

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

April 7, 2026

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in regular session in Commission Chambers at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

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

**9:00 AM ROLL CALL:**

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Carl Zalak, III, District 4; Vice-Chairman Matthew McClain, District 3; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Kathy Bryant, District 2; 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.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Chairman Zalak addressed upcoming scheduled meetings as listed on the Commission Calendar (Item 13.2.1).

**1. PROCLAMATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

Upon motion of Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner McClain, the BCC approved and/or ratified the following:

**1.1. PROCLAMATION** - Drive 4 Life Month - Sonja Christmas, Drive 4 Life Coordinator, North Marion High School (Approval and Presentation)

The Board presented the Proclamation designating April 2026, as "Drive 4 Life Month" to Drive 4 Life Coordinator Sonja Christmas, North Marion High School and several other representatives.

Bailey Lightner, North Marion High School, stated she is standing before the Board as more than a graduating student at North Marion High School, but as a voice for something far bigger than herself, noting this is about lives, about loss, and about the responsibility to protect one another.

Allison Clark, North Marion High School, advised that she stands with that same purpose because Drive 4 Life is more than just an assembly and more than a presentation, noting it is a movement, a promise and a wakeup call. She stated that one decision behind the wheel can change everything. Ms. Clark advised that in 2008, the community was shaken by a devastating tragedy on the Jumbolair airstrip, where five teenagers lost their lives in a single accident, noting these were 5 young people with futures, families and plans for tomorrow that were gone in an instant. In the face of that heartbreak, the senior class of 2010 at North Marion High School decided that enough is enough and refused to let these lives be remembered by only loss and they turned this pain into a purpose. She noted

April 7, 2026

that purpose became Drive 4 Life. Ms. Clark advised that since then, students like herself and Bailey have carried this on their shoulders year after year, not because it is easy, but because it matters and because they know what is at stake. Each year, members of their leadership class carry this weight on their shoulders and pour every ounce of themselves into something they hope will save someone else. They do it for the people the community has lost, they do it for their friends, and they do it for the person sitting next to them because they know that one text, one drink, one moment of distraction or exhaustion can take everything away. During the presentation, the leadership team talks about the four D's of driving drunk, drugged, distracted, or drowsy. She noted these are not just words, and this message does not stop at one presentation. Ms. Clark advised that students dedicate an entire week to it, beginning with an assembly on Monday morning where students hear real stories and are educated on the importance of safe driving. Throughout the week, the local Sheriff's Office hosts live demonstrations during lunches while leadership students lead educational games and conversations to keep students engaged. Students can also sign a pledge to make safe choices, which turns awareness into action. Drive 4 Life has reached thousands of students, and it continues to impact North Marion High School today, but the truth is, it cannot stop there because the danger is still real and the consequences are still devastating. She stated safe driving is not optional; it is life or death. This message cannot stay within the walls of one school and must go further to more students, more schools and more communities. When students lead something like this, they are not just completing a project, they are carrying the weight of a promise that those lives were not lost to be forgotten. Ms. Clark stated the leadership team will do everything in their power to protect the lives that are still here and requested help from the community to take this message further and wider before another life is lost, because one choice can end a life, but one message shared far enough can save thousands. She expressed her appreciation to Duke Energy and the Marion County Children's Alliance for their long standing support and sponsorship of this legacy program. Ms. Clark also expressed her appreciation to North Marion High School administration and staff including Principal Matt Johnson and Miss Sonya Christmas for their continued support of Drive 4 Life.

Commissioner McClain advised that nationwide, one of the most dangerous places for a teen is behind the wheel of a car, noting there are so many different distractions out there today, not just with the phones, but everything else going on. On behalf of the BCC, Commissioner McClain expressed appreciation to everyone who continues to bring awareness to this issue.

Sonja Christmas, North Marion High School, expressed her appreciation to the Board for recognizing the leadership students and the rest of the team for giving them the opportunity to be in front of this crowd and for recognizing their efforts over the years. She expressed her appreciation to Duke Energy and Marion County Children's Alliance for their support.

**1.2. PROCLAMATION** - Citrus Cup 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Week - Alicia Davis, Show Manager and Chair, 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Cup Horse Show (Approval and Presentation)

The Board presented the Proclamation designating April 20 through 26, 2026, as "Citrus Cup 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Week" to Show Manager and Chair Alicia Davis, 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Cup Horse Show, and several other representatives.

**1.3. PROCLAMATION - Farmland Preservation Month - Sara Fennessy, Executive Director, Horse Farms Forever (Approval and Presentation)**

The Board presented the Proclamation designating April 2026 as “Farmland Preservation Month” to Executive Director Sara Fennessy, Horse Farms Forever, Inc. (HFF) and several other representatives.

Commissioner Curry advised that his family has a 200 year history in Marion County, which is a very agrarian, agriculturally rich community. He commented on the amount of preserved property that Marion County has been able to set aside with the help of good partners like Save Our Rural Areas (SORA) and HFF. Commissioner Curry stated it is a fine line that Commissioners walk trying to protect the farmland, trying to protect the community, trying to keep that quality of life that everybody wants, yet still trying to accommodate growth.

Executive Director Sara Fennessy, HFF, expressed her appreciation to the Board for its support and for recognizing the importance of the Farmland Preservation Area (FPA). She opined that the horse industry is really the lifeblood of Marion County.

Jerome Feaster, SORA, stated his family is a pioneer farm family in Florida, which means they have been in the agricultural business for 100 years or more. He advised that on Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, SORA is going to hold a Farmland Preservation Festival in Orange Lake. Mr. Feaster invited everyone to come and help celebrate Farmland Preservation Month.

**1.4. PROCLAMATION - Water Safety Day - Renee Brandies, President, Harlow's Helping Hands (Approval and Presentation)**

The Board presented the Proclamation designating April 18, 2026, as “Water Safety Day” to President Renee Brandies, Harlow’s Helping Hands, and several other representatives.

President Renee Brandies, Harlow’s Helping Hands, expressed her appreciation to the Board and everyone in the community that continues to help support the organization’s mission by making water spaces and areas in Marion County safer. She invited everyone out to the Water Safety Day to be held at Florida Aquatics Swimming & Training (FAST) on Saturday, April 18, 2026. Ms. Brandies advised that the organization would provide free CPR training, along with water demonstrations, pool fencing information and other companies will be there to help provide resources. She commented on the importance of keeping children safe around water bodies and encouraged citizens to visit the organization’s website at [www.harlowshelpinghands.com](http://www.harlowshelpinghands.com), which has a list of resources where someone can register their children for swimming lessons, starting from infant up through elementary ages. Ms. Brandies noted for citizens who cannot access the website, they can call 352-598-0323 for more information.

Commissioner Bryant expressed her appreciation to Ms. Brandies, her entire team and everyone who puts forth so much effort to make sure that they are getting the word out and educating people on this very significant safety issue in the community.

**1.5. PROCLAMATION - Water Conservation Month (Approval Only)**

The Board approved the Proclamation designating April 2026 as “Water Conservation Month”.

**1.6. PROCLAMATION - National Fair Housing Month (Approval Only)**

The Board approved the Proclamation designating April 2026 as “National Fair Housing Month”.

April 7, 2026

**1.7. PROCLAMATION - National Community Development Week (Approval Only)**

The Board approved the Proclamation designating April 6 through 10, 2026, as “National Community Development Week”.

**1.8. PROCLAMATION - National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (Approval Only)**

The Board approved the Proclamation designating April 12 through 18, 2026, as “National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week”.

**1.9. PROCLAMATION - Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week (Approval Only)**

The Board approved the Proclamation designating April 12 through 18, 2026, as “National Animal Control Officer Appreciation Week”.

Commissioner Bryant out at 9:29 a.m.

**2. AGENDA ITEM PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Reserved for comments related to items specifically listed on this agenda. Scheduled requests will be heard first and limited to five (5) minutes. Unscheduled requests will be limited to two (2) minutes. Citizens may contact Marion County Administration by 5:00 p.m. the Friday before the meeting at 352-438-2300 to request to speak or submit the request online at: [www.marionfl.org](http://www.marionfl.org).

Commissioner Bryant returned at 9:31 a.m.

Chairman Zalak opened the floor to public comment.

Joseph Walker, SE, 54<sup>th</sup> Place, Ocklawaha, addressed the Board in regard to Agenda Items 9.1. and 9.2. as it relates to the requests for release of liens for Code Enforcement cases. He commented on Agenda Item 9.2 and referred to the pictures shown on the overhead screens. Mr. Walker stated the first Code Enforcement violation on this property was in 2010, noting there is still litter on this property today.

(Ed. Note: The Deputy Clerk did not receive copies of the pictures shown by Mr. Walker.)

Carolyn Morales, NW 223<sup>rd</sup> Street, Lawtey, advised that she owns the property related to Consent Agenda Item 9.2. She stated once she purchased the property, she tore down the mobile home and brought the property into compliance.

Chairman Zalak requested the Board address Agenda Item 9.2. at this time. It was the general consensus of the Board to concur.

**9.2. Request for Release of Lien on Code Enforcement Case Numbers 549422-AL and 549422-JB; Parcel 4551-016-067**

Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: On October 13, 2010, a Code Enforcement Board (CEB) lien was recorded against Joseph Mundy for having an accumulation of junk on the 0.14-acre property located at 10340 SE 131<sup>st</sup> Lane, Ocklawaha (Parcel 4551-016-067). In August 2011, a Certification and Claim of Lien was recorded for a junk abatement conducted on the property that has been accruing interest. In May 2025, NE Florida Land Watch LLC obtained the property via a quit-claim deed. Carolyn Morales submitted requests for reduction/rescission of each lien in November 2025 and paid the \$500 application fees (\$250 per lien).

On January 14, 2026, Ms. Morales' request for a reduction/rescission of the CEB lien came before the Code Enforcement Board (CEB). The CEB moved to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approve a reduction

or rescission of the CEB lien based on Ms. Morales' testimony that she paid the back taxes and had the mobile home removed from the property. The CEB does not make recommendations for abatement liens. Interest on the abatement lien is shown below, calculated at the varying rate and four percent.

	Varying %	Flat 4%
Code Enforcement Board lien	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Abatement lien	\$ 1,580.62	\$ 1,580.62
Case costs	\$ 1,054.79	\$ 1,054.79
Payments received	\$ 0	\$ 0
<u>Abatement interest through BCC date</u>	<u>\$ 2,467.04</u>	<u>\$ 927.07</u>
Total	\$ 8,102.45	\$ 6,562.48

Marion County Property Appraiser shows the 2025 Market Value and Assessed Value as \$8,676.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to deny a rescission of the liens for Case Numbers 549422-AL and 549422-JB; Parcel Number 4551-016-067, leaving the liens in full force and effect.

Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin stated he had Code Enforcement staff visit the property yesterday and referred to the picture as shown on the overhead screen, which reflects that the property is clean. He noted the pipe in the background is from a well or septic and the concrete is from the old mobile home. Mr. Varadin advised that staff have confirmed Ms. Morales removed the mobile home at her expense of approximately \$5,900.00, had the property cleaned up, and the back taxes have been paid. He advised that there are two Code Enforcement liens on the property, one is a Code Enforcement Board lien, and one is an Abatement lien, noting the Abatement lien does accrue interest over time. Mr. Varadin clarified that the original Code Enforcement lien was recorded in 2010 and the Abatement lien was recorded in 2011, noting both were filed against Joseph Monday, who owned the property at that time, but unfortunately Mr. Monday was incarcerated prior to the liens being recorded. He advised that the property would stay vacant until 2025 when Northeast Florida Land Watch, LLC, purchased the property by a Quit Claim Deed and then Ms. Morales purchased it from them. Mr. Varadin stated the hard cost, which includes the Abatement lien and the case cost total \$2,635.41. He advised that the total overall cost including interest is \$8,102.45, noting the assessed value for this property is \$8,676.00 according to the Property Appraiser's Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Curry, to approve a reduction of the total liens to the hard costs of \$2,635.41 and to waive all interest fees for Case Numbers 549422-AL and 549422-JB; Parcel Number 4551-016-067. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**3. ADOPT THE FOLLOWING MINUTES: (3 sets)**

- 3.1. November 18, 2025
- 3.2. December 2, 2025 A
- 3.3. December 2, 2025 B

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Stone, to adopt the meeting minutes of November 18 and December 2 (2 sets), 2025. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**4. CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS AND GOVERNMENTAL OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:**

April 7, 2026

**4.1. Billy Woods, Sheriff - Request Approval of Expenditure of \$2,000 from Law Enforcement Trust Fund**

The Board considered the following recommendation as presented by Sheriff William "Billy" Woods, Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO):

Description/Background: The Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is requesting \$2,000 from the Law Enforcement Trust Fund (LETF) for donations to the following:

- Nancy Renyhart Dementia Education Program: \$1,000
- Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranches: \$1,000

The Sheriff has certified that this request meets the requirements of Chapter 932 of the Florida Statutes and that there are no recurring expenses for subsequent fiscal years.

Budget/Impact: Neutral.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the expenditure request of \$2,000 from the Law Enforcement Trust Fund (LETF).

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Bryant, to approve the expenditure request of \$2,000 from the LETF. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**5. CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT:**

Clerk Gregory C. Harrell advised that Budget Amendment Resolution 5.1.1. relates to Agenda Item 4.1. (which was just approved) and Budget Amendment Resolution 5.1.2. relates to Consent Agenda Item 7.5.7.

Upon motion of Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Stone, the Board adopted the following Budget Amendment Resolutions transferring funds, as well as approving Consent Agenda Item 7.5.7. as presented by Clerk Harrell:

**5.1. Budget Amendment**

**5.1.1a.** 26-R-81 - Budget Transfer from LETF to Law Enforcement Finance Admin - \$2,000

**5.1.1b.** 26-R-82 - Budget Transfer from MSTU for Law Enforcement to Sheriff Patrol CID - TR - \$2,000

**5.1.2.** 26-R-83 - General Fund - Multiple Departments - \$44,000

**5.1.3.** 26-R-84 - MSTU for Law Enforcement - Sheriff Patrol CID Transfer - \$6,369

**5.1.4a.** 26-R-85 - Budget Transfer from General Fund to Sheriff Jail - Transfer - \$11

**5.1.4b.** 26-R-86 - Budget Transfer from Fine & Forfeiture Fund to Sheriff Regular - Transfer - \$80

**5.1.4c.** 26-R-87 - Budget Transfer from MSTU for Law Enforcement to Sheriff Patrol CID - TR - \$29,998

**5.1.5.** 26-R-88 - Tourist Development Tax Fund - Visitors and Convention Bureau - \$10,165

(Ed. Note: MSTU is the acronym for Municipal Services Taxing Unit and CID is the acronym for Criminal Investigation Division.)

**5.2. Clerk of the Court Items**

**5.2.1.** Present the Acquisition or Disposition of Property Forms Authorizing Changes in Status, as Follows: 044970, 046854, 047096, 047545, 047789, 047790, 47812, Landfill Disposition List, and Property Appraiser List

Commissioner Stone advised that Consent Agenda Item 7.1.1. is related to Item 5.2.1. and would like to approve that Item as well. It was the general consensus of the Board to concur.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner McClain, to approve the disposition of property forms 044970, 046854, 047096, 047545, 047789, 047790, 47812, Landfill Disposition List, Property Appraiser List and Consent Agenda Item 7.1.1. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

## **7. CONSENT:**

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda is a motion to approve all recommended actions. All matters on the Consent Agenda are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion unless desired by a Commissioner. Upon motion of Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Stone, the Board acted on the Consent Agenda as follows:

### **7.1. Administration:**

**7.1.1.** Request Approval to Donate Vehicle to Quality of Life Rehab & Foster, Inc. (Budget Impact - None)

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by ACA Angel Roussel, Administration:

Description/Background: On March 19, 2026, a request was received from Quality of Life Rehab & Foster, Inc., for a vehicle to support their ongoing work in the community.

Per Administrative Policy 4.3 and Florida State Statutes 274.05, the Marion County Board of County Commissioners has the discretion to donate equipment to governmental agencies and non-profit entities. The Fleet department has identified a 2014 Chevy 3500 Express Van, asset number VN-16, to consider for the donation. The disposition form is attached for reference and is included as a separate agenda item on this meeting for approval.

Quality of Life Rehab & Foster, Inc., is a grass roots effort to increase the quality of life for all animals, especially those who have been injured or abandoned and are most susceptible to entering the shelter.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve donation of the 2014 Chevy 3500 Express Van, asset number VN-16, to Quality of Life Rehab & Foster, Inc.

(Ed. Note: This Item was approved with Agenda Item 5.2.1.)

### **7.2. Attorney:**

**7.2.1.** Request Approval of Auto Liability Settlement in the Civil Action, Anthony Gonzalez v. Marion County Board of County Commissioners, Case No. 2025-CA-289 (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$175,000)

The Board accepted the following recommendation to adopt Resolution 26-R-89 as presented by County Attorney Mathew G. Minter, Legal:

Description/Background: On May 23, 2023, Anthony Gonzalez was the driver of a 2016 Hyundai Sonata which was turning right into Baseline Auto Sales on County Road 35 (Baseline Road). A County-owned 2007 dump truck operated by a County employee struck the rear of Mr. Gonzalez's vehicle, causing Mr. Gonzalez to hit a parked Ford van in the Baseline Auto Sales lot.

April 7, 2026

Mr. Gonzalez underwent treatment and complained of pain and discomfort in his neck, back and right knee because of the accident and underwent right knee surgery on September 27, 2023.

Mr. Gonzalez is represented by Dan Newlin Injury Attorneys. This lawsuit was filed on February 17, 2025. The original demand for settlement was for our maximum sovereign immunity limit of \$200,000. If this case were to proceed to a jury trial, Marion County faces exposure for Mr. Gonzalez's past and future medical expenses as well as non-economic damages which could easily exceed the sovereign immunity limit if a jury were to favorably consider Mr. Gonzalez's claim that his quality of life has been diminished due to this accident.

On March 9, 2026, Mr. Gonzalez forwarded a settlement demand in the amount of \$175,000. The County Attorney's office agreed to the amount of \$175,000, contingent on approval by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners (Board), which Mr. Gonzalez accepted. The recommendation to the Board is that Marion County settle this auto liability claim in the amount of \$175,000, inclusive of attorneys' fees and costs to be paid from the Auto Liability Self-Insurance Fund. Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$175,000, from the Auto Liability Self-Insurance Fund ZK160519-545701.

Recommended Action: Motion to Adopt Resolution Approving Settlement in the Anthony Gonzalez v. Marion County Board of County Commissioners, Civil Action Case for \$175,000, to be paid for by the County's Auto Liability Self-Insurance Fund.

Resolution 26-R-89 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA, APPROVING SETTLEMENT FOR ALL CLAIMS IN THE CIVIL ACTION, ANTHONY GONZALEZ V. MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, CASE NO. 2025-CA-289

### **7.3. Community Services:**

**7.3.1.** Request Approval of the Marion County Standard Public Services Agreement Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG-PS) with Wear Gloves, Inc. (Budget Impact - Neutral; not to exceed \$50,000)

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Community Services Director Cheryl Butler:

Description/Background: On August 6, 2025, the Board approved the FY 2025-26 Annual Action Plan for Community Services, which includes the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG). This Annual Action Plan aligns with the Fiscal Year 2024-2028 Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

Wear Gloves, Inc. is a local nonprofit organization who applied for CDBG funds to expand its comprehensive support services tailored to meet their needs and help become valued members of the community through employment, workforce development, job certification, supportive housing and life skills training.

The Dignity House Program under Wear Gloves, Inc. offers a safe, temporary 12-month shelter with access to mental health coaching, addiction recovery counseling, workforce readiness, job training, etc. The program is a low barrier; men's shelter located at parcel number 30918-001-00. The funding being

requested is to assist the program in expanding its services and to increase the number residents served at the current facility.

The project is located within Marion County and aligns with the objectives and requirements of the CDBG program.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; not to exceed \$50,000.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute all necessary documents associated with this Agreement with the Wear Gloves, Inc. and authorize Community Services Director to extend the term of the agreement if necessary.

**7.4. Municipal Services:**

**7.4.1. Request Acceptance of East Lake - Woodmar Improvement Area into Warranty Period and Authorization for Chairman to Execute Letter to Contractor (Budget Impact - None)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Municipal Services (MS) Director Chad Wicker:

Description/Background: The East Lake - Woodmar Road Improvement Project has been completed and constructed according to plan. In accordance with the contract, this project is under a warranty period of one (1) year. This improvement area has been maintained by the Office of the County Engineer and will continue to be maintained after the warranty period has ended.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to accept construction of East Lake - Woodmar Improvement Area and authorize Chairman to execute letter advising the contractor of the one (1) year warranty period.

**7.5. Procurement Services:**

**7.5.1. Request Approval of Bid Award: 26B-041 DRA Mowing Areas II and IV - Southern Shield Land & Disaster Services, LLC, Trenton, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$79,975)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Susan Olsen:

Description/Background: On behalf of the Office of the County Engineer, Procurement advertised a bid for mowing Area II and Area IV. Area II has 278 Drainage Retention Areas (DRAs) with 269.3 acres and Area IV has 153 DRAs with 187.7 acres. The Scope of Work is for five (5) mowing cycles per year which include routine mowing of DRAs, drainage right-of-ways, adjacent right-of-ways, and conveyance swales within drainage easements. The work also includes trimming around structures such as pipe ends, discharge structures, signs, trees, and along fencelines.

A total of six (6) bids were received for Area II in response to the solicitation, and the bid tabulation is provided below:

Firm - Location	Bid Total
Southern Shield Land & Disaster Service - Trenton, FL	\$47,127.50
Three Ponds Rental, LLC - Ocala, FL	\$62,612.25
BWC Services USA - Ocala, FL	\$79,443.50

JCM Outdoor Services, LLC - Anthony, FL	\$80,790.00
American Grounds Service, LLC - Dunnellon, FL	\$83,370.79
Extreme Enterprises of Marion County - Ocala, FL	\$94,255.00

A total of seven (7) bids were received for Area IV in response to the solicitation, and the bid tabulation is provided below:

Firm - Location	Bid Total
Southern Shield Land & Disaster Service - Trenton, FL	\$32,847.50
Three Ponds Rental, LLC - Ocala, FL	\$43,640.25
Rick's Lawn Service - Ocala, FL	\$56,925.00
BWC Services USA - Ocala, FL	\$55,371.50
JCM Outdoor Services, LLC - Anthony, FL	\$56,310.00
American Grounds Service, LLC - Dunnellon, FL	\$61,593.75
Extreme Enterprises of Marion County - Ocala, FL	\$65,695.00

Steven Cohoon, P.E., County Engineer, recommends that Southern Shield Land & Disaster Service receive the award as the lowest, most responsive, and most responsible bidder. Attached for review is a draft of the contract. Upon approval at today's meeting, it will be sent to Southern Shield Land & Disaster Service for signature, and upon return will be forwarded to the Clerk and Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; total expenditure of \$79,975. Funding is from EK430538-534101 (Stormwater Program).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the recommendation and allow staff to issue a contract, and upon approval by Legal, authorize the Clerk and Chairman to execute the contract with Southern Shield Land & Disaster Service under 26B-041.

**7.5.2. Request Approval of Bid Award: 26B-051 Silver Springs Shores 2026 Road Resurfacing Project - Superior Asphalt Inc., Bradenton, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$615,001)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On behalf of the Marion County Municipal Services Department, Procurement advertised a bid seeking qualified and experienced contractors for the resurfacing of approximately four (4) miles of subdivision local road sections within Silver Springs Shores. The project includes roadway preparation, crack sealing, leveling, adjustment of manholes and valve boxes to grade, shoulder removal, minor clearing and grubbing, installation of temporary striping, placement of permanent thermoplastic striping, and stabilization of all areas disturbed during construction. The contractor will be responsible for proper disposal of all debris and for adhering to all applicable permitting requirements and construction standards. Three (3) submittals were received, and the tabulation is listed below.

Firm Name - Location	Bid Price
Superior Asphalt Inc., - Bradenton, FL	\$615,001.00
C.W. Roberts Contracting, Inc. - Wildwood, FL	\$789,541.99
Anderson Columbia Co., Inc. - Lake City, FL	\$983,204.55

Municipal Services Director, Chad Wicker, recommends that Superior Asphalt Inc., receive the award as the lowest, most responsive, and most responsible bidder. Attached for review is a draft contract. Upon approval at today's meeting, it will be sent to Superior Asphalt Inc., for signatures. Once returned, it will be forwarded to the Clerk and Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$615,001. Up to 10% contingency may be added to the purchase order in accordance with the Procurement Manual. Funding is from HN522541-563220 (RM SSS MSTU Road Improvements).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the recommendation and allow staff to issue a contract and upon approval by Legal, authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the contract under 26B-051.

**7.5.3. Request Approval of Bid Exemption: 26BE-070 E-One Typhoon Pumper Engine Refurbish - On Scene Repairs & Maintenance, LLC, Ocala, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; estimated expenditure of \$280,897.21)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On behalf of Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR), Procurement Services is requesting a bid exemption for the refurbishment of a 2007 E-One Typhoon Pumper, Asset 39958, Serial 13244, VIN 4ENRAAA8771002444.

This engine has served as a reserve unit for more than 10 years and has been out of service for the past two (2) years. To avoid the significant cost of purchasing a new engine and to minimize the use of surtax funds required to return this unit to front-line service, approval is requested for On Scene Repairs & Maintenance, LLC (On Scene) to perform the necessary scope of work. MCFR was not able to obtain additional quotes as the only other certified provider capable of performing this service did not respond to the request.

Attached for review and approval is the Solicitation Waiver and the On Scene's quote. Upon approval at today's meeting, the waiver will be presented to the Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$280,879.21. Funding is from VJ732522-564101 (INFRAST SURTAX CAP PROJ FUND).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the bid exemption and authorize the Chairman to execute the solicitation waiver under 26BE-070.

**7.5.4. Request Approval of Change Order to Purchase Order 2401732: 24Q-226 Cross Florida Greenway Baseline Road to Santos Paved Trail - Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., Ocala, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; additional expenditure of \$57,685)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On September 4, 2024, the Board approved a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) awarding a contract with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. (KHA) to develop engineering plans, specifications, cost estimates, bid documents, and permit documents for the proposed Cross Florida Greenway paved trail, extending from the Baseline Road Trailhead to the Santos Trailhead.

This change order revises the scope of services to include the design of a proposed pedestrian crossover bridge at the Florida Northern Railroad and

removes the optional Florida Scrub-Jay survey, retaining wall design, and bidding/post-design services. Those funds will be reallocated to provide additional geotechnical services and structural design for a prefabricated pedestrian truss bridge, including ramps and support towers.

The change order and detailed proposal are attached for review. Upon approval at today's meeting, the change order will be forwarded to the Chairman for signature. Budget/Impact: Neutral; additional expenditure of \$57,685, bringing the total amount of the Purchase Order to \$895,710.18. Funding comes from BL760541-563220-TIP000024 (County Transportation Maintenance Fund).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the change order, allow staff to process, and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the third change order to Purchase Order 2401732.

**7.5.5. Request Approval of Contract Amendment 18P-021-CA-04, Visitors and Convention Bureau Website Development – Tempest Interactive Media, LLC, Philadelphia, PA (Budget Impact - Neutral; additional expenditure of \$5,600)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On April 3, 2018, the Board awarded a contract to Tempest Interactive Media, LLC under project 18P-021 for website development. This Contract Amendment adds audit work to ensure American for Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

Attached for review is the draft contract. Upon approval at today's meeting, it will be sent to the Firm for signatures. Once returned, it will be forwarded to Legal, the Clerk, and Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; additional expenditure of \$5,600 fee, bringing the project's total cost to \$176,650. Funding is available in CP155552-548101 (Tourist Development Fund).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the contract amendment, and upon approval by Legal, authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the contract with Tempest Interactive Media, LLC under 18P-021.

**7.5.6. Request Approval of Contract Amendment: 24Q-279-CA-01 Fire Training Facility - A&E Services - Monarch Design Group, LLC, Ocala, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$716,804.89)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On February 18, 2025, the Board approved a contract with Monarch Design Group, LLC to provide Professional Architectural Services for Marion County Facilities Management. The original project was intended for the Fire Training Facility; however, it was later determined that the project would instead be used to develop the prototype design for Fire Station 24.

This Amendment supplements the Agreement by adding the Construction Documents for Fire Station 24.

Attached for review is a draft contract amendment. Upon approval at today's meeting, it will be sent to Monarch Design Group, LLC for signatures. Once returned, it will be forwarded to the County Attorney, Clerk, and Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$716,804.89. Funding is available in line VJ732522-562102 - Infrastructure Surtax Capital Project Fund.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve, and upon approval by Legal, authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the contract with Monarch Design Group, LLC under 24Q-279.

**7.5.7. Request Approval of Contract Amendment (Renewal): 20P-151-CA-04, Disposition of Unclaimed Bodies - Gratitude & Compassion, LLC dba Roberts of Ocala Funerals and Cremation, Ocala, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; estimated expenditure of \$90,000)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On October 6, 2020, the Board approved an agreement with Gratitude and Compassion, LLC d/b/a Roberts of Ocala Funerals and Cremation (Roberts) to provide services for the care and disposition of unclaimed decedents in Marion County. These services include respectful removal, storage, cremation, disposition of remains, and completion of all required legal and administrative documentation.

On January 6, 2026, the Board approved a renewal of this agreement for an additional five (5) year term, extending through October 31, 2031. However, the renewal agreement was not executed as Roberts experienced a change in management and subsequently requested an increase in compensation before signing. Staff is now presenting a revised renewal agreement incorporating the requested rate adjustment, which increases the cost per unclaimed body from \$720 to \$900 to reflect current service.

Roberts has consistently performed these services in a satisfactory and professional manner. Staff recommends approval of the renewal agreement, as revised, to formalize the ongoing services and updated pricing.

The modification agreement, signed by Roberts, is attached for review. Upon Legal's approval, it will be forwarded for Clerk and Chairman signatures.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; estimated annual expenditure of \$90,000.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and allow staff to issue, and upon approval by Legal, authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the contract with Gratitude and Compassion, LLC d/b/a Roberts of Ocala Funerals and Cremation under 20P-151.

(Ed. Note: This Item was approved with Budget Amendment Resolution 5.1.2.)

**7.5.8. Request Approval of Piggyback of Contract: 26PB-061 Cleaning and Inspection of Manholes, Wastewater Lines, and Lift Stations - EnviroWaste Services Group, Inc., Palmetto Bay, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; estimated annual expenditure of \$200,000)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: Marion County Utilities (MCU) requests approval to piggyback Hillsborough County Contract ITB-24-24598 Cleaning and Inspection - Sanitary with EnviroWaste Services Group, Inc. for gravity sewer main cleaning and inspections. Hillsborough County's contract is effective through February 28, 2027.

Procurement Services has reviewed all supporting documentation and confirmed the piggyback complies with the County's Procurement Manual.

Presented for review is the Solicitation Waiver and the Hillsborough County Contract ITB-24-24598 Cleaning and Inspection - Sanitary.

Upon approval at today's meeting, the Solicitation Waiver will be presented to the Chairman for final execution.

To remain consistent with the Hillsborough County master contract, the County's piggyback agreement will automatically renew in accordance with Hillsborough County Contract ITB-24-24598 Cleaning and Inspection - Sanitary.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; estimated annual expenditure of \$200,000, subject to actual service needs and not to exceed budgeted amounts. Funds are available in Line ZF445536-563102 (Marion County Utility Fund).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the request to piggyback the Hillsborough County contract authorize the Chairman to execute the Solicitation Waiver.

**7.5.9. Request Approval of Selection Committee Recommendation: 26Q-047 Tourism Development Feasibility Analysis - C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc., Chicago, IL (Budget Impact - None)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: On behalf of the Marion County Visitors & Convention Bureau (VCB), a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was advertised to contract with qualified firms capable of providing professional consulting services for individual feasibility analysis of tourism development opportunities throughout the County on an as-needed, task order basis. Services include, but are not limited to: market analysis assessing tourism trends, user demand, and competitive benchmarks; economic and financial feasibility including revenue projections, return-on-investment, cost-benefit analyses, and funding opportunities; site and infrastructure evaluation of venue/park assets, access, and needs; concept development and comparative analysis; trail, park, and facility enhancements; and reporting/presentations with deliverables such as feasibility reports, executive summaries, and stakeholder presentations. Two (2) submittals were received and evaluated by Selection Committee members Sky Wheeler, Charles Ryan, and Chuck Varadin. The firms were ranked as follows:

FIRM - Location	Rank
C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc. - Chicago, IL	1
Amarach Planning Services - Ocala, FL	2

The Selection Committee recommends awarding a contract to C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc., the top-ranked firm. Although the County is currently contracting with one firm, VCB plans to re-open RFQ 26Q-047 to solicit additional qualified firms. This approach will broaden the vendor pool, enabling VCB to more effectively manage the County's ongoing workload and project demands.

Attached for review is a draft contract. Upon approval at today's meeting, the contract will be sent to the firm for signature and once returned will be forwarded to the County Attorney, Clerk, and Chairman for signatures.

Budget/Impact: None; task orders exceeding \$50,000 will be brought back before the Board for approval.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the recommendation and allow staff to issue the contract to C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc., and upon approval from Legal, authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute under 26Q-047.

**7.5.10. Request Approval of Sole Source Declaration: 26SS-068 MicroC 2000 - Hawkins Water Treatment Group, Inc. d/b/a Hawkins, Inc. Apopka, FL (Budget Impact - Neutral; estimated expenditure of \$100,000)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: Marion County Utilities department has the need to utilize MicroC 2000 as a supplemental carbon source within the wastewater treatment process to assist in denitrification. The sole manufacturer of the product is Environmental Operating Solutions, Inc. (EOSi). The sole supplier of less than bulk packaging in the State of Florida is Hawkins Water Treatment Group, Inc. d/b/a Hawkins, Inc.(Hawkins, Inc.).

Attached for review and approval is a Solicitation Waiver and the Sole Source letter from EOSi.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; estimated expenditure of \$100,000. Funding is from ZF445535-552108 (MARION COUNTY UTILITY FUND).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the request and authorize the chairman to execute the solicitation waiver to declare Hawkins, Inc. the sole source provider for Micro C 2000 under 26SS-068.

**7.5.11. Request Approval of Purchases \$50,000 and Over**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Procurement Services Director Olsen:

Description/Background: The item(s) below have been received by Procurement Services and are approved for conformance with the Procurement Code/Manual, pending approval at today's meeting.

1. Pending Requisition/Sportsfield Specialties - Marion County Parks & Recreation requests approval to purchase a StormGuard® ball safety netting system from Sportsfield Specialties. Equipment includes aluminum poles, cabling and hardware, ground sleeves, and black nylon ball safety netting for ball containment and spectator protection. The purchase also includes stamped and sealed engineering drawings and structural calculations prepared by a licensed professional engineer in accordance with applicable building codes Freight charges are included. Total expenditure of \$117,775.35. Funds are available in line CR362572-563102. This purchase meets competitive bidding requirements under Keystone Purchasing Network (KPN) Contract KPN-202001-02.
2. Pending Requisition/ Dell Marketing LP - Marion County Fire Rescue requests approval to purchase mobile data terminal equipment from Dell Marketing LP, a subsidiary of Dell Technologies. Equipment includes 70 Dell Pro Rugged tablets, 100 Dell Pro Rugged keyboards, and 100 Havis docking stations to support Fire-EMS mobile operations. This purchase includes manufacturer warranty and ProSupport Plus service coverage. Total expenditure of \$336,879.10. Funds are available in lines AA305526-552116 (\$129,229) and EF300522-552116 (\$207,650.10.) This purchase

meets competitive bidding requirements under the NASPO ValuePoint Computer Equipment Contract 43210000-23-NASPO-ACS 28880179, State of Florida Contract C000001116132.

3. Pending Requisition/Dell Marketing LP - Marion County Public Library System requests approval to purchase 72 standard desktop computers from Dell Marketing LP, a subsidiary of Dell Technologies, to support library computer operations. The purchase includes Dell Pro Micro Plus desktop units with keyboards, mice, and five-year ProSupport service coverage. Total expenditure of \$100,992.96. Funds available in line AA375571-552116 (375WIDELIB). This purchase meets competitive bidding requirements under the NASPO ValuePoint Computer Equipment Contract 43210000-23-NASPO-ACS 30807097, State of Florida Contract C000001116132.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve requested purchases.

### **7.6. Tourist Development:**

#### **7.6.1. Request Approval of Tourist Development Council Request for Event Bid Fees (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$26,000)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by Tourist Development Director Loretta Shaffer

Description/Background: The Tourist Development Council (TDC) seeks funding approval for organizations that have festivals, events, or programs which support the TDC's mission of growing the economy and accelerating prosperity in Marion County through effective destination sales and marketing. The Bid Fee Event Funding Program is intended to position Marion County as a must-experience destination in Florida through bringing quality events and initiatives to Marion County. The following funding contracts were recommended for approval by the TDC.

Funding for the USA Swimming Speedo Sectionals was initially approved by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners on March 19, 2024, as part of a three-year agreement. The event's sanctioning body has since directed the host organization, CSF Aquatics, to adjust the dates for the 2026 event year. The contract presented for approval reflects this change in event dates only. No additional funding is being requested.

USA Swimming Speedo Sectionals	\$25,000
Fishers of Men Championship Bass Tournament	\$1,000

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$26,000. Funding from CP155552-548101.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the Tourist Development Council funding request and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the attached funding agreements.

### **7.7. Transportation - County Engineer:**

#### **7.7.1. Request Approval of a Purchase Agreement Associated with the NW 80<sup>th</sup>/70<sup>th</sup> Avenue Segment 3 Road Improvement Project for a Portion of Parcel 23299-003-01 (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$203,065)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by County Engineer Steven Cohoon, Office of the County Engineer (OCE):

Description/Background: This is a request to approve a Purchase Agreement in the amount of \$203,065, plus closing costs for a portion of parcel 23299-003-01 associated with the NW 80<sup>th</sup>/70<sup>th</sup> Avenue Segment 3 Road Improvement Project (from +/- 900 feet North of SR 40 to +/- 600 feet South of US Hwy 27). This is a right-of-way taking of approximately 0.067 acres of an improved lot.

The negotiated agreement is inclusive of any and all costs associated with this transaction. There are cost savings recognized in this negotiation by avoiding additional costs that occur during condemnation proceedings.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$203,065, plus closing costs (Fund STC073812- CIPTRANSP- EXPANS ROW- 738- VJ738541-561301).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the Purchase Agreement.

**7.7.2. Request Approval of a Purchase Agreement Associated with the NW 80<sup>th</sup>/70<sup>th</sup> Avenue Segment 3 Road Improvement Project for Portions of Parcel 2109-001-000 (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$467,000)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by County Engineer Cohoon, OCE:

Description/Background: This is a request to approve a Purchase Agreement in the amount of \$467,000 plus closing costs for portions of parcel 2109-001-000 associated with the NW 80<sup>th</sup>/70<sup>th</sup> Avenue Segment 3 Road Improvement Project (from +/- 900 feet north of SR 40 to +/- 600 feet south of US Hwy 27). This is a 0.363-acre Right-Of-Way taking and a 0.003-acre Temporary Construction Easement taking of an improved parcel.

The negotiated agreement is inclusive of any and all cost associated with this transaction. There are cost savings recognized in this negotiation by avoiding additional costs that occur during condemnation proceedings.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$467,000, plus closing costs (Fund STC073812- CIPTRANSP- EXPANS ROW- 738- VJ738541-561301).

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the Purchase Agreement.

**7.7.3. Request Approval of a Purchase Agreement and Addendum Associated with the SW 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Phase Road Improvement Project for Parcel 3578-015-004 (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$363,520)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by County Engineer Cohoon, OCE:

Description/Background: This is a request to approve a Purchase Agreement and Addendum in the amount of \$363,520, plus closing costs for parcel 3578-015-004 associated with SW 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Phase Road Improvement Project (from Marion Oaks Trail to SW 95<sup>th</sup> Street). This is a full acquisition of approximately 0.44 acres of improved property. The Addendum provides for extended occupancy of six (6) months.

The negotiated agreement is inclusive of any and all costs associated with this transaction. There are cost savings recognized in this negotiation by avoiding additional costs that occur during condemnation proceedings.

Budget/Impact: Neutral; expenditure of \$363,520, plus closing costs (Fund STC073814-CIP TRANSP- EXPANS ROW-738- VJ38541-561301).

April 7, 2026

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and authorize the Chairman and Clerk to execute the Purchase Agreement and Addendum.

**7.7.4. Request Approval of Amendment to Developer's Agreement Ocala Crossings North PUD and to Developer's Agreement Ocala Crossings South PUD (Budget Impact - Neutral; expenditure of \$150,000, in future Transportation Improvement Program)**

The Board accepted the following recommendation as presented by County Engineer Cohoon, OCE:

Description/Background: This is a request to approve an Amendment to both Developer's Agreements for the Ocala Crossings North and South Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). The Amendment addresses outstanding issues related to SW 85<sup>th</sup> Street and SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street, corrects a scrivener's error in the South PUD Agreement related to the SW 85<sup>th</sup> Street obligations, modifies the North PUD requirements to reflect construction of only a partial segment of SW 85<sup>th</sup> Street, and establishes a path forward for the design and construction of SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street. It has been determined that SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street cannot be constructed within the right-of-way alignment originally anticipated and already conveyed. It is necessary for SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street to be realigned to the north to avoid impacts to an existing home. This Amendment provides for additional right-of-way dedication by the developers and contemplates the County's acquisition of supplemental right-of-way in areas not associated with either development. The Amendment also establishes a coordinated framework between the developers for the design, permitting, construction, and cost allocation of the remaining SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street improvements, along with issuance of transportation impact fee credits for eligible improvements. While the developers remain responsible for design and construction of the SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street roadway improvements, it will be necessary for the County to perform a preliminary engineering evaluation to support the potential eminent domain acquisition of right-of-way not associated with the developments but necessary to complete roadway connections in the area.

The realignment of SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street requires relocation of an existing County water main. The relocation costs will be shared between both developers and be eligible for transportation impact fee credits, capped at the lesser of actual cost or seventy-five percent (75%) of the estimated cost of \$174,500.

Estimated construction costs for the remaining SW 90<sup>th</sup> Street improvements are \$718,246.49 for the southern developer and \$1,146,028, for the northern developer, and will be offset through impact fee credits.

**8. COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

**8.1. Request Approval of a Resolution, at the Direction of the School Board, that the Board of County Commissioners Request the Supervisor of Elections of Marion County, Florida to Place a Measure on the Ballot for the November 3, 2026, General Election for the Electors within the School District to Vote on the Approval to Continue a One Mill Ad Valorem Tax for Four Years Pursuant to Section 1011.73(2), Florida Statutes**

The Board considered the following recommendation as presented by County Attorney Minter, Legal:

Description/Background: The School Board of Marion County, Florida has determined that the continuation of the one mill ad valorem tax to be used for necessary operating expenses, levied effective July 1, 2027, for a period of four

(4) years, subject to referendum approval, is to fund necessary operating expenses including safe schools, reading, physical education, art, music, library/media, and vocational programs; meeting class size requirements; and retaining State Certified teachers and paraprofessionals with oversight of these expenditures by an independent citizens financial oversight committee, as described in the copy of the School Board's Resolution 26-04 levying such ad valorem tax, (subject to referendum approval), attached hereto and incorporated herein as an exhibit. The previous additional one mill ad valorem tax approved by referendum in 2022 for necessary operating expenses expires June 30, 2027.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to Adopt the Resolution, at the direction of the School Board, that the Board of County Commissioners request the Supervisor of Elections of Marion County, Florida to place a measure on the ballot for the November 3, 2026, general election for the electors within the School District to vote on the approval to continue a one mill ad valorem tax for four years, pursuant to Section 1011.73(2), Florida Statutes; and transmittal of the Resolution to the Supervisor of Elections.

County Attorney Matthew G. Minter advised that this is a request for Board adoption of a Resolution to place a measure on the ballot for the November 3, 2026 General Election for continuation of a one mill ad valorem tax for four years beginning in 2027 for the Marion County School Board (MCSB), noting the School Board has requested this type of Resolution in the past. He stated the question has been posed to him as to whether the Board has to approve these Resolutions to put the item on the ballot, noting his answer has always been yes, the Board has to do that. Mr. Minter clarified that the Board's approval of the Resolution does not indicate an endorsement of the subject matter of the ballot question, but it is simply ministerially advising the Supervisor of Elections to place this measure on the ballot.

A motion was made by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Stone, to adopt Resolution 26-R-90, at the direction of the School Board, requesting the Supervisor of Elections of Marion County, Florida to place a measure on the ballot for the November 3, 2026, General Election for the electors within the School District to vote on the approval to continue a one mill ad valorem tax for four years, pursuant to Section 1011.73(2), Florida Statutes; and transmittal of the Resolution to the Supervisor of Elections. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

Resolution 26-R-90 is entitled:

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA AUTHORIZING REFERENDUM ON THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA CONTINUING ONE MILL AD VALOREM TAX FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATING EXPENSES, AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**8.2.** Request Board Authorization for County Attorney and County Engineer to Proceed with the Acquisition of Certain Property Interests from Bal Bay Realty, LTD., or its Successor in Interest, for the SW 40<sup>th</sup> and SW 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue Road Construction Project, Within the Purchase Price and Other Parameters Described Herein

County Attorney Minter, Legal, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: Marion County is currently constructing the SW 40<sup>th</sup> and SW 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue Roadway Project pursuant to a design-build contract with Art

April 7, 2026

Walker Construction, Inc. Acquisition of certain real property interests owned by Bal Bay Realty, LTD. is necessary to complete the project as designed. Bal Bay Realty, LTD., owns two parcels directly to the south of SW 66<sup>th</sup> Street and east of Interstate 75, totaling approximately 33.84 acres in size. The approved roadway alignment necessitates the proposed acquisitions, which include 0.005 acres of drainage easements, 0.057 acres of fee simple right-of-way, 0.456 acres of temporary construction easements, and 0.086 acres of a Marion County utility easement, for a total of 1.117 acres of property being acquired. Following extensive negotiations and the filing of a Petition in Eminent Domain, the parties have reached an agreement on the essential terms of a negotiated settlement, which is being presented for the Court's approval via a Stipulated Order of Taking and Final Judgment (Stipulated OT). The proposed Stipulated OT provides for the acquisition of the necessary property interests to allow construction to proceed. Staff respectfully requests Board approval of the proposed Stipulated OT, based on the agreed-upon essential terms, and authorization for the County Attorney and County Engineer to finalize and execute the Joint Motion for Entry of the Stipulated OT and any related ancillary documents consistent with those terms that are necessary to complete the acquisitions. Construction activities in this phase of the project have been delayed pending the acquisition of the required property interests. Approval of these settlement terms will facilitate the timely completion of the roadway project.

Compensation and Expenses: The most important part of the settlement provides for payment of the constitutional measure of "full compensation" to the property owner for all interests for \$50,000, including any claims for severance damages or consequential damages. In addition to that, the County will be required to pay the owner's statutory attorney fees of \$14,751, for a total cost to the County of \$64,751. Payment of these amounts is subject to the Court's execution of a proposed Stipulated Order of Taking and Final Judgment.

This will provide for the acquisition of what has been described in the eminent domain proceedings as Parcels 86 and 89 for fee simple right-of-way; Parcel 85 for a perpetual drainage easement, Parcels 87 and 88, for temporary construction easements, and one Unnumbered Marion County utility easement. Descriptions of the acquisition parcels are attached to the proposed Stipulated Order of Taking and Final Judgment.

Budget/Impact: Expenditure of \$64,751, payable from account STC073804 CIP TRANSP NEWINF ROW 738 VJ738541 561301.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the proposed Stipulated Order of Taking and Final Judgment to be finalized by the County Attorney and the County Engineer, incorporating the terms described above.

County Attorney Minter advised that this is a request for approval of an eminent domain acquisition for right-of-way (ROW) acquisition from Bal Bay Realty, LTD properties and is pursuant to the SW 49<sup>th</sup> Street project, noting staff recommend Board approval of this request. This would enable the County to file the Stipulated Order Of Taking with the Court.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Minter stated this approval would also provide for a Final Judgment as well.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner McClain, to approve the proposed Stipulated Order of Taking and Final Judgment to be finalized by

the County Attorney and the County Engineer, incorporating the terms described above. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**8.3. Request Consideration of Reduction and/or Release of Civil Restitution Liens for Briley Carr**

County Attorney Minter, Legal, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: On March 27, 2026, the County Attorney's Office received a request from Briley Carr for a Release/Reduction of their Civil Restitution Liens from Case No. 2017-MM-6266, recorded at OR Book 6705 Page 1768 on January 24, 2018, and Lien recorded at OR Book 7016 Page 0205 on August 2, 2019. Mr. Carr is requesting a reduction of the Civil Restitution/Cost of Incarceration Lien totaling \$8,279.57, with \$5,500.00 remaining in judgment and \$2,779.57 in interest.

On October 1, 2017, Mr. Carr was arrested for Battery (First Degree Misdemeanor), Violation of Domestic Violence Injunction (First Degree Misdemeanor) and Petit Theft (First Degree Misdemeanor) in Case No. 2017-MM-6266. On December 11, 2017, he was released on bond. On December 20, 2017, Mr. Carr was sentenced to 72 days, time served and placed on twelve (12) months of Probation. The Court imposed a Judgment of Cost of incarceration of \$3,600.00 (sentence 72 days x \$50 per day). He served a total of 72 days in the Marion County jail and was not an Inmate Worker. He has paid all other court fines and fees for this case.

On February 1, 2019, Mr. Carr was arrested for Violation of Probation for Battery (First Degree Misdemeanor), Violation of Domestic Violence Injunction (First Degree Misdemeanor) and Petit Theft (First Degree Misdemeanor) in Case No. 2017-MM-6266. Mr. Carr was released on bond on February 2, 2019. He served a total of two (2) days in the Marion County jail and was not an Inmate Worker.

On April 10, 2019, Mr. Carr was arrested for Failure to Appear on the Violation of Probation for Battery (First Degree Misdemeanor), Violation of Domestic Violence Injunction (First Degree Misdemeanor) and Petit Theft (First Degree Misdemeanor) in Case No. 2017-MM-6266. On May 15, 2019, Mr. Carr was sentenced to 121 days, time served. The Court imposed a Judgment of Cost of incarceration of \$1,900.00 (sentence 38 days x \$50 per day). He served a total of 38 days in the Marion County jail and was not an Inmate Worker. He has paid all other court fines and fees for this case.

Mr. Carr is asking for this release/reduction of their liens to help him purchase a house.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve or deny Briley Carr's request for a Reduction and/or Release of the Civil Restitution Liens recorded at OR Book 6705 Page 1768 on January 24, 2018, and OR Boox 7016 Page 0205 on August 2, 2019.

Mr. Minter stated this is a request for reduction or elimination of civil restitutions lien from Briley Carr in the amount of \$8,279.57, which includes the original \$5,500.00 plus \$2,779.57 in interest.

Briley Carr, Redwood Run Track, stated he had no idea about the civil restitution liens until a few days ago and noted he paid off every other fee that he was aware of. He advised that he was made aware of the liens when he went to purchase a home, noting

April 7, 2026

he is requesting to either waive them or reduce the liens so he can try to move forward with his life and purchase the home in order to get all of this behind him.

Mr. Minter clarified that there is no indication that Mr. Carr had any service while incarcerated, that he would have gotten credit for the inmate service, noting the total with interest is \$8,279.57.

Commissioner Stone noted there is a gentleman with Mr. Carr who would also like to address the Board.

Mark Shaffer, N. Magnolia Avenue, advised that he owns ABC Body Shop, noting Mr. Carr has worked for him for five years. He stated Mr. Carr got his life back, straightened out and is walking the straight and narrow. Mr. Shaffer advised that Mr. Carr has a permanent job with him, noting Mr. Carr worked really hard to get everything taken care of and would appreciate any help the BCC could provide.

Chairman Zalak stated he had no issue waiving the interest on the liens. Commissioner McClain concurred.

Commissioner Stone questioned whether it was possible to set up a payment plan for Mr. Carr, noting a lending institution may look more favorably when seeing that Mr. Carr is making payments on those liens.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Carr stated he would contact his lender to see if they would accept him making a payment plan option.

Commissioner Bryant advised that the Board has in the past drafted a promissory note and then showed the lien is being paid off, which is what was needed for the lending institution.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Minter stated the Agenda Item cover memo noted that Mr. Carr was an inmate worker for 2 days. Commissioner Bryant noted the lien needs to be reduced to give him credit for those 2 days served as an inmate worker. Mr. Minter advised that he misread the Memo, noting Mr. Carr was not an inmate worker during his incarceration.

In response to Mr. Minter, Commissioner Bryant requested Mr. Minter work out the payment terms with Mr. Carr so that it is affordable for him to be able to move forward and buy his home.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Curry, to waive the \$2,779.57 in interest and to reduce the Civil Restitution Liens to \$5,500.00 and to direct the County Attorney to draw up a Promissory Note between Marion County and Mr. Carr. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**8.4. Request Consideration of Engagement in Services of the Ballard Partners to Represent Marion County to Advocate for the County's Interests Before the State of Florida, Particularly Including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection**  
County Attorney Minter, Legal, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has adopted a new Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) Rule for Silver Springs and the Upper Silver River and Rainbow Springs Group and Rainbow River Basin Management Action Plan. The Rule's requirements for annual nitrogen reduction are neither physically nor financially achievable for the county government. See Attachment 1, Letter from County Engineer Steven Cohoon to FDEP dated May 2, 2025. After considering the options of litigation challenging the Rule, which would be very expensive and without strong likelihood of success, or choosing a non-litigation option, the County Attorney and County Administrator, as

well as Assistant County Administrators Angel Roussel and Tracy Straub, and County Engineer Steven Cohoon and Utilities Director Tony Cunningham, recommend engaging the services of Ballard Partners, partner David Childs, of Tallahassee, see Attachment 2, to engage in meetings with FDEP to negotiate an approach by Marion County that is operationally and economically feasible. Mr. Cunningham has had prior experience working with Mr. Childs, who is both an engineer and attorney, in dealings with state agencies. We believe this proposal is in the best interests of Marion County.

Budget/Impact: Expenditure of \$108,000, payable in \$9,000, monthly installments, for a one-year engagement.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve the proposed Engagement Letter.

Mr. Minter advised that Marion County, like many other Counties with springs, is subject to the FDEP's BMAP Rule that relates to the requirement to reduce the total nitrogen in their springs, noting the way that FDEP has crafted this Rule is very oppressive to say the least for all Counties involved. He commented on the billions of dollars that it would cost Marion County to clean up the springs to the level that FDEP is talking about, noting one of the ironies is that it includes the effects of agricultural land that the County has no control over and also issuance of septic permits by the Health Department that the County does not control. Mr. Minter clarified that the County is being asked to be responsible for the effects of things that it does not have control over, so rather than spending a lot of money trying to litigate this Rule with the State agency, staff's recommendation is for the Board to engage the services of Ballard Partners, a Tallahassee lobbyist who has had a lot of experience negotiating issues with the FDEP in the past. He opined that this would be the County's best chance for coming up with some reasonable resolution to this issue. By way of contrast, for instance, Volusia County has a similar magnitude of imposition on them. Hernando County has calculated their numbers to be around \$1,500,000,000.00 if they had to pay the imposition on them. Mr. Minter stated Marion County is not alone in this issue and staff feel like the County cannot ignore it, but wants to take affirmative action with FDEP to try to work something out.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bryant, seconded by Commissioner Stone, to approve the proposed Engagement Letter. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

#### **8.5. Present Update and Request Direction Related to the County's Lawsuit Filed as a Result of the Railroad Tie Fire on CSX Property in the City of Dunnellon**

County Attorney Minter, Legal, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: On Sunday, February 1, 2026, a railroad tie fire in the City of Dunnellon occurred and thereafter prompted direction from the Board of County Commissioners to initiate a lawsuit seeking relief in the form of an injunction in the case titled, "Marion County v. Track Line Rail, LLC, Florida Northern Railroad Company, LLC and CSX Transportation, Inc., Case No. 2026CA0496." The lawsuit was filed to facilitate the immediate removal of the railroad ties remaining after the Dunnellon Railroad Ties Fire, as well as perform any necessary remediation following the removal of the hazardous materials. The lawsuit is still pending, and CSX transportation is still actively removing the railroad ties.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For discussion.

April 7, 2026

Mr. Minter advised that this is an update relating to the railroad tie issues in and around Dunnellon, noting he provided the Board with a Memo from Assistant County Attorney Linda Blackburn who has taken the lead in working on this issue and even preparing and filing a lawsuit against the CSX and Track Line Rail, LLC. However, when staff filed that lawsuit, because they had been in ongoing communications and negotiations with the General Counsel of CSX regarding the removal of the rail ties, the County did not actually serve them. Staff have held the lawsuit in abeyance because getting into that litigation would have been very expensive and would have required all kinds of expert witnesses on both sides. He clarified that the gist of the Memo is that to date, CSX has accomplished the removal of a vast amount of rail ties within the unincorporated area of the County; however, there may still be more in the City of Dunnellon, which the County does not have any jurisdiction over, but staff believe that CSX is moving to get rid of all these rail ties. Mr. Minter advised that FDEP, as a result of their intervention in this case, feels like the remediation efforts that have been made to date have satisfied their regulations; however, FDEP is going to keep on monitoring the cleanup operations on the site. He stated at this point, staff recommends not withdrawing the lawsuit, but keeping it filed with the Court until the withdrawal deadline of July 2026.

Commissioner McClain opined that the Board should leave the lawsuit in place and the County should still be trying to work on getting reimbursed for the cost for Fire Rescue to go out there and put out CSX's fire.

In response to Chairman Zalak, County Administrator Bouyounes stated the Department has not yet billed CSX and is still doing some monitoring on a weekly basis to see how many ties have been removed and how many remain. He clarified that staff are bringing that to a closure and should be finalizing those costs in order to bill them.

Chairman Zalak opined that even if staff is still monitoring them, it should move forward and bill CSX for the work performed so far, noting the importance of having it on record that railroad ties were moved.

It was the general consensus of the Board to direct staff to continue monitoring the removal of the railroad ties and to move forward and bill CSX for the work performed so far.

(Ed. Note: The Deputy Clerk did not receive a copy of the Memo from Assistant County Attorney Linda Blackburn.)

## **6. PUBLIC HEARINGS (Request Proof of Publication) at 10:00 am:**

Public participation is encouraged. When prompted, please step up to the podium and state your name and address for the record. Please limit your comments to the specific issue being addressed.

### **6.1. PUBLIC HEARING to Consider Transmittal of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report Large-Scale Text Amendment to Amend the Marion County Comprehensive Plan (25-L05) After the Evaluation and Appraisal Report**

Deputy Director Kenneth Weyrauch, Growth Services, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment is the result of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) process, looking forward to sustainable growth practices through the 2050 horizon. In 2024, Growth Services staff worked with their consultant, Kimley Horn, to complete the EAR with a Data Inventory Analysis (DIA). The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) held eight workshops to perform a line-by-line review of the proposed

Comprehensive Plan Amendment language. During a Public Hearing on November 10, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted to adopt the changes and proceed with the transmittal hearing, and during a Public Hearing on December 17, 2025, the BCC voted approval and transmittal. Since that time, Growth Services has received additional comments from Florida Commerce, resulting in further revisions to the previously transmitted materials. The Planning and Zoning Commission considered the revisions during a Public Hearing on March 30, 2026, and approved transmittal to the BCC.

Staff recommends approval of the request to update the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, and recommends that the request is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 163, Florida Statutes and will not adversely affect the public interest.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to approve and direct staff to transmit the proposed EAR-Based amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to the State.

Deputy Clerk Thornton presented Proof of Publication entitled, "Notice of Change to Comprehensive Plan Text Marion County Comprehensive Plan" published on the publicly accessible website [www.MarionFL.org/LegalNotices](http://www.MarionFL.org/LegalNotices) on March 23, 2026. The Notice states the Board will consider the proposed changes to the EAR based Amendments to the Marion County Comprehensive Plan to complete the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Growth Services Deputy Director Kenneth Weyrauch advised that staff transmitted the proposed EAR-Based amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to the State, who sent back a letter saying null and void. Since that time, Growth Services has received additional comments from Florida Commerce, resulting in further revisions to the previously transmitted materials. He provided a brief overview of the changes now being recommended based on input from the State. Mr. Weyrauch advised that the first policy that Florida Commerce had issues with is Future Land Use Policy 1.1.6 "Buffering of Uses". Originally staff had recommended striking the word "substantial" where it says the County shall require new development or substantial redevelopment to provide buffering. However, to correct that issue, staff recommends leaving the word substantial in there, which is how the Comprehensive Plan reads today. He clarified that if a developer is making minor changes to their plan, they do not have to worry about buffering or changing the buffers outside, but if they do a substantial redevelopment of the site, they do have to bring the entire site up to Code.

Mr. Weyrauch addressed Future Land Use Policy 2.1.4 "Open Space Requirement" and provided an overview of the Florida Commerce concerns. Currently, this Policy requires a minimum of 350 square feet (sf) of open space for each residential lot in either single or linked multiple tracts within residential development. The proposed change replaces "lot" with "dwelling unit", thereby increasing the amount of open space required for each development. This change was determined to be more restrictive or burdensome under Senate Bill (SB) 180 than what is currently adopted in the Comprehensive Plan. He stated staff have revised the Policy to revert back to the word "lot" instead of dwelling unit.

Mr. Weyrauch addressed Transportation Policy 2.1.3., which was amended to read "The County may establish corridor specific service volumes and evaluate level of service (LOS) based on detailed corridor or subarea studies. The roadway service volumes shall be documented in the Congestion Management Process (CMP) database to be

April 7, 2026

developed in conjunction with the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and periodically updated". He stated staff were trying to allow flexibility for the developer; however, and the State did not read it that way.

Amber Gartner, Kimley Horn and Associates (KHA), SE 17<sup>th</sup> Street, clarified that if a roadway is showing a volume exceeding the generalized service volume that a more detailed study could be done to identify what is the actual operating service volume of that roadway and LOS based on actual operating conditions, the number of signals and how those are operating. She advised that staff modified this language and added two more clarifying statements as follows: "The County may establish corridor specific service volumes and evaluate level of service based on detailed corridor or sub area studies for the purpose of a more specific review if a generalized service volume results in a roadway approaching or exceeding the adopted level service standard".

Commissioner Stone noted there were also a few scrivener errors identified that will need to be addressed.

Mr. Weyrauch addressed the State's concern relating to Chapter 163 in regard to the Sanitary Sewer Element Policy 1.1.1., noting staff originally proposed that the LOS standard to determine demand for the new development shall be established and maintained in the Land Development Code (LDC); however, the State did not like the idea of taking the LOS from the Comprehensive Plan and putting it in the LDC. Staff are now proposing to strike it out of the LDC so that the LOS stays in the Comprehensive Plan where it is supposed to be to be consistent with Chapter 163.

County Attorney Minter opined that there are a few words in this document that would be beneficial for the County to change. For example, there are 14 listed land use designations and most have a phrase, usually at the end of them that may say for instance, in Rural Land Policy 2.1.16 it states, "this designation is a Rural Area land use". He referred to Policies 2.1.17 and 2.1.18, which state "this land use designation is considered an Urban Area land use". He expressed concerned about the word "allowed" because the County has been bashed in the past and can be interpreted as allowed without even getting the Land Use Amendment, which is clearly not the intent. Mr. Minter stated he would be more comfortable if the word "allowed" was changed to either "may be permitted" or "can be approved".

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Zalak stated it was the general consensus of the Board to change the word "allowed" to "can be approved".

Chairman Zalak opened the floor to public comment.

Blair Knighting, KHA, SE 17<sup>th</sup> Street, advised that the County did receive the null and void, which was a little defeating, but sort of accepted or expected. She stated the good news is it was just a few issues and opined that staff have resolved them and hopefully will be able to transmit and move on. She stated Counties and municipalities across the State are seeing a lot of null and voids out there with a lot of back and forth with Florida Commerce in regard to Senate Bill 180, noting it is becoming a little bit chaotic in the planning world of Florida because municipalities do not know what to do and the interpretation is very strict.

Chairman Zalak expressed his appreciation to Kimely Horn and Associates and staff for their hard work on this matter.

Chairman Zalak advised that public comment is now closed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Curry, to approve the proposed EAR-Based Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan with the

changes proposed by staff including the corrections to scriveners' errors and to direct staff to resubmit to the State. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**9. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR:**

**9.1. Request for Release of Lien on Code Enforcement Case Number 521656-JB Associated with Parcel 4018-012-040**

Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: On October 27, 2009, an abatement lien in the amount of three thousand ten dollars and twelve cents (\$3,010.12), plus interest, was recorded against Michael Kurpil for the removal of an unsafe structure and junk located on his property at 9414 SE 195<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Ocklawaha, Marion County.

The property ownership has changed twice since the lien was recorded. In January 2026, the current owner, Diane Lefebvre, paid the two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00) fee and submitted an application requesting relief of the lien.

	Varying %	Flat 4%
Code Enforcement Board lien	\$ 0	\$ 0
Abatement cost	\$ 3010.12	\$ 3,010.12
Case costs	\$ 464.20	\$ 464.20
Abatement interest through 03/03/2026	\$ 5,008.60	\$ 1,970.10
Payments received	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Balance	\$ 8,482.92	\$ 5,444.42

Marion County Property Appraiser shows the 2025 market value is \$9,227, and assessed value is \$5,460.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to deny a rescission of the lien for Case Number 521656-JB on Parcel 4018-012-040, leaving the lien in full force and effect.

Growth Services Director Varadin provided a brief overview of the request by Diane Lefebvre for a rescission of an abatement lien originally recorded in 2009 for removal of an unsafe structure and junk located on parcel 4018-012-040. He noted the property has since changed hands a couple of times. Mr. Varadin stated the parcel was sold by a Quit Claim deed to Mr. Jerry Kulchinski, who, according to his wife's testimony, unfortunately passed away from COVID in 2021. She had gone to sell the property in the fall of 2025, when she realized that there was a lien still remaining against the property. He stated Code Enforcement staff visited the property last week and no Code violations were found. Mr. Varadin advised that the hard cost for this case, which includes the abatement cost and the case cost are \$3,474.32. The total balance which includes the interest due to being an abatement lien (accruing interest of \$5,008.60) is \$8,4182.92. He stated Marion County Property Appraiser shows the 2025 market value is \$9,227.00, and assessed value is \$5,460.00.

Diane Lefebvre, NW 64<sup>th</sup> Court, Coconut Creek, advised that in 2016, her husband bought the land sight unseen thinking they were going to retire there together; however, that did not occur. She stated last fall she had some money issues and asked her kids if she could sell it and they all agreed to sell the property. Ms. Lefebvre advised that she found a buyer for \$8,000.00 and on the day of the closing she found out there lien on it that was more than with the sale price. She noted she works 2 jobs and does not have the money to pay off the lien. Ms. Lefebvre noted she and her husband were not the reason the County had to place the lien on the property.

Commissioner Stone advised that the taxpayers of Marion County did spend \$3,474.32

April 7, 2026

to clean up that property, so it is due back to the County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Bryant, to waive the interest and reduce the lien to just the abatement cost and the hard cost in the amount of \$3,474.32 for Case Number 521656-JB. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

Chairman Zalak directed Mr. Varadin to meet with Ms. Lefebvre to provide more information.

### **9.3. Present Update on Marion County Day 2026 and America250**

ACA Amanda Tart, Administration, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: Update on Marion County Day held on March 28, 2026, overview of the America250 Gala, and discussion of a proposed drop-ship store for America250 merchandise, including flags for sale.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

ACA Amanda Tart, Administration, provided a brief update regarding Marion County Day held on March 28, 2026, an overview of the America 250 Gala and the proposed drop-ship store for America250 merchandise. She commented on the recently completed Marion County Day for 2026. This year the County welcomed nearly 12,000 attendees, making it one of the most successful events to date. The Westport High School Drumline delivered an incredible performance on the steps of the Tax Collector's Office, and the local high school JROTC teams showed up in full force to participate. The County also had more than 200 vendors in attendance, which is the highest number in the event's history. Ms. Tart advised that for those who joined the celebration on Saturday, they may have run into Rubbish and Debris dressed in red, white and blue or taken in a performance by the County's own Cross Creek Cloggers, noting there truly was something for everyone and it was a great reflection of the County's community spirit.

Ms. Tart provided an update on the upcoming drop-ship merchandise store available through Ocala Marion Tourism Department. The team is currently building out the site and finalizing product imagery, and anticipating it to be fully operational by the end of April 2026. This store will give residents and visitors easy and accessible ways to show their pride and be a part of the America 250 celebration. The merchandise will feature a variety of patriotic and Marion County branded items designed to appeal to all ages, from apparel and accessories to keepsakes to commemorate this historic milestone. In addition to the store, staff are working on an initiative to bring a strong hometown feel across the community and want to see patriotism on display at every home and every business. To support this, staff have stocked up on yard signs, and are coordinating distribution through community partners to help spread awareness and excitement. She stated the yard signs were designed by the County's Public Relations (PR) team and will be available on the drop-ship merchandise store and at all of the events that Marion County Departments attend and will be for sale for \$10.00. Ms. Tart advised that yard signs placed in the rights-of-way (ROW) are currently prohibited under Marion County Ordinance; however, given the significance of the upcoming America 250 events staff would like to request Board consideration of a temporary pause on enforcement of America 250 signs and flags in the months leading up to July 4<sup>th</sup>, if the Board so chooses to give staff that direction. She stated the County's LDC does allow for exemptions for holiday decorations so if that is allowed, then staff would encourage people to put them out, but make sure that they are not a safety concern.

Chairman Zalak opined that sometimes people's ROW and property lines can end up being really tight for placing signs and flags; however, if it becomes a safety issue then Code Enforcement can move them back a little bit rather than removing them altogether. Commissioner Bryant expressed concern relating to the Board making special rules for this government event.

General discussion ensued.

ACA Tracy Straub advised that Section 4.4.2 of the LDC is titled "exempt signs", noting Paragraph 5 allows for holiday lights and decorations. Staff feel like displays in yards of all this patriotism and liberty lives here signs and American flags certainly does meet that standard.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Bryant reiterated her concern that the Code does not allow signs in the ROWs for local companies that spend money to promote their businesses and opined that it feels wrong to make an exception for something that the County is trying to promote. She requested staff to bring back more information at a later date.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Stone advised that she is not comfortable with anything being left in the ROW that has a Marion County name on it.

Ms. Tart provided a brief overview of the America 250 Gala, which will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2026 at the Club at Iron Lake. This evening will feature exceptional food and spirits, a keynote speaker, Silent Auction, and a fireworks show over the lake, which will be provided by Alpha Fireworks, the County's firework company. She stated tables are priced at \$5,000.00 and is pleased to report that staff have already sold 10 tables. Ms. Tart stated all proceeds will directly support July 4<sup>th</sup> events and any remaining funds will benefit local veteran organizations. She provided a brief update relating to event sponsorships, noting Advent Health has come on board with the County as the title sponsor and has continued to be an outstanding partner. In addition, staff have secured all of the sponsors currently displayed on the overhead screen, bringing the total to just under \$150,000.00 in total sponsorships to date. Moving forward, the momentum continues to build, and it is truly exciting to see the community come together in such a meaningful way. From strong event attendance and growing sponsorships to new initiatives that bring pride and patriotism to every corner of Marion County. Ms. Tart opined that the County is well on its way to delivering a celebration that reflects the very best of Marion County.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Ms. Tart stated the County has a separate Facebook page to keep citizens updated on all of the celebration events, which are being run by the County's PR Department. She advised that other municipalities and partners are contributing to that page, noting if the City of Ocala has something, they are tagging that page, and it is going on there and then everything is being updated that way. Same thing for the City of Belleview and the City of Dunnellon.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes clarified that the Board had a previous discussion and then sanctioned staff to be involved in the 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration, noting Chairman Zalak was appointed as the liaison.

Commissioner Bryant stated the Board also had discussion that the PR team was supposed to have minimal work in this project and opined that the PR team is spending a lot of time and effort in putting all this together.

Ms. Tart stated as presented to the Board last month, the County has contracted with Making It Matthews, a professional event planning company who will be running that

April 7, 2026

event. She advised that staff are involved to ensure that it goes the way that the County wants it to go and it meets everyone's expectations, noting staff are giving feedback on selecting the dinner menu and things like that. Ms. Tart clarified that the County's PR team will run the audio and visual at the gala event, but as far as the coordination of all of the vendors, coordination of all of the silent auction items, all of those things are going through Making It Matthews. She noted it is the same thing for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July events. Ms. Tart advised that the County will have the four locations, noting the City of Belleview is running the City of Belleview location; The Dunnellon Chamber of Commerce is running the Dunnellon location with the help of Making It Matthews; the County does have some of the Parks and Recreation team that are going to be running the Wrigley location with the help of Making at Matthews; and then she will be with the PR team running the location at Veterans Park. She noted Sue Mosley is running the parade. The County does have the Executive Committee and many of the other events that are going on throughout the community between now and July 4<sup>th</sup> that are not sponsored by Marion County. Staff are sharing and helping promote those events, but many of those events are being sponsored by Things to Do Ocala. The City of Ocala has several events that they are hosting as well. Ms. Tart stated the Ocala Police Department (OPD), Ocala Fire Department (OFD), Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR), and the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) will all be involved in the July 4<sup>th</sup> events for the community.

Commissioner Bryant advised that there is so much going on in this County and she is starting to feel like staff are spending a lot of resources on America 250 and taking time away from things that citizens are waiting for, noting that was the one thing that she cautioned everybody about when it started going into this. She opined that staff's involvement in the event has gotten way bigger than originally discussed.

Commissioner Curry stated that although there is no doubt that staff are spending some time on it, this event cannot be done without them. He noted there are a lot of volunteer meetings and work going on behind the scenes. Commissioner Curry opined that if it ends up being a little bit more work than what was originally anticipated, he would rather do that than see a failed effort by the County for the America 250 event.

Commissioner Stone advised that the Board needs to use good judgment in making decisions relating to the time and effort that goes into the event, noting she wants it to be a very successful launch. She commented on the importance of ensuring it is going to come to a close at the end and not going to live on through the end of the year.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Stone commented on the TDCs participation, noting most of the visitors come to visit family and friends and so as a result, the County wants to make sure that the community knows what they can bring their guests to be a part of during that specific holiday season. She clarified that it is not just to promote the America 250 event.

General discussion resumed.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that as part of the contract with Miles Partnership LLLP, the TDC will have analytics after the event that shows the percentage increase of folks who visited this year versus last year.

ACA Angel Rousel stated the TDC does measure these type of events, for example, when the City of Ocala organized the drone show, the TDC looked at the prior year, that year, and the following year after that event.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the BCC approved \$75,000.00 as seed money for the America 250 event and staff are supposed to reimburse the Board that \$75,000.00 from the fundraising that staff are doing and from the sponsorship funds collected.

**10. COMMITTEE ITEMS:**

**10.1. Housing Finance Authority - Request to Declare Seat Vacant and Authorize the Advertisement of One (1) Full Member Position for an Unexpired Term Ending September 2026**

Executive Assistant Gennifer Medina, Commission Office, presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: Jon M. Kurtz was last reappointed to the Housing Finance Authority Board on September 20, 2022, to serve a term ending in September 2026.

Mr. Kurtz has been a valued member of the board since his initial appointment in April 2018. However, due to unforeseen personal circumstances, he has been unable to attend recent meetings. To ensure the board remains active, engaged, and effective, it has been determined that his seat should be declared vacant to allow for the appointment of a new member.

Pursuant to Commission Policy 22-01 for Citizen Advisory Boards, Section II, B. Attendance Requirements for Citizen Advisory Board Members, all advisory board members are required to faithfully attend meetings on a regular basis. If any member fails to attend three (3) successive meetings without prior approval of the chairman of such board, or if any member fails to attend forty percent or more of all meetings within any calendar year, such fact shall be reported to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). The BCC may declare the seat held by such member to be vacant and may appoint a new member without notice.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Motion to declare Jon M. Kurtz' seat on the Housing Finance Authority vacant and authorize the advertisement of one (1) full member position for an unexpired term ending September 2026.

A motion was made by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Bryant, to declare Jon M. Kurtz's seat on the Housing Finance Authority (HFA) vacant and authorize the advertisement of one (1) full member position for an unexpired term ending September 2026. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

**11. NOTATION FOR ACTION: NONE**

**12. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Scheduled requests will be heard first and limited to five (5) minutes. Unscheduled speakers will be limited to two (2) minutes. Citizens may contact Marion County Administration by 5:00 p.m. the Friday before the meeting at 352-438-2300 to request to speak or sign up online at: [www.marionfl.org](http://www.marionfl.org).

Chairman Zalak opened the floor to public comment.

Jan Cubbage, SW Highway 484, Dunnellon, advised that she is present on behalf of the Board of Directors for the Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. She presented a 1 page handout regarding visitor attendance at the KP Hole on the Rainbow River. Ms. Cubbage referred to the handout and commented on the economic impact the Rainbow River has for Marion County. She expressed her appreciation to the BCC for its efforts in protecting the Rainbow River and for improving law enforcement presence on the river.

April 7, 2026

Ms. Cabbage advised that on November 4, 2026, the BCC adopted Ordinance 25-51 creating Chapter 5, Boats, Docks and Waterways, Article VI Silver Glen Springs and Silver Glen Run providing for a Noise Sensitive Zone, Penalties and Enforcement, noting the Rainbow River is in a similar situation relating to noise, only worse. She stated the statistics she presented put the KP hole at over 78,000 visitors with the State Park putting another 80,000 visitors into that river. Ms. Cabbage stated this is income for the County, but of course there are expenses involved with having those visitors come and use the river. She stated the Rainbow River Conservation, Inc. wants to keep the river a family friendly safe place, but are now seeing so many confrontations on the river because of people that come on their boats and other vessels. Ms. Cabbage advised that it is mostly the large pontoon boats that think the river is a perfect place to party, particularly during the warmer months and they bring with them their party equipment. She commented on all the creatures such as otters, birds, osprey, turtles, etc., noting these are natural creatures and you cannot hear them or even see them if you have people blasting their audio equipment on the river. Ms. Cabbage requested the BCC do for the Rainbow River what it did for Silver Glen Springs and Silver Glen Run, noting she has spoken with Lieutenant Doug Watts, MCSO, who opined that making the Rainbow River a Noise Sensitive Zone is a way to help with other problems and disturbances on the river.

Commissioner Bryant advised that she is a strong advocate for the Rainbow River and for anything that the Board can do to keep it safe and healthy, noting that has been the struggle due to all the traffic. She stated the Board also wants to ensure that residents who live on the Rainbow River get to live a peaceful life. Commissioner Bryant stated the County has taken tremendous steps to make sure that it is not putting too many people on the river when it comes to tubing. She requested Board consensus to have staff look into this request to keep that kind of activity from happening on that river. Commissioner Bryant stated this is Marion County's river, noting it is vital to the health of the Dunnellon community and the Board needs to make sure that it is doing everything that it can.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Bryant requested legal staff review this issue and bring the matter back.

Commissioner Curry recommended that Parks and Recreation Director Jim Couillard review this matter with the Legal Department and bring back a recommendation.

Robert Burton, SE Highway 25, addressed the Board in regard to the need for the County and the community to prepare for an economic downturn. He opined that world events have become a clear and present danger to the people of Marion County. Mr. Burton advised that Social Security is at an immediate risk, noting arrangements need to be made, especially for the less fortunate people in the community, but also the people who have invested a lot in Marion County.

Lori Conrad, Marion County Public Schools (MCPS), advised that MCPS had planned a ground breaking for the new Lake Weir Middle School this morning, but the weather has delayed that event. She expressed her appreciation to the BCC for unanimously approving the referendum language to place a measure on the ballot for the November 3, 2026, General Election relating to the continuation of a one mill ad valorem school tax (Item 8.1). Ms. Conrad advised that the revenue generated from the tax referendum allows MCSB to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) at every single school in Marion County, noting some of the middle and high schools have more depending on the number of students enrolled. She expressed her appreciation to the community for its support.

Joseph Walker, SE 54<sup>th</sup> Place, Ocklawaha, commented on Agenda Items 9.1. and 9.2. and expressed his appreciation to the BCC for making sure the hard costs stay on

properties until the lien is paid. He expressed his appreciation to Growth Services Director Varadin for getting staff to go out to those properties and verify they are cleaned up.

Henry Munoz, Marion Oaks Boulevard, addressed the Board in regard to a voicemail he received from Marion County utilities advising customers of a boil water notice. He expressed concern that he never received a notice that it was safe to drink the water again. Mr. Munoz stated he was told that the Utility sent out texts and emails notifying its customers that the water was now safe to drink. He advised that there are people that do not have a text message app or a computer, noting the Utility should call people the same way they did when they were under a boil water notice.

Utilities Director Tony Cunningham clarified that the utility does not have a definite timeline for when the water is safe to drink again, noting the Department must have two clear samples in order to rescind the boil water notice. It is estimated to be within 48 hours, but staff have to get those clear samples. He advised that to Mr. Munoz's point, staff did have some challenges with the Utility's automatic calling system. Mr. Cunningham stated there were a large number of folks that were identified as being placed under the boil water notice and the calling system took an extended period of time to get the information out to customers. He stated staff are working on improving that technology to be able to call a large number of people in a shorter period of time. Mr. Cunningham noted staff will work to provide customers with phone call messages instead of texts or emails.

Chairman Zalak advised that public comment is now closed.

### **13. COMMISSIONER ITEMS:**

#### **13.1. Commission Comments**

Commissioner Curry expressed his appreciation to everyone for coming to the banquet for the Veterans Hall of Fame. He commented on the emotional connection he had with what was happening in that banquet hall, noting he did not see one person leave early. Chairman Zalak stated it was a great honor to attend the event.

Commissioner McClain commented on earlier discussion relating to the America 250 event, noting it is important to ensure that staff are not overworked and that the County is using TDC resources appropriately. He expressed his appreciation to Chairman Zalak for the time, energy and effort he has been putting into this event to make sure that this community has something great and something beautiful for the America 250 celebration.

Commissioner Stone advised that Chairman Zalak has put a lot of time and passion into the America 250 event and is making it very publicized that the County is definitely going to be celebrating.

Commissioner Stone stated there has been some conversation over the last two months that she has been a part of the TDC, of the need to make citizens aware that those who have Airbnb's and are advertising and renting out their home in any way whatsoever that a Sales Tax needs to be collected and it must be remitted to the Tax Collector's Office. She advised that people in the neighborhood who know that there is an Airbnb, need to call and notify the Tax Collector that there is an Airbnb at this address in order for the Tax Collector's Office to follow up to ensure that the Sales Tax is being remitted, noting it is a felony if that is not done. Commissioner Stone stated that Chief Assistant County Attorney Dana Olesky has also been asked to take a look at the County's Ordinance and make sure that it has all the appropriate language.

April 7, 2026

Commissioner Stone advised that it is Employee Appreciation Month, noting she would like to say to County employees and staff how much they are greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Bryant invited everybody out to the Freedom Public Library ribbon cutting, which will be held on Monday, April 13, 2026 at 10:30 a.m.

Chairman Zalak expressed his appreciation to staff, noting the Board could not do any of these things or be effective in any way without the team, the Directors and all of the employees. He stated from filling potholes, to taking out the trash, to getting roads built, and in every other way staff serve the citizens of Marion County, the Board is grateful for their service.

### **13.2. Commission Calendar**

#### **13.2.1. Present Commission Calendar**

The Chairman acknowledged receipt of the Commission calendar covering the period of April 7 through May 5, 2026.

### **14. NOTATION FOR RECORD:**

#### **14.1. County Administrator Informational Items:**

**14.1.1.** Solid Waste Monthly Operations Report for January and February 2026

**14.1.2.** Present Chamber and Economic Partnership Quarterly Financial Reports for 2025 and Quarter One of 2026

**14.1.3.** Present Letter Dated March 5, 2026, from Florida Governmental Utility Authority Regarding Two Public Hearings for Proposed Fee Increase

**14.1.4.** Present Canterwood Acres Community Development District Board of Supervisors Meeting Dates for Fiscal Year 2026

#### **14.2. Present Walk-On Items From Previous BCC Meeting: NONE**

#### **14.3. Clerk of the Court:**

**14.3.1.** Present Administrative Budget Transfer Report for FY 2025-26

**14.3.2.** Present Memorandum from Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Regarding the Filing of Ordinances 26-05 and 26-06 with the Secretary of State's Office

**14.3.3.** Present Infrastructure Surtax Capital Improvement Program Project Close-Out

**14.3.4.** Present Regular Report of Utilization for Reserve for Contingencies

#### **14.4. Present for information and record, minutes and notices received from the following committees and agencies:**

**14.4.1.** Code Enforcement Board (CEB) - February 11, 2026

**14.4.2.** Development Review Committee (DRC) - March 2 and 9, 2026

**14.4.3.** Housing Finance Authority - January 21, 2026

**14.4.4.** Land Development Regulation Committee (LDRC) - March 4, 2026

**14.4.5.** License Review Board (LRB) - February 10, 2026

#### **14.5. General Informational Items:**

**14.5.1.** Marion County Health Department – For the Latest health news and information, Visit the Website at <http://marion.floridahealth.gov/>

**14.5.2.** Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) - For Minutes and Agendas, Visit the Website at <http://www.WaterMatters.org>

**14.5.3.** St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) - For Minutes and Agendas, Visit the Website at <https://www.sjrwmd.com>

**14.5.4.** Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) - For Minutes and Agendas, Visit the Website at <https://ocalamariontpo.org>

**14.5.5.** Withlacoochee Regional Water Supply Authority (WRWSA) - For Minutes and Agendas, Visit the Website at <http://www.wrwsa.org>

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

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Carl Zalak, III, Chairman

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

DRAFT

April 7, 2026

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