on page 54. The overall increase for the HR Department budget is \$24,296.00. She stated changes include line item 512101, Regular Salary and Wages, noting HR is fully staffed and the only significant increase is in line item 552106, Computer Software, for the General Fund of TrueComp (formerly GovInvest). There was also an increase in the per person fee for Vector Solutions.

Ms. Caron referred to page 672, noting the next few pages show the revenues for the Insurance Fund, which are comprised of employee contributions, rebates, and Wellness Program funds from Florida Blue. Page 674 summarizes all of the revenues for each Cost Center. There is no projected Capital, since the clinic build-out will be completed this FY. She stated the Insurance Fund budget can be found on page 675. Ms. Caron advised that there was a change since the County is eliminating the current employee clinic, noting the health insurance premiums have been zeroed out.

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

Ms. Caron appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 172, Employee Health Clinic, which can be found on page 56. She advised that this Cost

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Center has been zeroed out because a new Cost Center has been created for the Employee Health budget.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to Employee Health Clinic budget.

Ms. Caron appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for the new Cost Center 161, Employee Health, which can be found on page 676. She stated this budget includes personal health and is funded by premiums paid by staff and Constitutional Officers. She advised that line item 534101, Contract Serv Other Misc., is for contracted services that will cover the expenses of My Health Onsite, the County's clinic management company. The County has terminated the cost of Concentra from the Insurance Fund, which is a savings of approximately \$350,000 per year, and terminated the cost of Heart of Florida (HOF), which is a savings of over \$15,000 per year (since the update to the contract in October 2024), and staff hopes to see a reduction in claims within 18 months of clinic implementation.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to Employee Health budget.

Ms. Caron appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 162 Risk and Benefit Services, which can be found on page 677. The Risk and Benefits team continues to provide exceptional customer service, quality benefits, proactive risk management and effective safety awareness programs in an effort to prevent and minimize the County's consequences from losses.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Risk and Benefit Services budget.

Ms. Caron appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 163, The Employee Wellness Program, which can be found on page 679. She advised that this year the Department has invested training dollars in more "train the trainer" programs, such as Stop the Bleed, and CPR. This will provide an overall savings for multiple Departments since our Wellness Coordinator and other staff can now provide these trainings. The budget for Wellness has a decrease of \$2,400.00 in expenses.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Employee Wellness Program budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Michelle Sanders, 9-1-1 Management Director**

9-1-1 Management Director Michelle Hirst Sanders appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 313, 9-1-1 Management, which can be found on page 314.

Ms. Sanders advised that as the Director of the 9-1-1 Management Department, noting she is grateful for the opportunity to present the proposed annual budget for FY 2025-2026. She expressed her appreciation to the Board for its continued support of the Department and its mission. This enables staff to excel in providing a Countywide 9-1-1 system, addressing, and emergency services mapping. Ms. Sanders provided a brief overview of a few key requests from the proposed budget, which include those tied to the transition to Next Generation 911. She referred to line item 541101, Communication Services, noting this account has increased to accommodate the cost of operating both the Legacy and new 9-1-1 systems concurrently, ensuring full functionality before the transition is complete. The increase to line item 552106, Computer Software, reflects the necessary upgrades to the Mapping and Management Information System (MIS) used in the County's Communication Centers. She advised that she is requesting funding for an



additional Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst position, noting with the continued growth in Department workload and the implementation of the GIS-based Enterprise Permitting & Licensing (EPL) software, this role is essential. The current workload exceeds what a single analyst can reasonably manage.

Commissioner Zalak questioned the cost projection of having to run both the Legacy and the new Next Generation 911 systems and how long those dual systems will have to run concurrently. Ms. Sanders advised that it doubles the expenses to line item 541101, Communication Services, by approximately \$448,432.00, noting she expects to have to run those dual systems for about 1 year. She commented on roadblocks she is having in regard to getting quotes from Lumen for different parts (i.e., circuits).

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the 9-1-1 Management Department.

**OPENING REMARKS – Susan Olsen, Procurement Services Director**

Procurement Services Director Susan Olsen appeared to review the proposed FY 2025–26 budget for Cost Center 176, Procurement Services, which can be found on page 63. Ms. Olsen advised that the Department held a Reverse Trade Show last month at the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion (SELP), noting it was attended by 160 vendors, 13 outside agencies, as well as other Counties and municipalities. She commented on the hard work performed by the Department's vendor liaison.

Ms. Olsen provided a brief highlight of key initiatives that are helping achieve cost savings and improve overall efficiency. Last year, the Board approved the implementation of an e-procurement software system. This system has significantly streamlined processes for staff, vendors, and County Departments. The Department is actively using the platform and has conducted multiple training sessions to help vendors and staff navigate the new system. The adoption of this technology has allowed the Department to maintain a high level of service without increasing staff. The Procurement Department is also collaborating with the Clerk's Finance Department to support the implementation of a vendor onboarding and electronic payment system. This initiative is expected to expedite vendor payments and enhance overall efficiency.

Ms. Olsen noted to further streamline purchasing, staff have established a Countywide Amazon Business account. This account improves order tracking, restricts the purchase of ineligible products, and eliminates the need for Departments to maintain individual Prime memberships. Procurement secured a two-year membership at no cost to the County. After that, the total cost will be \$3,500 per year for all Departments, which Procurement will continue to cover. She advised that the program includes an annual rebate based on total County spending, noting this year the County received over \$17,000.00. Staff are currently working to implement a similar program with Lowe's, which will also offer rebate benefits, including a \$5,000.00 retroactive rebate. Each year, the Department tracks cost savings achieved through competitive procurement efforts.

Commissioner Curry out at 11:49 a.m.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Ms. Olsen advised that the rebate revenues are currently being placed into a General Fund account.

Commissioner Curry returned at 11:50 a.m.

Commissioner Zalak opined that the rebate revenues should go into the Employee Morale Fund.

Chairman Bryant disagreed and opined it should either go back to the individual Department Funds (based on the purchases) or into the General Fund.

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Ms. Olsen advised the Department secured over \$4,000,000.00 in savings last year through competitive solicitations and strategic negotiations.

Commissioner Stone out at 11:52 a.m.

Ms. Olsen advised that the reason staff hold the Reverse Trade Shows, vendor training, etc., is to increase vendor competition in order to secure better pricing. She opined that with the new software (Bonfire), the Department will be able to collect the data to reflect the savings. She advised that while personnel costs have increased slightly, primarily due to rising insurance premiums, the Department has reduced expenses in categories such as operating supplies and computer hardware, as fewer equipment replacements are needed. Overall, there is an approximate \$7,000.00 reduction in the operating budget compared to last FY.

Commissioner Stone returned at 11:53 a.m.

In response to Commissioner McClain, Ms. Olsen advised that line item 534115, Contract Serv Staff Leasing, is utilized to pay for Resource staffing, noting those are funds that are moved from personnel (line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages) into that contract services line item to reflect the funds spent on contract staffing.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Procurement Services budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Michael Savage, Building Safety Director**

Building Safety Director Michael Savage appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 318, Building Safety (page 361). Also present was Assistant Building Safety Director Chuck Brown.

Mr. Savage advised that as Marion County continues to experience significant growth, the Building Safety Department has observed stable numbers in permits, inspections and investigations/code cases. The Department, through May of FY 24/25, completed 176,650 inspections, staff assisted 14,988 customers in the office, received 23,662 applications and issued approximately 23,075 permits. Through May FY 24/25, the Department received applications for 4,273 single family residential (SFRs) permits, and the Plan Review Division reviewed 11,730 sets of plans. There were also 6,195 advanced property searches processed through the Building and Safety Department. The Department's Remote Video Inspections (RVIs) program has expanded over time, and enhanced the Department's ability to provide inspections. The Department averages 1,649 RVI's a month, which is roughly 7.5% of the inspection load. He advised that in FY 24/25 the Licensing Investigators within the Department processed a total of 1,880 Action Orders, and 509 Code Cases resulting in a combined activity log of 2,389 spread among the three Investigators and one Supervisor. The current open Code Case load is 2,253, and the investigators have cleared 477 violations. The Department utilizes customer service surveys to help gauge customer satisfaction, primarily with the permitting process. Based on the most recent review of customer service surveys, the Department is hitting the 100% positivity mark and has been for an extended period of time.

Mr. Savage stated the budgetary measures staff are seeking are to help maintain and expand upon the customer service experience being offered. Operating and Capital budgets have been adjusted, to preserve and improve the excellent level of customer service. Staff are requesting to increase line item 534101, Contract Serv Other Misc, to \$1,988,100.00 (operating budget), which funds the Departments 34 Government Support Agencies (GSA's) and contract employee positions on the team. This is an increase over last year's amended budget in the amount of \$343,897.00 for contract employee positions

to assist in data entry to incorporate documents in EPL. The positions are of the utmost importance so the Department can preserve construction documents and permits, to comply with records retention laws. The total Operating Budget is increasing by \$488,306.00 as shown on page 363.

Mr. Savage advised that the Capital Budget the Department is showing an expenditure of \$366,661.00 in line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, to replace five vehicles as noted on page 370, and to add two vehicles to the fleet for service vehicles when assigned vehicles are in for maintenance, ensuring nonstop operations in the Inspections Division. He referred to line item 562101, Building Improvements, noting there is an increase of \$85,505.00 for a needed renovation to the Building Safety conference room update and office buildout, that will include IT updates to allow for hosting of virtual meetings, and Inspector secured testing, as well as flooring and paint updating. This area has not been touched since the building was renovated several years ago. The Capital Budget will increase by \$146,020.00 as noted on page 363. Mr. Savage provided an overview of the charts on pages 35 and 36 of the Budget Talking Points handout. He stated in FY 2022/23 there were 21,974 customers served in the Building Department's Office; FY 2023/24 there were 23,323; and to date for FY 2024/25 there were 14,988. Mr. Savage noted the Department averages around 1,200 inspections per day.

Chairman Bryant requested staff provide monthly averages for building inspections. Mr. Savage advised that in the past 2 months the Department has seen a slight reduction in the number of permits being requested; however, there has not been much of a decrease in inspection requests.

Mr. Savage stated the FY 2025/26 budget will include the title change of the Division Manager of Plans Examination and Inspections to Deputy Building Official. The budget will include a pay grade increase for the Permitting and Licensing Division Manager, changing from a pay grade of 113 to 114. The budget will include the correction in the pay grade for the Permitting and Licensing Technicians to bring them into alignment with the pay grade of OCE's newly created Permit Technician positions. The pay grades will increase from the current low scale grade of 104 (\$33,134.40) and the higher scale grade of 106 (\$37,939.20), to a pay grade of 108 (\$43,431.00). These increases are shown under personnel on pages 367, 368 and 369 with the total personnel cost for the whole Department reflected on page 363. The budget will include the addition of the position of Business Technologist, with a pay grade of 111, a salary cost of \$53,207.00 to assist in the implementation and maintenance of the EPL platform, and other Department IT necessities.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Savage advised that the renovation to the Building Safety conference room update and office buildout will include upgraded technology needs, work station improvements, etc.

In response to Commissioner McClain, Mr. Savage noted the renovation project would be done internally.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Building Safety Department budget.

There was a recess at 12:06 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 1:33 p.m. with all members present.

Also present were Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Angel Roussel,

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ACA Tracy Straub, ACA Amanda Tart, and Executive Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

**OPENING REMARKS – Chad Wicker, Municipal Services Director**

Katy Burton, Municipal Services Community Manager, appeared to review the Department's proposed budget for FY 2025-26 for Cost Center 410, Municipal Services Assessments (page 183); Cost Center 510, Marion Oaks Recreation (page 423); Cost Center 512, Marion Oaks MSTU for General Services (page 429); Cost Center 520, Silver Springs Shores (page 439); and Cost Center 530, Hills of Ocala Recreation (page 449). Also present was Administrative Services Coordinator Cara Cline.

Ms. Burton addressed Cost Center 410, Municipal Services Assessments (pages 183-185), and provided a brief overview of the Department's accomplishments, which include: the completion of three (3) road construction projects in FY 24/25, totaling 29.27 miles. An additional four (4) road projects are currently in active phases ranging from "under construction" to "design" totaling 7.95 miles. The Department is managing three (3) road grading projects, covering a total of 44.24 miles. Staff currently have four (4) petition-based road assessments in progress, totaling 1.57 miles. She stated there are two (2) continuous overlay projects with the largest project, Marion Oaks, having a total of 260 miles of road that Municipal Services is responsible for improving. A total of 202 miles has been paved to date, with 58 miles remaining. In an estimated 5 years, the Department will have completed the first paving cycle in Marion Oaks. Ms. Burton advised that the other overlay project is Silver Springs Shores (SSS), which has a total of 230 miles of roadway that Municipal Services is responsible for improving. A total of 227 miles has been paved to date, with 3 miles to be paved next year to complete the first paving cycle. This proposed budget has a \$41,587.00 decrease or (4.73%) from last year's proposed budget.

Ms. Burton referred to line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages, noting this year the Department is proposing to eliminate the vacant Municipal Services Project Supervisor position. This position has a loaded cost of \$54,309.00 annually. After conducting a thorough review of internal processes, staff found that the functions previously assigned to this position could be effectively absorbed by the Operations Manager and Community Manager. This reorganization eliminates redundancy and allows the Department to maintain service levels without the need to fund the Supervisor position in this year's proposed budget.

Ms. Burton stated Operating costs decreased by a total of \$15,705.00. The major areas of decrease are for line item 541101, Communication Services, which decreased by \$1,345.00 due to the elimination of the Project Supervisor position. Line item 552101, Gas, Oil & Lubricants, decreased by \$4,785.00 after reviewing fuel usage trends for the current fiscal year. Line item 552106, Computer Software, decreased by \$7,140.00 based on current needs and actual costs this FY. Line item 552116, Operating Supplies Computer Hardware, decreased by \$3,550.00 due to the Department currently being caught up with recommended computer replacements.

Ms. Burton referred to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, noting the Department is requesting \$86,000.00 to replace the current cubicle system, which is made up of components from previous Departments that upgraded their systems. The proposed replacement will not only match the neighboring Department that shares the office space but also provide a more efficient layout and better utilize the current space.

This upgrade will help improve functionality and create a more cohesive and professional work environment.

Ms. Burton addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 510, Marion Oaks Recreation (pages 421-426), and introduced Community Center Supervisor David Pierce and Marion Oaks Recreation Advisory Board Chairman Kathy Martin.

Ms. Burton provided a brief overview of the Department's accomplishments, which include the successful implementation of the new dog park and recreation events geared toward dog owners and promoting dog adoptions; the re-roof of the Community Center building due to emergency, necessary repairs; a repaved walking trail around the Community Center campus; and the repurpose of a tennis court to a pickleball court to meet the demands of the community members. She advised that Marion Oaks Recreation has an ad valorem tax of 1.0200 mills, based on property assessed values for both vacant and improved parcels. There is a \$242,000.00 (14.4%) decrease in this proposed budget. The major proposed change relates to Personnel for the addition of one (1) Recreation Supervisor to better serve the employee team by establishing a lead Recreation staff member who will extend coverage for evening and weekend programming.

Ms. Burton advised that in regard to Operating costs, line item 531338, Prof Service Miscellaneous, has increased by \$7,000.00 to cover architectural services to look into future recreational facility renovations and upgrades including the possibility of a lap pool. In regard to line item 552108, Operating Supplies, Ms. Burton stated there is an increase of \$37,000.00 to include the replacement of tables and chairs for Building A of the Annex building, as well as the installation of benches along the walking trail. Line item 552106, Computer Software, increased by \$7,200.00 to include the GovInvest, Microsoft Office, and Microsoft Teams licensing for its employees. Line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, in the amount of \$39,000.00 includes the purchase of a zero-turn mower, 2 additional treadmills and Genie lift for building and maintenance tasks.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Community Center Supervisor David Pierce advised that Mr. Wicker has been in contact with the County's IT Department relating to getting internet services into the community's auditorium. He expressed his appreciation to the BCC for its continuing support of the Marion Oaks community. Mr. Pierce stated there are approximately 6,500 members who participate in the Marion Oaks Recreation.

Ms. Burton addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 512, Marion Oaks MSTU for General Services (pages 427-432) and introduced General Service Maintenance Supervisor Sherry Sloan and Marion Oaks MSTU Advisory Board Chairman Henry Munoz.

Ms. Burton provided a brief overview of the Department's accomplishments, which include continual maintenance of approximately 380 miles of right-of-way (ROW) including litter pickup and mowing of the grass; maintenance and planting of flowers twice a year at the waterfall, mulching, trimming bushes, upkeep and pressure washing of the waterfall, which brings beautification to the entrance of Marion Oaks. She expressed her appreciation to Sherry Sloan and her team for their diligent hurricane cleanup. There is "No Horsin' Around" in Marion Oaks as they keep the ROW clear of litter and snipe signs. Ms. Burton advised that overall, there is a \$208,217.00 decrease (11.83%) in this proposed budget. Major proposed changes relate to line item 543102, Utilities Waste Disposal, which decreased by \$2,800.00 due to a renegotiated contract with the local vendor; and line item 552116, Operating Supplies Computer Hardware, which decreased by \$1,275.00 because staff are currently caught up on recommended computer replacements. She stated line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, decreased from

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\$145,000.00 of equipment purchases in 2024/2025, down to \$21,120.00, which is slated for the purchase of an additional side-by-side utility vehicle for litter control, as well as a flatbed trailer.

General Service Maintenance Supervisor Sherry Sloan expressed her appreciation to County staff who have participated in community cleanup days.

General discussion ensued in relation to trash issues within the community.

Marion Oaks MSTU Advisory Board Chairman Henry Munoz, commented on a recent accident that occurred at the intersection of Marion Oaks Boulevard and Marion Oaks Manor, noting there may be a need for a lighted stop sign or traffic light at that intersection. Commissioner Curry questioned if there is a need to hire a Deputy to enforce the Litter Control Ordinance throughout Marion Oaks.

Ms. Sloan noted the community would accept any help. She stated the community has a group called the "Marion Oaks Beautification Crew", which is a volunteer organization that helps with cleanup efforts.

Ms. Burton addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 520, Silver Springs Shores Recreation (pages 437-442) and introduced Community Center Supervisor Danny Smith, and Advisory Board Chairman Stan Saint-Louis.

Ms. Burton provided a brief overview of the Department's accomplishments, which include expansion of the fitness center to include a cardio equipment room; addition of a large gazebo for event space and enhancing lakeside amenities; and the addition of a second pickleball court to meet demands of community members. She advised that there is a \$36,571.00 decrease (3.16%) in this proposed budget. Major proposed changes relate to Operating line items 534101, Contract Serv Other Misc, which has an increase of \$700.00 due to needing two security camera upgrades; line item 546101, Repairs and Maint Bldgs and Grounds, which has an increase of \$19,000.00 to purchase a floating dock for fishing and paddling programs; and line item 552108, Operating Supplies, which has an increase of \$19,000.00 for replacement chairs and tables for two of the pool decks, as well as replacement kitchen cabinets for the Community Center. Ms. Burton stated line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment was reduced from \$105,000.00 down to \$7,000.00 slated for a replacement zero-turn mower.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Community Center Supervisor Danny Smith stated residents are excited about the upcoming Library project.

Advisory Board Chairman Stan Saint-Louis expressed his appreciation for the current library services being offered to youths within the community. He advised that this community is facing the same issues relating to traffic and litter problems.

Ms. Burton addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 530, Hills of Ocala (pages 447-450). She advised that this budget is maintaining a flat budget and continuing to build funds for future projects such as converting one of two tennis courts to two (2) pickleball courts (estimated at \$26,000.00) extending the roof over existing concrete patio on the Clubhouse (estimated at \$75,000.00 for the 37 foot (ft) x 20 ft area complete with lights and ceiling fans); revitalizing the playground/park area next to the clubhouse. (estimated \$150,000.00); and rebuilding the walking trail with clay/sand mix. (estimated \$20,000.00 for approximately 1 mile of walking trail).

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the MSTU Department budgets.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Cheryl Butler, Community Services Director**

Community Services Director Cheryl Butler appeared to review the Department's proposed budget for FY 2025-26 for Cost Center 330, Health (page 150); Cost Center 335, Unclaimed Decedent Program (page 152); Cost Center 337, Assessments Public Assistance (page 154); Cost Center 340, Community Services (page 155); Cost Center 341, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (page 207); Cost Center 342, Home Investment Partnership HOME (page 208); Cost Center 345, Emergency Solutions Program (page 211); Cost Center 348, Continuum of Care Program (page 214); Cost Center 349, Continuum of Care Program Florida (page 215); Cost Center 351, Continuum of Care Program Challenge (page 216); Cost Center 352, Continuum of Care Emergency Solutions (page 217); Cost Center 353, Continuum of Care TANF (page 218); Cost Center 333, Opioid County Settlement Fund (page 287); Cost Center 332 Opioid Regional Settlement Fund (290); and Cost Center 350, State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Act (page 373).

Ms. Butler provided an overview of the Department's accomplishments over the past year, which included the approval of 130 new affordable housing units, exceeding the annual target of 100 units of which the LOGOS Lodge project received Statewide recognition through the Florida Housing Coalition (FHC). Other accomplishments include acquiring 2 properties and completed hotel demolition in the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) to support infill development and future economic growth; completed 17 neighborhood cleanups through the partnership with Code Enforcement; hosted the First Annual Continuum of Care (CoC) community meeting, with over 180 participants, to raise awareness of homeless services and resources; finding multiple nonprofit organizations across all programs, moving toward the goal of serving over 60,000 low-to-moderate income residents; and allocating Regional Opioid Settlement Funds to support the Women's Residential Treatment Facility (now open) and to begin construction on the Central Receiving Facility, scheduled to open in FY 2026.

Ms. Butler advised that after the budget was published, the Federal and State government decided to finally announce the Department's allocations and as a result the Department is seeing some fluctuations (decreases and increases) in grant sources in the amount of approximately \$815,541.00. She requested Board consensus to allow the Community Services Department to work with the Budget team to help align some of the Cost Centers to those new amounts prior to the final Budget public hearing. She referred to the spreadsheets on pages 47 and 48 of the Budget Talking Points handout that shows the revised amounts to each Cost Center.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 330, Health (page 150), noting the proposed Operating budget total is reduced by \$100,000.00 from the previous budget of \$340,000.00 to \$240,000.00.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 335, Unclaimed Decedent Program (page 152), noting the proposed budget remains the same as last year at \$46,000.00, the County covered the costs associated with 65 of 95 decedents. Others were handled through body donations or family identification post-receipt. As of June, the Department has already paid for 66 decedents, averaging 5.5 per month at \$720.00 each. At this rate, the current budget will fall short, and a midyear request for additional funding is expected. The current contract with Roberts Funeral Home downtown is expiring as they have exhausted all of its renewals. A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued, and staff will be negotiating with potential vendors. She noted Roberts Funeral Home has always provided outstanding service.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 337, Assessments Public

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Assistance (page 154), noting the proposed budget remains the same at \$25,000.00. She noted last year, 60 households were assisted. Applications are now open through August 30, 2025. Ms. Butler stated this is a "first come, first qualified" basis until all funds have been expended. She noted staff is working with the Tax Collector on this program.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 340, Community Services (pages 155 and 156), noting this budget covers Personnel and Operating costs to manage all Department programs. This proposed budget will need to be updated due to \$815,541.00 in additional grant funding which allows a reduced allocation to the General Fund. As a result, the proposed Personnel line items will be reduced from \$304,771.00 to \$258,068.00 (a decrease of \$46,703.00). The proposed Operating budget will be reduced from \$151,790.00 to \$142,609.00. She noted overall General Fund budget expenditures will be reduced from \$447,380.00 to \$400,677.00.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 341, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (page 207), noting the proposed budget of \$2,173,037.00 is correct as presented, which is a \$2,378.00 increase in allocation from prior years. The FY 2025 amended budget of \$400,000.00 in building improvements is dedicated to the Silver Spring Shores Library which is currently under contract.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 342, Home Investment Partnership (HOME) (page 208), noting the proposed budget of \$891,550.00 is correct as presented, which is a \$8,638.00 increase in allocation from last year.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Centers 343 and 344, Neighborhood Stabilization Program 1 (NSP1) and (NSP3) (pages 209 and 210). She stated the close out application for NSP1 has been submitted, and the Department is waiting for approval from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Department is working to close out NSP3, once the official close out is received from HUD, the Department will notify the BCC.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 345, Emergency Solutions Program (ESG) (page 211), noting the proposed budget of \$190,774.00 is correct as presented which is a \$215.00 decrease in allocation from the previous year.

Ms. Butler addressed Cost Center 346, CDBG Cares (page 212), noting this budget has been closed out.

Ms. Butler addressed Cost Center 347, ESG Cares (page 213), noting this budget has also been closed out.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 348, Continuum of Care (CoC) Program (page 214), noting this is HUD funding that was approved by the BCC in June 2025. She stated the proposed budget will be increased from \$119,617.00 to a new total of \$143,307.00. Ms. Butler noted this Fund pays for personnel and staffing.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 349, Continuum of Care Program Florida (page 215), noting the Board recently approved a 3-Year funding agreement with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). She stated the proposed budget will increase from \$107,143.00 to a new total of \$181,270.00. This funding source begins on July 1, 2025 and runs through June 30, 2026.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 351, Continuum of Care Challenge (page 216), noting the proposed department budget will be increased from \$86,000.00 to a new total of \$800,664.00. She advised that staff are currently in negotiations with local not-for-profit organizations and those contracts will come back to the Board for consideration.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Ms. Butler advised that the grant increase allows for



more housing, noting the CoC sets those priorities (i.e., rapid rehousing, transitional housing, etc.). She stated staff are in discussions with Lutheran Services of Florida to discuss their ability to help the homeless navigate through the housing system (i.e., from shelters to transitional housing to permanent housing). Ms. Butler advised that the “point in time” count for 2025, was approximately 400 people, noting 258 of those were living sheltered and 142 were living unsheltered, which is a decrease from the previous year. Commissioner Stone noted the “point in time” count came at the coldest period in time for Marion County.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 352, Continuum of Care ESG (page 217), noting the proposed Department budget will be increased from \$172,000.00 to a new total of \$242,339.00. She noted these funds have to be utilized for rapid rehousing, homeless prevention, etc.

Ms. Butler addressed the proposed budget for Cost Center 353, Continuum of Care TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) (page 218), noting the proposed Department budget will be decreased from \$38,000.00 to new total of \$31,574.00.

Ms. Butler addressed Cost Center 332, Opioid County Settlement Fund (page 285-287), noting the proposed revenue amount is \$351,323.00. She stated the settlement plans, as approved by the BCC, have been submitted to DCF. Ms. Butler noted these funds will support emergency medical services, law enforcement, and the planning of the County Employee Clinic. Of the total budget, staff are allocating monies for personnel at the Employee Clinic in the amount of \$17,376.00 (5%).

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Butler advised that monies applied for the County clinic is specifically for a counselor that will help employees and their families with substance/mental health occurring issues.

Ms. Butler addressed Cost Center 333, Opioid Regional Settlement Fund, (page 288-290),

noting the total Department budget reduced from \$1,668,508.00 to \$1,507,000.00. She advised that the Personnel budget decreased from \$90,029.00 to \$0.00, noting the Department shares the Administrative costs with the Marion County Hospital District (MCHD) and those costs have already been allocated.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Ms. Butler clarified that an organization (i.e., Veterans Association) can seek an application for funding through the Opioid County Settlement Fund or the Opioid Regional Settlement Fund; however, those applications are vetted through the Hospital District.

Ms. Butler addressed the Local Housing Assistance Trust Fund (Fund 1151), also known as SHIP (pages 371-373), noting this Fund has a reduction from \$2,553,788.00 to \$2,442,935.00 (a \$39,603 reduction). Personnel costs reduced from \$378,707.00 to \$317,622.00 for a total Department budget reduced from \$3,663,210.00 to \$3,552,357.00.

Ms. Butler addressed Cost Center 342, HOME ARPA (page 382-384), noting proposed revenue increased from \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00 to cover personnel costs. She advised that this is a one-time grant from HUD that totals \$3,217,585.00 and supports homeless individuals, veterans, and domestic violence victims. Funds are helping launch a new low-barrier shelter “Wear Gloves.”

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Community Services Department budget.

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**OPENING REMARKS – Daisy Diaz, Veterans Services Director**

Veterans Services Director Daisy Diaz appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 378, Veterans Service Office, which can be found on page 180. She expressed her appreciation to the Board for its continued support of veterans and their families. Ms. Diaz advised that there are over 40,000 veterans in Marion County, noting this number changes daily due to an influx of people moving to Marion County from other States, as well as other Counties. The Department also provides services for the Veterans' widow/widowers and their children who are qualified to receive VA benefits. The County has a one-of-a-kind Veterans Exhibit and Education Center. Inside the Center is a room for WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, 9/11 attack on America, as well as other memorabilia.

Ms. Diaz advised that staff are proposing a lateral reclassification of the Veteran Services Specialist to Veteran Services Officer with no salary increase.

Chairman Bryant passed the gavel to Commission Zalak who assumed the Chair.

Commissioner Bryant out at 2:17 p.m.

Ms. Diaz referred to line item 582101, Aid to Private Organizations, in the amount of \$24,000.00, noting staff are still collaborating in concert with Vets Helping Vets to aid veterans and their families (for services such as gas card, rent, utilities, car repair, food, etc.). The overall budget increased by \$795.00 due to personnel services. Ms. Diaz advised that staff are conducting Veterans Benefits Briefings in outlying areas of Marion County including gated communities and Assisted Living Facilities (ALF). Scheduled for this calendar year are as follows: On Top of The World (OTOW) Veterans Association (twice); Belleview American Legion Post 284; VFW Post 4209; American Legion Post 27; and Magnolia Assisted Living Facility. The Department also has a satellite office in the V.A. Clinic located at SW Highway 200 on SW 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Road that is open Tuesday through Thursday 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. This has been very convenient for veterans and their families residing off the SW Highway 200 corridor.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Veteran Services Department budget.

Commissioner Bryant returned at 2:19 p.m.

Chairman Zalak returned the gavel to Commissioner Bryant who resumed the Chair.

**OPENING REMARKS – Charles Varadin, Growth Services Director**

Growth Services Director Charles Varadin appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 317, Code Enforcement (page 142) and Cost Center 320, Planning and Zoning (page 145). Also present were Growth Services Deputy Director Ken Weyrauch and Code Enforcement Manager Robin Hough.

Mr. Varadin referred to Cost Center 317, Code Enforcement (page 142), and noted Personnel expenses in the amount of \$1,604,614.00, which is a year-over-year (YOY) increase of 13% (or \$188,000.00). Staff are proposing to add 1 New Code Enforcement Officer & 1 Administrative position, which is converting a resource position to a FTE staff. He stated most of the FY 2026 increase is for the new positions (\$119,000.00). Mr. Varadin advised that there are also matrix increases of \$27,000.00 and stipends of \$5,000.00 along with the benefits (retirement of \$21,000.00 and insurance \$28,000.00) associated with new and existing positions, noting CDBG funds offset about \$80,000.00 in personnel expenses. He stated Operating expenses of \$561,000.00 are a YOY decrease of 5% (\$27,000.00). This is before the \$120,000.00 of CDBG reimbursement is calculated. Mr. Varadin referred to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, noting

staff are requesting \$155,976.00 in Capital for 3 vehicles (1 new & 2 replacements). He advised that Code Enforcement is requesting a total budget of \$2,300,000.00, which is a YOY increase of 6.4% (or \$140,000.00).

In response to Chairman Bryant, Code Enforcement Manager Robin Hough commented on the increase in commercial vehicle parking complaints throughout the County, especially in the Marion Oaks area. She advised that there is also an increase in the number of recreational vehicles (RVs) complaints about people parking and living in RVs on otherwise vacant lots.

Chairman Bryant recommended staff create a social media message to advise citizens of these issues.

Mr. Varadin addressed Cost Center 320, Planning and Zoning (page 145). He commented on Personnel costs and stated staff adjusted a reclassification amount that reduces the Personnel expenses by approximately \$15,734.00, bringing the new total to \$2,643,000.00. Staff are proposing to add a Planner position and a Development Review Technician, as well as reclassifying a GIS analyst and a Senior Planner position. The other increases include stipends (\$20,000.00), matrix increases (\$25,000.00), retirement buy-out (\$39,000.00), and benefit expenses of \$66,000.00 (insurance \$30,000.00 and retirement in the amount of \$36,000.00). He noted the biggest hit to the Planning and Zoning Department in the upcoming year will be the retirement of its most Senior Planner. Mr. Varadin commented on the overall Operating expenses of \$568,225.00, which is a YOY decrease of 11% (or \$70,000.00). He referred to line item 531109, Professional Services, in the amount of \$300,000.00, noting this represents a reduction of \$45,000.00. The FY 2026 projects for this line item include \$100,000.00 for Land Development Code updates; \$75,000.00 for the Marion Oaks Trail system; and \$125,000.00 for the Planned Service Area (PSA) design Master Plan.

General discussion ensued relating to the Marion Oaks Trail system and the PSAs.

Mr. Varadin referred to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, noting staff is requesting \$25,000.00 for two additional cubicles for the new positions. He stated the total Planning and Zoning budget is \$3,236,000.00 and the total combined budget including Code Enforcement is \$5,500,000.00, which is a 6.9% (or \$358,000.00) YOY increase.

Commissioner Curry expressed his appreciation to staff.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Growth Services budget.

### **OPENING REMARKS – Julie Sieg, Library Director**

Library Director Julie Sieg appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 375, Marion County Public Library System (page 174). Also present were Assistant Director Lee Schwartz, Administrative Manager Neshe Frye, Senior Library Division Manager Susan Reynolds and several members of the "Friends of the Library" organization.

Ms. Sieg advised that this year the Department successfully launched a seed library, thanks to the generous partnerships with Extension Services, Marion Soil Conservation District, Pioneer Garden Club, the Hospital District, and many of the library's patrons. Since the service began, April 19, 2025 through July 10, 2025, approximately 7,560 packets of seeds have been checked/given out. She requested Commissioner McClain provide staff with pictures of his families bush bean plants the Department can share as a success story.

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Ms. Sieg stated also started this year, thanks to the American Heart Association, the Department now offers blood pressure cuffs for checkout and hope to soon have Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in the event of a heart attack at one of the libraries. She commented on the "Right Service at the Right Time" online resource directory, which became effective July 1, 2025 and replaced the "2-1-1 Call Center", noting access to this information service can be obtained on both the Library and the County's websites. Ms. Sieg encouraged anyone who needs assistance accessing this information to please call or visit their closest public library location. She noted the SSS Public Library building is currently being renovated with an expected opening in October. The Freedom Public Library expansion is slated for opening this winter and the remodel of the existing space to open in the spring of 2026. The plan is to move all library functions into the new space and completely empty the existing space to accommodate the renovations. Staff will set up a temporary circulation desk next to a secondary entrance and temporarily run the back-of-house functions out of the new meeting room. It has been an absolute pleasure for staff to work closely with the County's Facilities Management team and the construction team of Charles Perry Partners, Rispoli and Associates and the numerous other professionals associated with this project.

Ms. Sieg referred to page 174 of the budget book, noting the BCC has previously approved the filling of the new Freedom Library positions this fiscal year. Staff have been successful in the selection of individuals to fill 50% of the new positions. The Department continues to receive applications and conduct interviews for the remaining unfilled positions. The new positions for the Freedom Public Library expansion have resulted in an overall 11.5% increase in the library personnel accounts. She advised that for the most part, the operational accounts have been reduced to try to offset the increase in personnel. Exceptions to the reductions include Contract Services Other Misc (line item 534101) due to the increase in custodial services and the inclusion of both an expanded Freedom Public Library and the new service point in the Shores. Also experiencing an increase is the Operating Supplies Computer Hardware account (line item 552116). This increase is due to the new computers needed at the Freedom Public Library, as well as Freedom

Library being in the queue for replacement of computers. And finally, the library is seeking to replace a cargo van, which was taken out of service due to a lack of availability of parts. This new replacement van will be used for its larger capacity for deliveries to the larger, higher-circulating libraries including Belleview, Freedom, and Dunnellon.

Ms. Sieg expressed her appreciation to the BCC for its support, encouragement and leadership.

Commissioner Curry expressed his appreciation to the Board and Library staff for their support of the SSS Library.

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

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Jared Goodspeed, Facilities Director**

Facilities Management Director Jared Goodspeed appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budgets for Cost Center 180, Facilities Management (page 71); Cost Center 181, Facilities Management Health (page 77); and Cost Center 182, Courthouse Security (page 78).

Mr. Goodspeed advised that the Department maintains over 370 County-owned buildings, totaling over 3,400,000 square feet (sf) of occupied space. There is a team of dedicated

trade experts that ensures seamless daily operations, proactive maintenance, and timely response to service needs across the County's facilities. Over the past year, the Department has faced increasing demands for internal renovations and the execution of capital projects. In response, the Department has restructured staffing priorities and resources to expand project support capacity, while also sustaining routine facility operations. Staff remain committed to internal development, professional training, and strategic investments to support long-term operational reliability. The FY 2025/26 proposed budget reflects targeted increases to support the ongoing efforts to set the proper expectations and the ability to deliver on results. The Department's focus areas this year include improving technician coverage ratios, investing in staff development, modernizing technology, and replenishing its fleet to match operational needs.

Mr. Goodspeed addressed Cost Center 180, Facilities Management (page 71), noting overall, the Board will notice many line items have been adjusted up and down to account for fluctuations in cost and historical usage trends. The FY 2025/26 recurring budget has an overall increase of just 3.9%. He referred to line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages, which increased by \$399,636.00 (10.5%), primarily due to the addition of three full-time positions, two Maintenance Technicians (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and electrical specialties) and one Project Coordinator. These roles will help improve the Departments technician to - sf coverage and increase the capacity to manage projects and preventive workloads. Mr. Goodspeed referred to page 76, line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, and advised that while this line item has a high one-time cost compared to FY 2024, it includes critical additions of 9 vehicles to support the new FTEs, previous staffing adjustments, and field operations.

Mr. Goodspeed addressed Cost Center 181, Facilities Management Health, (page 77), noting this budget remains flat at \$275,000.00 with no change in the revenue cap. Reimbursements will continue based on actual expenditures.

Mr. Goodspeed advised that Cost Center 182, Courthouse Security (page 78), has no planned increases, noting line item 534101, Contract Serv Other Misc, remains at \$1,100,000.00.

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

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Thomas Northey, Information Technology Director**

IT Director Thomas Northey appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 174, Information Technology (page 58). Also present was Operations Manager Michael Vann.

Mr. Northey advised that he is pleased to report an overall budget decrease of 5% from last year, noting a portion of this reduction is due to cost savings achieved from consolidating business systems into the Microsoft 365 Cloud and the Enterprise Resource Planning Software (ERP) System. He presented some key achievements from the Department this past year including collaboration with Fire and Facilities on several projects, including First Arriving in County Fire/EMS stations. These digital signage dashboards enhance internal communications across the Fire Department showcasing everything from active calls to rosters and daily staff communications. Staff also collaborated with Airport staff to implement a new fuel point of sale system, which is a major revenue source for their operations. Adobe Sign was implemented for electronic signatures, aiding County Departments in going paperless with efficient routing and tracking. The Department implemented Tyler Notify, a text and phone notification service,

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for citizens and employees. Notifications range from Utilities customer boil water alerts to HR providing hurricane updates to employees. Staff collaborated with Animal Services and Administration to implement a new online Pet Licensing system. This service offers citizens the convenience of registering and renewing their pets' licenses online. In partnership with the Utilities Department, staff upgraded to a modern, mobile-friendly customer service portal that enables customers to view and pay their bills online. In the upcoming year, technology will remain a foundational component in empowering employees to effectively serve Marion County's expanding community. The Department's continued transition to a cloud-centric business model emphasizes enhancing services for citizens while upholding a customer service-focused approach. The subsequent budget requests align to support these initiatives.

Mr. Northey advised that as technology advances and workloads evolve, staff are continuously seeking the most effective strategies to align our team with the County's needs. Staff are proposing personnel adjustments under line item 512101, Regular Salaries & Wages, which includes the addition of two new full-time employees (one Live Production Specialist and one IT Helpdesk Assistant) to manage the increasing workload, as well as some reclassifications and title changes. The total increase for these changes, including benefits, is \$159,000.00. He addressed the request for a Live Production Specialist, noting as the community grows, public meetings and events have steadily increased in frequency and duration. The Live Production Team currently has two team members supporting these activities. These exempt employees regularly exceed a 40-hour work week. IT employees are frequently pulled from other areas of the Department to cover when a Live Productions Team member takes leave and for meetings requiring a third person. Mr. Northey opined that adding an additional Live Productions Specialist (pay grade 111) will help provide the required coverage to continue meeting the County's live production needs. He addressed the request for the IT Helpdesk Assistant, noting as workloads increased for IT technicians the Department hired a temporary entry level employee through Resource to handle calls and enter work orders at the Helpdesk. This freed up a technician from these tasks and allowed them to focus on resolving technical issues. Given the positive results seen, the Department is requesting to add an IT Helpdesk Assistant (paygrade 104) as a full-time position. Mr. Northey addressed the request for position reclassifications and paygrade changes, noting as technology progresses, job responsibilities also change to align with the organization's evolving requirements. To reflect these adjustments in duties and to better align compensation with the required skills in a competitive job market, staff is requesting the following changes: GIS Coordinator (pay grade 113) to Enterprise GIS Manager (pay grade 114); IT GIS Programmer Analyst (pay grade 111) to GIS Developer (pay grade 112); Technology Training Coordinator (pay grade 112 to 113); IT Security Analyst (pay grade 110 to 111); IT Operations Manager to Information Technology Assistant Director (no change in pay); and IT Web and Multimedia Specialist to Live Productions Specialist (no change in pay)

Mr. Northey advised that the IT team is strategically delaying certain initiatives to help balance staff workloads and combining technologies to achieve greater economy of scale, thereby reducing expenses.

Mr. Northey referred to line item 534115, Contract Serv Staff Leasing, noting staff is requesting an additional \$18,000.00 for a temporary employee to assist the Network Team with a backlog of work. Line item 541101, Communication Services, is increasing by \$44,000.00 to cover rising communications cost, new fiber connections, and additional

Federal Communication taxes. Line item 544101, Rental and Leases Equipment, decreased \$37,000.00 due to savings on the County's ERP server lease. Line item 546301, Repairs and Maint Equipment, decreased by \$137,000.00 due to firewall renewals occurring every three years. Line item 552106, Computer Software, decreased by \$351,000.00, which resulted from consolidating software under the County's Microsoft agreement and systems transitioning into the County's ERP system. Line item 552116, Operating Supplies Computer Hardware, decreased by \$134,000.00 due to fewer scheduled computer replacements and a strategic reduction in wireless access point deployments next year. He referred to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, noting staff are requesting \$450,000.00 to replace the end-of-life Enterprise backup system. The new system will be utilized to back up all the County's servers, provide a local backup of all Microsoft Cloud files, and ensure disaster recovery and protection against ransomware. Staff are requesting \$141,000.00 to purchase four (4) additional vehicles to reduce the need for employees to use their personal vehicles for County business. Lastly, staff are requesting \$60,000.00 to replace several end-of-life network switches across the County.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Northey addressed the request for position reclassifications, noting the Department is trying to align staff with other industries and agencies. He noted a few are just title changes.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Northey opined that staff are looking at the possibility of a new, more modern back-up system, noting the current back-up system technology was selected over a decade ago. He advised that the County received a \$25,000.00 grant and utilized the funds to have a security consultant review the current security settings.

General discussion ensued relating to security protocols.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Northey stated the \$141,000.00 is just the cost to purchase 4 additional vehicles.

ACA Amanda Tart advised that the insurance rates for those vehicles will be included in the County's insurance premiums that are paid out of the Risk Fund.

Mr. Northey stated the Department currently has 9 vehicles being shared with 40 employees.

General discussion ensued.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the IT Department budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Mark Williams, Fleet Management Director**

Fleet Management Director Mark Williams appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 178, Fleet Management (page 65).

Mr. Williams noted a reduction in the budget of \$901,403.00 or approximately 8.1% less than last year's adopted budget. He advised that the Fleet Department continues to support all County Departments with their maintenance, repair and new vehicle or equipment purchase requirements. Vehicle manufacturers have relaxed order allocations; however, the lead times are still lengthy on some models. Mr. Williams advised that this year the Department ordered 93 vehicles and pieces of equipment and at this time over 61 have been delivered, although some of the heavy trucks and specialty vehicles are still being waiting on (i.e., ambulances). He advised that this year, with the Boards approval, staff will be reallocating 5 Building Department vehicles: (1) to Extension Services, (1) to Facilities and (3) to Parks. This allows the County to extend the life of



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those vehicles, get some older vehicles out of service and also save money in the General Fund. Once again, staff has had a productive year with over 11,000 work task orders completed. Mr. Williams advised that the Department has started its Field Service Unit to assist Departments in the field, this will help keep services up to date and also help those that cannot easily transport equipment to Fleet for regular maintenance.

Mr. Williams advised that the cost for Personnel has increased by \$123,687.00 to a total of \$2,783,410.00 partly due to an increase in benefits and an update in the technician matrix, which he believes will give the incentive to learn and maintain useful skills and knowledge for use in their career. He stated that the Department invests a lot in its technicians and wants them to stay. Mr. Williams referred to line item 546305, Repairs and Maint Vehicles and Equipment, which has an increase of \$162,809.00 to a total of \$1,296,984.00 due to increased cost of 3<sup>rd</sup> party repairs and tires. He referred to line item 552101, Gasoline Oil and Lubricants, which has a reduction of \$661,869.00 due to the expected tempering of US fuel pricing. The Department hopes to realize fuel budget savings this year. Mr. Williams advised that line item 552257, Parts Vehicle and Equipment, was reduced by \$150,000.00 from last year for a total of \$1,237,497.00, noting there was an excess in this line last year and staff expect to be closer to the actual costs this year. He referred to line item 564101, Machinery and Equipment, noting staff have 2 requests totaling \$116,547.00, noting one is a replacement forklift to give Technicians safer reach and maneuverability, the other is to increase the diesel fuel storage at Fire Station 30 from 1,000 to 2,000 gallons, due to the higher demand at this location.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Williams advised that the technician matrix moved the technicians up a paygrade.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Fleet Department budget.

#### **OPENING REMARKS – Kyra Lynch, Animal Services Deputy Director**

Animal Services Director Kyra Lynch appeared to review the proposed FY 2025-26 budget for Cost Center 315, Animal Services Department (page 137).

Ms. Lynch provided a brief overview of some of the milestone the Department has achieved, including a 92.3% live release rate; impounded or taken in 6,319 animals; Spay Neuter Release (SNR) program returned 1,615 cats back into the community; volunteer hours are at 8,040.94; transferred 445 animals to rescue partners; 2,526 animals adopted; and Animal Control has had 16,518 responses so far this year.

Ms. Lynch advised that Personnel Services has an increase of \$513,162.00 or 9.56%; Operating expenses has an increase of \$329,043 or 21.12%; and Capital Machinery & Equipment has a 100% decrease for an overall total budget increase 6.86%. She referred to page 141 of the proposed budget book, which provides a list and salary breakdown of the two (2) FTE positions (Program Coordinator and Animal Care Technician) staff are requesting, and two (2) reclassified position proposals.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Ms. Lynch advised that the Program Coordinator will oversee all other coordinators (i.e., Rescue Coordinator, Foster Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Marketing personnel, etc.), as well as participate in internal training. Reclassifications include Animal Center Veterinarian pay grade 120 to Senior Shelter Veterinarian pay grade 121 (salary impact is \$0.00) and a Veterinary Technician pay grade 208 to Veterinary Technician Supervisor pay grade 111 (salary impact - \$1,601.00).



Ms. Lynch advised that the increase to the Operating budget reflects the impact of the new positions being requested, increases to technology, uniforms, personal protective equipment (PPE) related supplies, the need for additional equipment, supplies, and increased utility costs as the Department prepares to transition into the new facility. She referred to line item 543101, Utility Services Electric Water Sewer, which reflects an increase of approximately \$87,357.00 for the new shelter. She stated line item 552103, Medical Supplies, reflects an increase of \$164,074.00 (30% Inflation); line item 552108, Operating Supplies reflects an increase of \$84,000.00; and line item 552116, Operating Supplies Computer Hardware, reflects a decrease of \$55,645.00. Ms. Lynch referred to line item 564101, Capital Machinery & Equipment, in the amount of \$0.00, noting based on Fleet recommendations, the Department is not requesting any replacement vehicles this year.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Ms. Lynch stated the Department now has a total of 3 Veterinarians.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Animal Services Department budget.

**BOARD DISCUSSION: NONE.**

**CLOSING COMMENTS: NONE.**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

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Kathy Bryant, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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