

Marion County Fire Rescue and EMS Advisory Board
August 20, 2025 Minutes - DRAFT

- 1. Call to Order** – The Marion County Fire Rescue and EMS Advisory Board met in the Training Room at Marion County Fire Rescue Headquarters, 2631 SE Third Street, Ocala, FL 34471 on August 20, 2025. Pat Gabriel called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- 2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Roll Call and Quorum Determination** – Roll call was taken, and a quorum was met.

Members Present:

Patricia Gabriel, Chair
Alan Keesee, CEO, HCA Florida Ocala Hospital
Erika Skula, President and CEO, AdventHealth Ocala
Clint Welborn, Fire Chief, Ocala Fire Rescue
Dr. Frank Fraunfelter, Medical Director, Marion County Fire Rescue

Members Absent:

Erin Jones, Healthcare Development Director, Ocala/Marion County Chamber and Economic Partnership
Floyd Magwood
Adam Woods

Others in Attendance:

Robert Graff, Deputy Chief of Operations, Marion County Fire Rescue
James Davis, Division Chief, Marion County Fire Rescue
Barry Cannon, EMS Transport Manager, HCA Florida Ocala Hospital
Wanda Bowlin, EMS Relations and Emergency Management Specialist, AdventHealth Ocala
Pam Doherty, Administrative Staff Assistant, Marion County Fire Rescue

- 4. Approval of Minutes** – The May 21, 2025, Marion County Fire Rescue and EMS Advisory Board minutes were submitted for approval. Dr. Fraunfelter made a motion to approve the minutes, and Erika Skula seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

5. Marion County Fire Rescue Updates

Chief Graff gave an update on the budget for Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) and believes it will move forward for approval by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC). Public hearings are scheduled for next month. The budget will include the personnel for two additional transport units, one of each to be housed at East Marion Station 4 and Silver Springs Shores Station 17. Adding these transport units will allow others to stay in their zones. It will also allow the department to move resources around based on workload and address issues on the west side of Marion County. The four areas that are experiencing call concurrency (more than one call at the same time) are Golden Ocala, Rainbow Springs/Rainbow Lakes Estates, Silver Springs Shores and the Ocala National Forest. In addition to the transport units, MCFR will add a Quality Improvement Technician, a Training Lieutenant and the reclassification of EMS Captains to EMS Battalion Chiefs. Dr. Fraunfelter added that this gives our single certified paramedics a technical ladder which is helpful for retention in the department.

From a budget standpoint, the BCC is doing a good job keeping the millage rate flat. The Operating items in the budget were approved, and most of the Capital expenditures are moving to sales tax. The impact fees and fire assessment are moving through the final phases.

Chief Graff advised that a new section will be added to the Quarterly Report for EMS impact fees. These fees are generated in the City of Ocala. Part of the impact fee agreement is to provide a report of the metrics showing how EMS impact fees are being used to address the EMS system.

Property for the new EMS West station has been identified, and this project is currently in the design phase. Construction for this station will move forward in the next five years, as well as the addition of several new fire stations. Orange Springs Station 13 is slated to open in October 2025 and will staff an engine company. The newly remodeled Golden Ocala Station 20 should open by October 1, 2025. The water agreement has been signed for North Marion Station 11, and Marion County is in the design phase to start this project at the Florida State Fire College. Several stations are in the remodeling process to extend the life of the stations and improve accommodations for staff.

This year, the Training department hired 155 people and hosted 16 new hire classes. The addition of these people has closed the staffing gap. There are currently only three vacancies in Fire Rescue and ten vacancies in EMS. The new hires are in various stages of training. The turnover rate is around 8-9% per year. This past year, 67 people left the department due to resignations, retirement, or new hires unable to complete training.

Negotiations recently opened with Local Union 3169. They are asking for a schedule change. Legislature has passed new house bills recommending an alternate schedule to include a 42-hour work week. Local Union 3169 has asked for a 48-hour work week. To do this, MCFR will have to hire a lot more people. This new schedule is the current trend in the fire service. Once MCFR gets the scheduling and the wages comparative to other departments, this will be the missing piece to retain people in the department. Dr. Fraunfelter added that more people are moving on to other life events, such as nursing careers, retirement or new agencies. Attrition is different now from what the department experienced in the past.

Chief Graff advised that mandatory overtime has dropped significantly. This can be attributed to filling additional positions, alternating the schedule and advertising for overtime early so people can pick it up. The task book program, which allows for succession planning, gives staff the opportunity to ride-up out of class after their skills have been checked off and they meet all the requirements. This has helped cut down on the costs of overtime and the need to mandate people.

The 2025 Master Plan/Strategic Plan is about 90% complete. All department information is included in this document, including a financial analysis. Five years of response data was analyzed, and it is tied together with the Strategic Plan. The Master Plan is tied into the Strategic Plan and includes a community risk analysis and a standard of cover. The standard of cover allows the department to identify the risks in the community, match them up with the resources, fill in any gaps, and plan for the future. The plan will be sent to the Fire Chief for review on September 1, 2025, and then presented with the new budget on October 1, 2025. Many of the initiatives in the plan have been rolled into the new budget. This should be released before the next Fire Rescue and EMS Advisory Board meeting.

6. Board Items

6.1 FY 24/25 Quarter 3 Report

Chief Davis discussed the FY 24/25 Quarter 3 Report that was provided to the Advisory Board. During this quarter, there were 173 interfacility transports, that included 134 critical care transports. AdventHealth had 20 transports that included 4 critical care, HCA Ocala had 130 transports that included 114 critical care, and UF Health had 23 transports that included 16 critical care. MCFR appreciates each hospital's investment in this program and requested that each hospital pass on MCFR's appreciation to their crews.

Chief Graff noted there were major improvements in the Unit Hour Utilization (UHU) chart (Figure 10) over the past two years. These improvements are contributed to a workload that is more manageable, due to the addition of the free-standing emergency rooms that give the ability to offload faster, and also, not having the inter-facility transports.

Pat Gabriel asked about the large number of calls listed as "Canceled–Good Intent" on the MCFR Service Demand by NFIRS Incident Type chart (Figure 1). Chief Graff explained that a "Canceled–Good Intent" call is a call that is canceled because another agency arrives first, or law enforcement or the citizen cancels the call before MCFR arrives. MCFR is reviewing the way this percentage is reported and working with the software vendor to correct these numbers. The numbers are off this quarter because some of the "Canceled–Good Intent" calls are actual EMS calls. The Master Plan contains the corrected data, although there are some anomalies in this 3rd Quarter Report.

Dr. Fraunfelter advised that the state reported cardiac arrests were at 43% for return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) last quarter. This is the highest level reported, which includes the city and county combined.

Chief Graff advised that the county is looking at new software for the payment process in Billing. Once implemented, this will cut down on credit card fees. Chief Davis said there is a new feature in the ESO reporting system that auto-generates a narrative. This additional feature should help increase revenue on the billing side moving forward.

Dr. Fraunfelter asked if there were any predictions on Medicaid and self-pay going up, due to the new legislature. Chief Graff said that MCFR has not made any predictions, but Chief Kruger is tracking this.

Dr. Fraunfelter offered congratulations to MCFR's Fire Chiefs and Administration, adding that the department is running very well and has made an 180-degree turnaround. Mrs. Gabriel concurred with this statement.

Mr. Keesee appreciates how MCFR is keeping up with IT improvements. HCA Florida is announcing a new free-standing emergency room and many of the residencies are expanding.

Mrs. Skula mentioned that construction on AdventHealth's third off-site emergency department by Heathbrook is almost finished and set to open January 2026. Also, a family medicine residency was started in July 2025.

7. **Next Quarterly Meeting Date** – The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Training Room at Marion County Fire Rescue, 2631 SE Third Street, Ocala, FL 34471.
8. **Adjournment** – There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Approved:

Pat Gabriel, Chairperson

Date