

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

July 7, 2021

CALL TO ORDER:

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners met in a workshop session at 1:35 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN JEFF GOLD

Chairman Gold advised that the workshop was scheduled this afternoon to discuss Strategic Planning.

The Deputy Clerk received a 120 page Agenda packet and a 23 page handout entitled, "Empowering Marion for Success II" to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

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 Jeff Gold, District 3; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5. Vice-Chairman Carl Zalak, District 4 and Commissioner Kathy Bryant, District 2, arrived shortly after the meeting commenced. Also present were Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, Chief Assistant County Attorney Dana Olesky, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Jeannie Rickman; ACA Angel Roussel, ACA Tracy Straub, and Fiscal Manager Mike McCain

STAFF PRESENTATION

1. Present 2022-2026 Strategic Plan "Empowering Marion for Success II"
County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes advised that the purpose of today's workshop is to present the Board a draft format of the proposed 5-Year Strategic Plan, which has the same theme as "Empowering Marion for Success". He stated one-on-one discussions with Commissioners will take place in August, 2021 and the final review at the Administrative level at the end of August, 2021. Originally, the Board was supposed to consider the plan at the second meeting in September, but due to only having one meeting in September, the acceptance presentation will likely be moved to the first meeting in October, 2021.

Commissioner Zalak arrived at 1:36 p.m.

Mr. Bouyounes stated the proposed plan consists of the following 5 elements: organizational experience; resources and public facilities; planning and future growth; public infrastructure; and public safety. He advised that a committee containing 1 Commissioner has been formed for each element.

- Organizational Experience

Executive Director of Administrative Services Amanda Tart advised that the first initiative is the "Organizational Experience", which is a new element created by combining the element of "Organizational Culture and Customer Service" with "Technology". The Organizational Experience includes the internal and external experiences of both

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employees and customers. She stated the first initiative is the employee experience, which is comprised of several tasks including: workload; teleworking and flexible scheduling; electronic signatures; department liaisons for records; a document management manual; and a document management training program.

Ms. Tart addressed the second initiative, which is "Compensation". Compensation is something the County will have to continually address over the next several years as a result of the upcoming changes to the minimum wage requirement. She advised that "Evergreen Solutions" has been hired to complete a compensation study, which will include the changes to the minimum wage requirements. Evergreen Solutions is well known and is used by the majority of the Counties and Cities in the State of Florida. Ms. Tart advised that this study should take approximately 4 to 6 months to complete. Once the study is complete, the Board will be presented options to ensure the County is where it needs to be by the end of 2026. She stated benefits are a big part of the total compensation package, which staff will continue to review over the next several years.

Ms. Tart stated the third initiative is "Staff Development", which includes succession planning, leadership development, security awareness training, and implementation of a digital training platform across the County.

Ms. Tart addressed the fourth initiative, which is "Customer Service". Through technology and Public Relations the County will add ease and accessibility to information and provide helpful interactive tools for a more expedited process for customers. Social media will be utilized to reach more people and share untold stories of what makes Marion County great. In addition, staff will continue to train employees on how to provide customer service in line with the County's core values.

Stone out at 1:45 p.m.

Commissioner Bryant arrived at 1:45 p.m.

Ms. Tart advised that communication and customer service go hand in hand, noting Information Technology (IT) and Public Relations (PR) will be working together to improve external communication by increasing citizen access to County resources through existing and emerging technologies, as well as platforms to include digital access for submission and processing of documents. Internal communication will be improved by creation of a newly created share point system, which will allow employees to stay engaged and informed, while sharing information and enhancing accessibility to resources maintained by their department liaison. She stated a messaging system will also be implemented across targeted County buildings to offer a consistent message to employees and customers regarding various services offered, as well as upcoming events.

Ms. Tart stated advanced security measures to prevent cyber security threats will be a major focus, noting IT will be implementing several initiatives in the first 2 years of the plan to help protect the County. The risk of cyber-attacks will be minimized by implementing advanced end point security solutions and multi-factor authentication for non-Virtual Private Network (VPN) users. She advised that a password management solution will allow employees to seamlessly manage their log in credentials for multiple systems and the implementation of privileged access management will add a reduction in risks to the organization.

Commissioner Stone returned at 1:48 p.m.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Ms. Tart advised that the cost of 2 factor authentication is approximately \$30,000.00 initially and \$20,000.00 recurring, noting the implementation is included in the first year of the plan.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the advanced endpoint protection, multi-factor authentication for VPN, password management solutions for employees, and privileged access management will all be addressed during Budget workshops, noting the estimated total cost to implement the proposed security measures is approximately \$261,000.00.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff is reviewing ways to measure the success such as creating a survey.

Commissioner Zalak questioned how staff is going to continue to define the culture. Ms. Tart stated as the County worked through the first "Empowering Marion" plan it really focused on establishing the core values, guiding principles, mission, and vision of the organization. She advised that over the 5 year span the goal was to ensure everyone within and outside the organization knew the core values, noting employees attended training on these values.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Stone opined that each department should be submitting an employee for the "Employee of the Quarter Award" that exemplifies these values, noting if they are unable to find a qualifying employee then the Board needs address the culture of that department.

Mr. Bouyounes requested the Board provide suggestions for any changes or improvements.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Chairman Gold advised that there is a lot of information being provided today and more details and questions can be addressed during one-on-one discussion between staff and the Commissioners.

General discussion resumed.

- Resources and Public Facilities

Fiscal Manager Mike McCain addressed resources and public facilities operations and maintenance, noting there are three goals 1) analyze all County facilities for safety/security needs and develop an implementation plan; 2) create a comprehensive wayfinding program for County facilities that utilizes design elements of the Gateway Signage project; and 3) develop an Administrative Policy and Manual for construction project management.

In response to Chairman Gold, Mr. McCain advised that when it comes to security, staff will continue to focus on the highest priority buildings first, noting it will be an ongoing process.

Commissioner Bryant questioned if all security updates for the Administration building are complete. Facilities Director Jared Goodspeed advised that all safety recommendations have been implemented, but safety evaluations are necessary every 2 to 3 years.

Commissioner Bryant opined that more could be done to protect the employee sitting in the reception area. She requested that area be reconsidered. It was the general consensus of the Board to concur.

Commissioner Zalak commented on balancing safety with customer service.

Mr. McCain addressed the current Marion County building inventory size and age, noting \$5,000,000.00 is budgeted annually in the General Fund for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He stated the current adopted CIP includes new buildings and rehabilitation of existing buildings, noting rehabilitation costs are approximately \$6,000,000.00.

Mr. McCain recommended a General Fund Building Rehabilitation Replacement Organization be created to analyze the buildings based on user condition, age, etc., noting buildings would be treated similar to County vehicles, computers and roads.

Commissioner Bryant opined that the Board should consider what real estate owned by

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the County is needed and what is not, noting there are opportunities for consolidation. Commissioner Zalak commented on the current location of Fleet Management and the value of that property.

Mr. McCain addressed the feasibility of creating a Marion County Government Center to replace aging buildings, which would consist of two, 3-story buildings for a total of 2,000 square feet connected by a walkway. He advised that none of the interior floor space has been decided, but it will be driven by the outcome of the rehab analysis.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that this is a long term plan that will take place roughly 15 to 20 years down the road. He commented on the importance of planning ahead and saving funds to address the antiquated buildings and insufficient space.

Commissioner Stone questioned if the review of the buildings will be completed in-house or if an outside consultant will do the study. Mr. McCain stated staff would like to hire a consultant.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the study would be similar to what was done with the jail.

Mr. McCain stated staff will be identifying and prioritizing new/expanded parks and library facilities' needs based on the current service gaps and expected population growth over the next 10 years. He addressed the possible creation of a destination tour application (horse farm tour application), which provide visitors with a guide to experiences within Marion County and incorporates the County's trails, museums, etc. Another goal is to create an equine/bike/walking trail map library.

Mr. McCain stated staff is considering the development of a Conservation and Recreation Land Acquisition Program to acquire strategic properties.

In response to Commissioner Zalak, Mr. McCain advised that the program may be modeled after the Florida Forever, which is a program at the State level that does the same thing as what is being proposed.

Mr. Bouyounes stated the proposal will need a lot more work and the criteria will need to be developed.

Commissioner Zalak opined that Marion County does not need to be in the Florida Forever program, noting the County can partner with the State on different things similar to what is already being done. For example, the State buys the land, and the County manages the land, if it is the right asset for Marion County.

Commissioner Bryant stated there needs to be a complete inventory of all lands placed in Conversation through the State program and a full Marion County map needs to be created identifying those locations, as well as existing and future parks. She commented on existing land and parks that need to be addressed and the importance of prioritizing those areas that are not being utilized to their fullest potential.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. McCain addressed the possibility of creating an Open Space Fund, similar to the Sidewalk Construction Fund.

In response to Chairman Gold, Mr. McCain stated if the developer wanted to utilize every bit of their land they would be able to pay a fee in lieu of, which can be used for a park nearby.

Commissioner Bryant commented on the fields of houses that can be seen from the interstate when driving to Orlando and stated she did not want Marion County to look that way.

Chairman Gold addressed the need for workforce housing to accommodate the employees of the businesses being brought to Marion County.

Mr. McCain advised that the three different options for funding the proposed programs

and project are Grants, Impact Fees, and a Quality of Life Bond. He stated there is a need to add a Grants Coordinator position in the General Fund to assist departments with becoming aware of how to apply for and secure grants.

Commissioner Zalak expressed opposition to the proposed Quality of Life Bond. It was the general consensus of the Board to remove the Quality of Life bond from the funding options.

Mr. Bouyounes recommended removing the Impact Fee option.

Commissioner Curry commented on the benefit of Pennies for Parks as it relates to Carney Island and Lake Weir.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. McCain advised that staff will compile an inventory of County parks for Board review.

Commissioner Stone questioned if the Parks Master Plan had any guidance as it relates to funding. Mr. Bouyounes advised that discussions have taken place in the past regarding implementing a program similar to Pennies for Parks.

Commissioner Bryant stated there may be some opportunity to include parks in the next sales tax initiative.

Chairman Gold stated the County is doing a great job replacing all the necessary equipment for emergency services and should be caught up soon; therefore, some adjustments may be needed to the sales tax allocation. Mr. Bouyounes concurred, noting it is getting to the point that the County can begin to start adding other priorities into the mix.

General discussion ensued.

- Planning and Future Growth

ACA Angel Roussel advised that stakeholder meetings, presentations and discussions took place between September 2020 and January 2021 and the Administrative presentation was in March of 2021. He stated the driving principle of this element is industry creates jobs, which increases the demand for housing, and in turn, increases the demand for commercial businesses. Mr. Roussel advised that the County's job market is doing well thanks to the decisions made over the last 10 years, but the housing market is lagging behind, which is causing builders to gravitate towards meeting the higher cost demand first, while the lower cost units are being left behind. He stated the County should focus on development in defined success areas such as within the Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB), World Equestrian Center (WEC) vicinity, Florida Crossroads Commerce Park, McGinley area, State Road 200, and northwest 49th Street Interchange areas. Infill will keep housing in proximity of existing services, infrastructure and jobs.

Mr. Roussel stated the County can capitalize on opportunities by incentivizing development where infrastructure improvement needs are minimal, meet community needs, and are within the County's focus area for development. He stated there is room to improve processes and policies, noting the Board and staff need to analyze the processes and policies to ensure there is adequate technology and staffing for the County's workload.

Mr. Roussel advised that the final driving principle is basic infrastructure, noting historically roads, communication infrastructure, water, sewer, stormwater, and solid waste have all been considered basic infrastructure. He stated due to the advancements of technology broadband is now being considered basic infrastructure and the County will need to create a foundation of information to guide investments and partnerships in order to improve the level of service (LOS) Countywide.

Mr. Roussel stated the overarching goals are staying the course on economic

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development; encouraging housing; and capitalizing on existing/planned infrastructure and services. He advised that the anticipated results are continued economic growth, increase in level of services, decrease in proportionate cost of services, increase in quality of life, and the preservation of natural resources and farmlands. The main strategies to achieve these goals are defining strategic areas and housing needs; reviewing the permitting process and Comprehensive Plan; and improving broadband Countywide.

Mr. Roussel advised that some of the defined strategic areas include WEC, Florida Crossroads Commerce Park, State Road 200, NW 49th Street Interchange and Silver Springs Shores Employment Centers. He stated defining housing needs can be achieved by creating a lot inventory by area, determining the existing level of service available to see what is still needed, proximity to existing and anticipated Employment Centers, and to develop strategies and incentives to guide housing based on needs.

Mr. Roussel stated during the permitting process review, staff will be examining employee workloads, permitting policies, and consider hiring of a permit ombudsman. He advised that staff will also review the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the UGB and farmland area to determine if the appropriate boundaries are in place. He advised that a Countywide Broadband Feasibility Study is needed to establish the foundation for future partnerships and investments.

Mr. Roussel addressed the need for affordable housing in Marion County. Currently, new construction is focused on where they can make the most profit, but there is a need for lower cost housing. He advised that options to address the affordable housing issue are to provide grants/loans through the Community Services Department; impact fee waivers; capital charge credits; or voluntary inclusionary zoning/architectural standards.

Mr. Roussel advised that additional staffing is needed for Growth Services and Permitting Department, noting two Senior Planners and a Permit Ombudsman are included in the Strategic Plan. Additional positions may be required as determined by a staffing plan analysis.

Commissioner Curry questioned if staff was keeping track of what is being approved in municipalities, as well as County. Commissioner Bryant advised that in the past she had requested that staff create a map of the entire County including the municipalities showing a current inventory, along with what has been approved, but is not yet built.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff has a good inventory of what has been approved, but it is not in a map format.

Mr. Roussel stated one of the initiatives included in this Strategic Plan is to formalize a map and provide more information relating to the lot inventory, such as the proximity to nearby Employment Centers and lot availability.

Commissioner Bryant advised that there has not been a slowdown in approving new developments since approximately 2015/2016.

Chairman Gold stated it would also be beneficial to the Board to see a list of which developments have not been approved and the reasoning behind the denial.

Florida House Representative Stan McClain, NE 25th Avenue, advised that he is present today on behalf of the Marion County Builder's Association, noting members of the Builder's Association have met with County staff to discuss available programs and to address water and sewer in certain areas of the County. He addressed supply chain issues within the building industry.

Commissioner Stone out at 2:51 p.m.

Representative McClain commented on the efforts being made to address the need for workforce/affordable housing and the amount of housing inventory needed.

Commissioner Stone returned at 2:52 p.m.

Representative McClain advised that the Federal Government has been discussing raising interest rate, which could slow down the building industry. He stated water and sewer is an ongoing issue and stimulus funds on the State level were set aside for sewer/septic conversions or similar activities, noting Marion County may be able to benefit from some of that funding.

Representative McClain stated density will need to be addressed to prevent urban sprawl. He commented on the increasing request from Commissioners to include amenities in proposed subdivisions and the available parks system within the County.

Chairman Gold questioned what is considered to be affordable housing. Community Services Director Cheryl Martin advised that the maximum price of a house to be considered affordable by the State is \$250,000.00, Marion County has an average median income of \$55,600.00. She commented on the many different variables involved when determining housing affordability. Ms. Martin stated it is important to define what is considered to be affordable housing within Marion County, which will eliminate a lot of confusion for developers. She advised that Community Services can assist developers with Gap Financing, partner with the Ocala Finance Authority to bond projects, and provide guidance on tax credit type projects.

Ms. Martin stated Marion County has limited rental availability, noting when she spoke with the Board of Realtors there were only 45 homes listed for rent in the County and the average rent was \$1,500.00.

General discussion ensued.

Representative McClain reiterated supply issues that builders are currently experiencing and the need for more workforce housing in the County.

Commissioner Bryant commented on the shortage of higher end housing, which is also in demand.

Representative McClain advised that most of the jobs that are being created in Marion County would allow a worker to afford a house priced at \$200,000.00 or less.

Commissioner Curry requested more discussion take place regarding open space requirements and what can be considered open space.

Mr. Roussel advised that open space is an element that will be addressed as the Comprehensive Plan is being reviewed.

David Tillman, Tillman & Associates Engineering, LLC, SE 16th Avenue, opined that Marion County is the best location in the state of Florida as it relates to permitting. He expressed appreciation to County staff for their willingness to work with builders. Mr. Tillman commented on open space requirements and possible ways to better measure the amount of open space needed for a development. He stated the 20 percent (%) open space requirement causes a 20% increase in land cost to the developer, which is then passed on to the homeowner.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Stone stated not everyone is moving to Marion County and wanting to purchase a home, some are looking for apartments.

President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kevin Sheilley, Ocala Metro Chamber and Economic Partnership (CEP) advised that multi-family housing is needed in the County, noting over the last 8 years 40,000 people have moved to Marion County and only 600 multi-family units have been constructed. He commented on the inaccurate assumption that multi-family means subsidized, less desirable, and high crime.

Commissioner Bryant stated each individual case that comes before the Board needs to

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be reviewed to determine where higher densities can be allowed, noting sometimes it makes more sense to build up than build across.

Commissioner Zalak addressed the possibility of incentivizing developers to participate in an overlay zone for future projects. Commissioner Stone concurred and stated incentives could also be offered for development in "Opportunity Zones".

Mr. Roussel advised that at the next presentation of public infrastructure staff will provide possible incentive options.

General discussion resumed.

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

Commissioner Gold out at 3:23 p.m.

- Public Infrastructure

County Engineer/ACA Tracy Straub advised that public infrastructure encompasses a transportation network, including traffic and drainage; delivery of safe drinking water; treatment and disposal of wastewater; protection and preservation of the existing water quality; and solid waste disposal. She stated the goals established by staff are providing for existing/historic needs and growth; protecting water resources; and funding the needs. Ms. Straub addressed the importance of coordinating between departments as it relates to roads and utilities.

Ms. Straub advised that there are 30,000 residential lots and multifamily units in the Silver Springs Shores area, noting due to its density and proximity there have been a lot of conversations relating to well and septic. She stated there is a pretty sophisticated road network internally for Silver Springs Shores, but traffic problems still exist. The Board has already approved the Emerald Road project, which will extend Emerald Road from Silver Spring Shores to SE 92nd Loop. Ms. Straub provided a brief overview of the possible projects that could alleviate some of the traffic issues in the southeast area.

Commissioner Gold back at 3:29 p.m.

Chairman Zalak passed the gavel back to Commissioner Gold who resumed the Chair.

Commissioner Bryant out at 3:30 p.m.

Ms. Straub stated there are 28,000 residential lots and multi units available in the Marion Oaks area, noting infill is important when discussing infrastructure. She addressed the need to promote infill and further economic development of both existing and new commerce areas; expand water and sewer utilities; improve transportation connectivity south to north and west to east; possible new Interstate 75 (I-75) flyover; the need to evaluate universal waste collection; and explore construction of a Class III landfill within southwest Marion county.

Commissioner Bryant returned at 3:34 p.m.

Ms. Straub addressed the need to promote infill; further promote economic development of existing and new commerce areas; expand and regionalize water and sewer utilities; improve transportation connectivity south to north and west to east; and create a new I-75 interchange within the northwest quadrant of Marion County.

Ms. Straub addressed the need to promote infill; further promote economic development of existing and new commerce areas; expand water and sewer utilities; and improve transportation connectivity from west to east in the northeast quadrant in the County.

Ms. Straub advised that over the conversations will have to take place between the Board and the Solid Waste team regarding Master Planning over the next 5 years as it relates to universal waste collection, managing airspace, and construction of a Class III landfill and vegetation disposal site on the west side of I-75.

Ms. Straub addressed the importance of protecting the County's water resources, noting

there are regulatory obligations that cannot be avoided, unfunded mandates, and permit obligations that require certain public education components. The State has worked on the springs Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs) and the basin management action plans (BMAPS). She advised that septic, wastewater, and fertilizer have been a huge target in those plans, noting County continues to make improvements as it relates to stormwater. There are regulatory obligations for minimum flows and levels that continue to be discussed to ensure water quality and availability.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Environmental Services Director Jody Kirkman advised that the feasibility study was recently presented to the Board for consideration in its final form.

Commissioner Stone requested discussion take place regarding the outcome of the study.

Mr. Kirkman advised that the feasibility study can be brought back for Board discussion.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the Board requested staff develop a project in a specified section of the Silver Springs Shores and bring it back to the Board.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Roussel stated staff will be presenting some projects to the Board by the second meeting in August relating to the Recovery funds.

Ms. Straub provided a brief overview of the different funding options available for the proposed needs.

Commissioner Bryant advised that she looked into it and people are not allowed to ride their horses to the WEC.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Ms. Straub advised that there is a parallel road to I-75 reaching between the new interchange intersection and Highway 326, noting there are some property owners in that area interested in trying to work with the County to address options. She requested Board direction on how to move forward on developing that corridor.

General discussion ensued.

It was the general consensus of the Board for staff to bring back more information regarding road development options in the NW quadrant.

Commissioner Curry questioned if staff was aware of the impact electric cars are having on the gas tax. Ms. Straub advised that the Florida Association of County Engineers and Road Superintendents has requested Florida Association of Counties (FAC) support the indexing of Gas Tax, but it has not been successful. She stated conversations did take place relating to electric vehicles and how they are not paying into the Gas Tax, but are using the roadways. There may be a different Legislative option to address offsetting the Gas Tax.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the Gas Tax is controlled by the State at the local level and by the Federal Government on the National level, noting there are a lot of regulations and restrictions in place.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Zalak out at 3:55 p.m.

- Public Safety

Fire Chief James Banta, Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) advised that many Marion County Departments work in conjunction with one another to ensure the community's safety. This plan spans from radio coverage for First Responders to Animal Control to voluntary sprinkler installations. Public Safety's objective is to address the operational needs of our existing and future public safety resources while exploring funding options

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in order to protect life and property with honor, compassion and respect. He stated the element of Public Safety has four focus areas, each focus area has initiatives, goals and objectives, noting today the focus will be on the initiatives. The four areas of focus are 9-1-1 Management and Public Safety Communications (PSC); Public Safety Services; Public Safety equipment and Public Safety regulations. Chief Banta advised that 9-1-1 Management supports Countywide addressing and the technological infrastructure that PSC utilizes in service to the citizens of Marion County. In addition to processing more than 140,000 annual emergency and non-emergency requests for service, PSC also maintains and manages the Marion County radio system. He stated Initiative 1 – “Regional Back-up Plan” focuses on working towards a partnership for a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) that is geographically diverse and capable of handling call volume; Initiative 2 – “Next Generation 9-1-1 Core Services” will allow for increased capabilities with transmission and reception of voice data, text messages and transfer of videos on a more reliable network; Initiative 3 – “Security Upgrades” will prevent any interruption of critical emergency services by physical and technological enhancements; Initiative 4 – “Radio System Upgrades” will focus on expanding coverage into areas where there are significant gaps in coverage.

Chief Banta addressed the Public Safety Services element, noting as the community grows the nature of the services needed are ever changing. Population, density and characteristics play a part in the direction of those changes. Traditionally, Public Safety agencies served more of a response only method and a reactive stance. In modern times these agencies have realized the value to the Community and its citizens by serving in a more directly involved role to prevent some of the demands for service occurring on an emergency basis. He commented on the following initiatives: Initiative 1 – “Managing Demand for Emergency Services”; Initiative 2 – “Community Paramedicine & Opioid Response”; Initiative 3 – “Animal Services”; and Initiative 4 – “MCFR Accreditation”.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Chief Banta advised that the Radio upgrade the Department is going through will bring the County up to the current standard and addressed antiquated equipment, noting in order to reach the 95% coverage goal additional towers are needed. Chief Banta stated a total build out would be 15 towers.

Chairman Gold questioned the life expectancy of the portable radios. Chief Banta advised that during the first Sales Tax initiative MCFR replaced all the Department’s radios.

In response to Chairman Gold, Mr. Bouyounes advised that approximately \$2,600,000.00 of the sales tax funds are directed towards Animal Services.

Chief Banta advised that MCFR is the 5th busiest Fire Rescue Department in the State of Florida.

Commissioner Zalak returned at 4:06 p.m.

Chief Banta stated the ability to deliver high levels of fire and emergency medical services (EMS) is dependent on several factors including, infrastructure needs; emergency vehicles; fire and EMS equipment; and having appropriate and strategically located stations also helps to ensure delivery of service in the most efficient time possible. He commented on the following initiatives associated with Public Safety Equipment: Initiative 1 – “Apparatus”; Initiative 2 – “Fire & EMS Equipment”; and Initiative 3 – “Station & Facility Needs”.

Chairman Gold stated the growth of Marion County is higher than initially anticipated and questioned if MCFR had taken that into consideration when planning new stations. Chief Banta advised that staff is continually reviewing the County’s growth, noting there has been a significant increase in call volume in certain areas. He addressed some

infrastructure an access issues that need to be address in order to provide better service to Marion County.

Chief Banta advised that Marion County departments work collectively to provide for the common good of the community while following the codes, standards and local Ordinances. Departments work with many public and private stakeholders to achieve their primary mission, which is public safety. Specifically, MCFR and Marion County Building Safety work in conjunction with one another in order to provide safety to the public. He commented on the following initiatives associated with Public Safety Regulations: Initiative 1 – “Voluntary Sprinkler Systems”; and Initiative 2 – “Alternative Firefighting Water Supplies”.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Chief Banta advised that the County’s current Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) rating is a 3/3Y, noting this is a Countywide rating and is not broken into different jurisdictions within the County. He stated MCFR has not worked with utilities to address water access issues.

Chairman Gold stated the Fire Marshal does review water availability during the inspection process. He advised that a ladder truck and an engine truck were added to Station 18, which was part of the ISO issue in that area.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Bouyounes advised that one-on-ones can be done with Commissioners in August to go over each element of the proposed plan.

Commissioner Zalak stated it may take 3 or 4 months for the Board to review all the information included in the proposed plan.

In response to Chairman Gold, Commissioner Bryant advised that the next Rainbow Lakes Estates (RLE) Advisory Board meeting is on July 16, 2021, noting she does plan on attending that meeting.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Bouyounes advised that IT will be addressed during budget workshops.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Jeff Gold, Chairman

Attest:

Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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