



Marion County Board of County Commissioners

Fire Rescue ▪ Headquarters

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April 29, 2025

Mr. Darren Gray, County Manager
Seminole County Manager's Office
1101 East First Street
Sanford, FL 32771

Mr. Gray:

Thank you for your March 31, 2025, correspondence regarding the Medical Examiner facility (THE PROJECT). As Marion County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes is currently out of the country, I am responding to your letter. While we acknowledge Seminole County's intention to exit the project, we find it important to clarify the commitments made and actions taken to date on behalf of all six counties.

Project Background and Cost Participation

Over the past several years, representatives from all six counties, including Seminole, have participated in the planning and decision-making process for THE PROJECT through the Medical Examiner Advisory Committee. There was a clear consensus to move the project forward using a shared cost model based on population with Marion County fronting initial expenditures to avoid delays and keep the process on track.

While it was discussed that a new interlocal agreement would formalize long-term obligations, there was a collective agreement—including from Seminole County—to proceed with critical expenditures in the interim. This included multiple unanimous votes of support, including the selection of the Summerfield site, the design approach, and the decision for Marion County to secure financing.

Budget Transparency and Documentation

In response to your request, Marion County has provided a detailed accounting of all project-related expenses including budget transfers, appraisals, professional services, and a reconciliation of the budget facility funds of the COMMITTEE from fiscal year 2020 to present. Also included in the attachments are the invoices totaling \$83,003.80 for the remodel that was done partly because of the inclusion of Seminole County.

Regarding appraisal expenses, it is important to clarify that the Summerfield site was selected by unanimous vote as the preferred location for the regional facility. Though it was acquired by Marion County to move the project forward, the cost was incurred with the understanding it would be proportionally shared—consistent with the population-based model discussed and agreed upon by the Advisory Committee.

Change in Direction

We are disappointed that Seminole County has decided to withdraw from the project at this late stage, especially after years of cooperative planning and shared decision-making. This change in direction introduces significant complications and cost implications for the remaining counties and undermines the regional momentum built over time.

That said, we recognize your Board's decision and will respect Seminole County's desire to submit an exit proposal for Committee review. Going forward, any new interlocal agreement for THE PROJECT will be executed among the remaining partner counties only. Seminole County's financial responsibility for its share of costs incurred prior to its withdrawal remains a matter to be addressed as part of a fair and equitable exit.

Path Forward

We appreciate your past participation and look forward to reviewing Seminole's proposed exit strategy. In the meantime, Marion County remains committed to ensuring the successful completion of this regional facility for the benefit of the counties who continue to support it.

Sincerely,



James Banta
Fire Chief

21 Enclosures

cc: Jay Zembower, Chairman, District 2, Seminole County
Bob Dallari, District 1, Seminole County
Lee Constantine, District 3, Seminole County
Amy Lockhart, District 4, Seminole County
Andria Herr, District 5, Seminole County
Holly Davis, Medical Examiner Advisory Committee, Citrus County
Jeff Bogue, Medical Examiner Advisory Committee, Sumter County
Jerry Campbell, Medical Examiner Advisory Committee, Hernando County
Sean Parks, Medical Examiner Advisory Committee, Lake County
Michelle Stone, Medical Examiner Advisory Committee, Marion County
Mounir Bouyounes, County Administrator, Marion County
Amanda Tart, Assistant County Administrator, Marion County
Kristian Swenson, Assistant County Manager, Seminole County
Steve Howard, County Administrator, Citrus County
Jeff Rogers, P.E., County Administrator, Hernando County
Jennifer Barker, County Manager, Lake County
Bradley Arnold, County Administrator, Sumter County
James Blevins, Public Records Coordinator, Marion County