

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

July 21, 2025

CALL TO ORDER:

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners met in regular session in Commission Chambers at 1:32 p.m. on Monday, July 21, 2025 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country.

1:30 PM ROLL CALL:

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, District 2; Vice-Chairman Carl Zalak, III, District 4; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Matthew McClain, District 3; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5.

Also present were: Growth Services Director Chuck Varadin, Deputy Director Ken Weyrauch, Transportation Planner Ken Odom, Senior Planner Chris Rison, Planner Sara Wells, Staff Assistant Autumn Williams, County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Tracy Straub.

1. PLANNING & ZONING AND DRC WAIVER REQUESTS - REQUEST PROOF OF PUBLICATION (AT 1:30 PM):

Deputy Clerk Lewter advised that there are three Proofs of Publication to be presented for this afternoon's meeting.

The first Proof of Publication is Display ad No. 11393772 entitled, "Notice of Change to Comprehensive Plan Text Marion County Comprehensive Plan" published in the Star Banner newspaper on June 16, 2025. The Notice states the Board will consider transmitting the listed Large-Scale Comprehensive Plan text change Amendment 25-L01 to the State and Regional Agencies for their review regarding the Amendment.

The second Proof of Publication is Display ad No. 11393773 entitled, "Notice of Change of Land Use Marion County Comprehensive Plan" published in the Star Banner newspaper on June 16, 2025. The Notice states the Board will consider transmitting the listed Large-Scale Comprehensive Plan land use designation on the future land use map Amendment 25-L02 to the State and Regional Agencies for their review regarding the Amendment.

The third Proof of Publication is Legal ad No. 11462780 entitled, "Notice of Intention to Consider Adoption of an Ordinance" published in the Star Banner newspaper on July 7, 2025. The Notice states the Board will consider adopting an Ordinance approving Comprehensive Plan Amendment, zoning changes and/or Special Use Permits (SUP). County Attorney Matthew G. Minter provided a brief overview of the process for today's Master Plan approval, land use and zoning.

Mr. Minter requested that everyone who will be testifying today to please stand and be sworn in en masse.

1.1. Planning and Zoning Consent Items: NONE

1.2. Planning and Zoning Items for Individual Consideration:

1.2.1. 231007ZP - Westwood Trails Planned Unit Development FKA Fun N Games or Vila Verde, Final Master Plan Approval for Planned Unit Development Approved in Resolution 23-R-478, 18.13 Acre Parcel, Parcel Account Number 35461-000-00, 7875 SW 75th Ave. The Planned Unit Development was Approved for 72 Single-Family Homes. Deputy Growth Services Director Ken Weyrauch presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: Paolo Mastroserio, agent for the applicant, Fun N Games, LLC, requests the final Master Plan approval for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) on a ±18.13 acres. The Parcel Identification Number for the subject parcel is 35461-000-00; Site Address is 7875 SW 75th Ave. The legal description is provided within the application. The site is located inside of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and in the County-wide Secondary Springs Protection Zone (SS-SPOZ). No code cases have been found to be active at this location. Westwood Trails Planned Unit Development FKA Fun N Games or Vila Verde PUD was approved per Resolution 23-R-478 on October 17, 2023. Attached is the Master Plan and renderings of the amenities and buffers proposed for the PUD. Planning staff is recommending approval.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Staff recommends approval.

Deputy Director Ken Weyrauch, Growth Services, advised that this is a request for approval of the final Master Plan as required by the PUD Conditions. He provided a brief overview of the proposed project.

Paolo Mastroserio, Mastroserio Engineering, Inc, SE 32nd Place, on behalf of the applicant, advised that the applicant has met all the required Conditions. He stated there will be 69 units instead of the approved 72 units.

Chairman Bryant opened the floor to public comment.

Cheryl McClain, SW 79th Street, commented on the pleasant experience the residents of Hibiscus Park had working with Mr. Mastroserio and the applicant on this project. She expressed support for the proposed plan.

Chairman Bryant advised that public comment is now closed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Zalak, seconded by Commissioner McClain, to approve the Master Plan. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

1.2.2. 25-S09 - Raymond Rains, Serving as Personal Representative of the Estate of John Rains, SR., LLC, Small-Scale Land Use Change from Rural Land (RL) to Commercial (COM), 20.0 Acre Parcel, Parcel Account Number 45984-000-00, No Address Assigned

The Board considered a petition by Raymond Rains, serving as Personal Representative of the Estate of John Rains Sr., for a Land Use Change, Articles 2 and 3, of the Marion County Land Development Code, from Rural Land (RL) to Commercial (COM), on an approximate 20.0 Acre Parcel, on Parcel Account Number 45984-000-00, No Address Assigned

P&Z PUBLIC HEARING ON JUNE 30, 2025

25-S09 Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation

Motion was made by Mr. Lourenco, seconded by Mr. Bonner, to agree with staff's findings and recommendation, and recommend approval of the land use change based on the following findings of fact:

1. Will not adversely affect the public interest
2. Is consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan
3. Is compatible with the surrounding land uses

The motion passed, 3-1, with Mr. Behar dissenting.

Transportation Planner Kenneth Odom, Growth Services, advised that Agenda Items 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 are companion items and can be heard together. He advised that the applicant has also provided a Developer's Agreement. Mr. Odom advised that the zoning is a by right request. Typically, there is not a Developer's Agreement; therefore, when considering the Developer's Agreement it is all or nothing and there is no opportunity for negotiation.

Mr. Odom provided a brief overview of the land use change request. He advised that the only opposition received was from a local owner who expressed concern with the buffering. Mr. Odom stated the existing phase 1 is 258 units. The proposed phase 2 is 158 units. He advised that when the driveway is installed between the two phases the developer will lose 2 units, noting there will be a total of 414 units. Mr. Odom stated a Type D buffer is required all the way around the perimeter of the property. A Type D is very similar to a Type C except for it typically has a wall component that is added. He advised that an applicant is requesting a fence instead of a wall. The opposing neighbor to the north and developer have spoken and agreed to change the buffer; therefore, the applicant is requesting a modified Type D buffer. Mr. Odom advised that the Type D modified buffer will consist of a 3 foot berm with a 6 foot opaque fence on top and all the necessary vegetation.

Mr. Odom commented on the trip generation by the proposed use compared to a Commercial use. He advised that Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission both recommended approval of the land use change.

Mr. Odom provided a brief overview of the zoning change request from General Agriculture (A-1) to Recreation Vehicle Park (P-RV). He advised that the proposed Developer's Agreement addresses four specific areas: 1) limits on the use; 2) buffering; 3) lighting; and 4) no access at all to SE 80th Avenue.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Odom advised that the Developer's Agreement would limit the use of the site to a recreational vehicle (RV) park.

Chairman Bryant requested staff clarify if the applicant has the by right zoning in place already.

Mr. Odom advised that staff is recommending approval of the by right zoning and does not have an opinion on the Developer's Agreement. He clarified that the applicant currently has a Rural land use and A-1 zoning, noting they have to have approval from the Board to move forward with the proposed project.

Commissioner Curry out at 2:02 p.m.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Odom stated a typical Type D buffer is usually 15 feet wide with 2 shade trees, 3 ornamental and 50% understory every 100 lineal feet, also a 6 foot wall is required. In this particular case the modified version the applicant is requesting replaces the wall with a 6 foot opaque fence on top of a 3 foot berm. The foliage characteristics would not change. He stated this modified Type D buffer would be along the north and west boundaries.

Commissioner Curry returned at 2:03 p.m.

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Jimmy Gooding, SE 36th Avenue, attorney on behalf of the applicant, commented on the existing RV park to the east, noting this is an expansion of that park. He advised that because this site is outside the UGB the Comprehensive Plan requires certain things to be submitted in support of the request. One of the items needed is an urban sprawl analysis, which has been submitted. The second is a needs analysis. The applicant submitted an analysis of the occupancy rates of the existing RV park throughout the year. In the summer months the occupancy is low, but increases in the winter months. Mr. Gooding advised that the parcel is landlocked and has no access except through adjacent properties.

Mr. Gooding advised that the Developer's Agreement limits the property use to expansion of the existing RV park and requires the property to be under common ownership with the existing operator of the RV park next door. He stated the south boundary is a standard Type D buffer and the west and north boundaries are a modified Type D buffer. Mr. Gooding advised that the neighbor to the north who objected did not want the existing vegetation to remain; therefore, language is included in the Developer's Agreement to state "unless the owner of the property contiguous to the buffer does not desire the existing vegetation remain and the County departments that implement landscaping and buffer requirements approves removal of the existing vegetation."

Mr. Gooding advised that all lighting would comply with the Land Development Code (LDC) and there will not be any access to SE 80th Avenue.

Commissioner Stone clarified that the only change made to the Developer's Agreement included in the Agenda Packet and what was presented today is the modification to section 2.3. Mr. Gooding concurred.

Chairman Bryant opened the floor to public comment.

Robert Gagnon, SE 80th Avenue, expressed support for the proposed expansion of the existing RV park. He presented 3 photographs of the subject property and advised that the property has not been maintained in over 30 years.

Helen Russell, NW 80th Avenue, did not appear when called upon to speak.

Clay Albright, SE 14th Avenue, advised that he has represented the Rains Estate for over 40 years in various capacities and provided a brief history of the subject parcel. He stated the property is landlocked. Mr. Albright advised that there were 82 ascendants of the Rains family that had to be coordinated to get this property settled, which has taken over 6.5 years.

Chairman Bryant advised that public comment is now closed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Curry, seconded by Commissioner McClain, to approve the land use change, agreeing with Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission, based on findings and recommendations that the proposed use will not adversely affect the public interest, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with the surrounding land uses. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

1.2.3. 250705ZC - Raymond Rains, Serving as Personal Representative of the Estate of John Rains, SR., LLC, Zoning Change from General Agriculture (A-1) to Recreation Vehicle Park (P-RV), 20.0 Acre Parcel, Parcel Account Number 45984-000-00, No Address Assigned, Accompanied by a Developer's Agreement (25-DA02) Proposed in Addition to this Zoning Change Request

The Board considered a petition by Raymond Rains, serving as Personal Representative of the Estate of John Rains Sr., for a Zoning Change, Articles 2 and 4, of the Marion

County Land Development Code, from General Agriculture (A-1) to Recreation Vehicle Park (P-RV), for all permitted uses, on an approximate 20.0 Acre Parcel, on Parcel Account Number 45984-000-00, No Address Assigned, accompanied by a Developer's Agreement (25-DA02) proposed in addition to this Zoning Change request.

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250705ZC Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation

Motion was made by Mr. Lourenco, seconded by Mr. Bonner, to agree with staff's findings and recommendation, and recommend approval of the land use change based on the following findings of fact:

1. Will not adversely affect the public interest
2. Is consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan
3. Is compatible with the surrounding land uses

The motion passed, 3-1, with Mr. Behar dissenting.

This matter was addressed with Agenda Item 1.2.2.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Curry, to approve the zoning change from A-1 to P-RV along with the Developer's Agreement as presented today, agreeing with Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission, based on findings and recommendations that the proposed use will not adversely affect the public interest, is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and is compatible with the surrounding land uses.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if the Conditions set by the Developer's Agreement can be recorded as a deed restriction. Mr. Minter advised that the terms of the Developer's Agreement are enforceable the same as the County Code.

Mr. Gooding advised that the Developer's Agreement will be recorded.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Gooding stated the Developer's Agreement does not have an expiration date. He advised that language can be added to paragraph 8 stating the agreement will be perpetual.

Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Curry amended the motion to include the additional language in paragraph 8.

The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

There was a recess at 2:18 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 2:24 p.m. with all members present.

1.2.4. 25-L01 - Golden Ocala Equestrian Land, LLC, et. al., requests a Comprehensive Plan Large Scale Text Amendment to amend Future Land Use Element (FLUE) Policy 2.1.28 - World Equestrian Center, FLUE Table 2-1 - Summary of Future Land Use Designations, FLUE Policy 10.5.1 - Golden Ocala, and FLUE Map 15.h - Golden Ocala, Multiple Addresses and/or No Addresses Assigned

The Board considered transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan Large Scale Text Amendment to amend Future Land Use Element (FLUE) Policy 2.1.28 - World Equestrian Center, FLUE Table 2-1 - Summary of Future Land Use Designations, FLUE Policy 10.5.1 - Golden Ocala, and FLUE Map 15.h - Golden Ocala, Multiple Addresses and/or No Addresses Assigned

P&Z PUBLIC HEARING ON JUNE 30, 2025

25-L01 Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation

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Motion was made by Mr. Behar, seconded by Mr. Bonner, to agree with staff's findings and recommendation, and recommend approval of the land use change based on the following findings of fact:

1. Will not adversely affect the public interest
2. Is consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan
3. Is compatible with the surrounding land uses

The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

Senior Planner Chris Rison, Growth Services advised that Agenda Items 1.2.4 and 1.2.5 are requests to amend the Comprehensive Plan, noting 25-L01 is a Text Amendment for the land use designation of the World Equestrian Center (WEC) definition and 25-L02 is changes to the policy and map relating to the Golden Ocala/WEC Development of Regional Impact (DRI) scale development project and its provisions. He stated there is a third application that is not being considered today, which is the PUD modification. The zoning change will be heard at a later date pending the outcome of Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Mr. Rison advised that today is the second of three public hearings that is related to these Comprehensive Plan Amendments. He stated the first public hearing was with the P&Z Commission held on June 30, 2025, noting today's hearing is for the transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan Amendments to the State and Regional agencies for their review. The State and Regional Agencies have 60 days to complete the review. Once the review period is completed the matter will come back before the Board for consideration.

Mr. Rison provided a brief history of the changes made relating to the Golden Ocala project. He referred to the maps shown on the overhead screens and commented on the development activity in the area, as well as existing uses in the surrounding area.

Mr. Rison advised that the first portion of the Text Amendment is a proposal to modify the definitions for what constitutes the WEC land use designation. The key proposal is to add in a reference to sports facilities and then provide examples of those sports facilities. He stated the date of the approval of the WEC Jockey Club Ordinances was also added, noting this does not change anything in relation to that project.

Mr. Rison advised of the companion text update to the FLUE Table 2-1, which is the summary of the land use designations where it notes for the Rural Area there is a Golden Ocala reference and for the Urban Area portion of the WEC sports facilities is included. He stated the applicant is proposing to update FLUE Policy 10.5.1 – Golden Ocala/WEC and companion map to reflect the addition of sports facilities to the project site. The applicant is also proposing to shift from a lump number of seats to an acreage amount for the different activities. There is also a proposal to increase the number of hotels by 300 units to a total of 1,650 rooms. Mr. Rison advised that there are no proposed changes for the recreational vehicle area at this point in time and there are no changes proposed for the commercial square footage maximum.

Mr. Rison commented on proposed minor language changes as shown on the overhead screen for section 8 and 10.

Mr. Rison advised that overall, from a staff standpoint the proposed request would enable sports fields/facilities as both indoor and outdoor venues and accommodate other events to utilize multi-purpose capabilities of the facilities. The current WEC land use designation definition accommodates indoor and outdoor venues for the equestrian "sport" activities as both indoor and outdoor venues and have accommodated other events. Additional "sport" activities would broaden and increase the opportunities to use the site's existing and already planned supporting facilities (e.g. hotels, restaurants, supporting retail/office),

thereby increasing opportunities for use and expanding a “single-use” aspect of the current facilities, while supporting and establishing a single-campus effect. The change is proposed solely for that portion of the project that is within the UGB with an Urban area designation and not to take place in the Rural area sites that are WEC designated. He stated staffs remaining concerns relating to the project are focused on traffic, noting the projects methodology has been approved and the traffic study is currently underway. Some of staff’s concerns are related to the overall trip generation, internal capture potential, transportation network capacities and transportation network improvements (system and access). As a large-scale amendment it does require the coordinated State review; therefore, it takes an additional 60 days of review from the State agencies. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) will be one of the agencies reviewing the request and providing comments. Mr. Rison advised that upon receipt of those agency comments the County will have up to 180 days to consider final adoption consideration for the project.

Mr. Rison advised that Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission are recommending approval of the request for transmittal of the Text Amendment. He stated staff does anticipate further discussion will take place, noting the completion of the traffic study will allow for better analysis of the PUD. Mr. Rison advised that the applicant has submitted an amendment to the current Development Agreement for the project, noting the agreement being settled is pending the traffic study.

Mr. Rison provided a brief overview of the proposed Map Amendment 25-L02. He advised that the site is located within the UGB and is part of the Urban area. The request proposes converting approximately 251 acres from Low Residential (LR) to WEC. It would be an extension of the WEC designated area fronting on NW 80th Avenue to also front along West State Road (SR) 40. It adjoins Commercial designated lands. Mr. Rison stated 5 lots within Sherman Oaks Hamlet adjoining the subject property are also commonly owned by the applicant. The Farmland Preservation Area (FPA) boundary relating to this site is 0.5 miles to the west at NW 100th Avenue and to the south across from West Highway 40. The FPA lands south of West Highway 40 are designated Rural land and encompass the Live Oak Stud Farm. He advised that the land to the west is a single Rural land designated tract, noting it is undeveloped within the UGB and eligible for development under the TDC program. The site is located along West Highway 40 with alternative access to the northeast via the existing WEC complex. Prior Equestrian Complex facilities and proposed sports facilities have limited traffic study resources for estimating traffic generation; however, some specific facilities anticipated do have specific resources. This request prompts the need for a traffic study and the applicant has obtained approval of the necessary traffic methodology. Mr. Rison stated staff anticipates internal capture will be a factor in the study due to the presence of on-site hotel, retail/office and other supporting facilities that may be expected to support/serve the users of the site’s anticipated improvements.

Mr. Rison advised that Growth Services Staff and the P&Z Commission are recommending approval of transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment. He stated the PUD may be discussed at certain points, but it is not being considered today. Jimmy Gooding, SE 36th Avenue, attorney on behalf of the applicant, advised that the only thing being considered for this site today are the two transmittal requests. He opined that the request is an incremental expansion of the uses in the WEC. Mr. Gooding stated the applicant is permitted under the existing land use improvements to support the host

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sports community and community in general. There are permitted non-equestrian events that take place on site.

Eric Sullivan, The Sports Facilities Company, LLC, (SFC) Highway 19 North, Clearwater, advised that his role is to help to plan, develop and operate venues across the Country that are municipally owned, privately owned or public/private partnerships. The company's whole reason for existence is to help support the health and economic vitality in the communities that they serve. This is done through things that help provide healthy family and community lifestyles such as sports, recreation, fitness, wellness, etc. He stated SFC has served over 3,000 communities in this capacity, noting they have done over \$15,000,000,000.00 of planned and developed assets and currently operate the largest network of these types of facilities in the County. Mr. Sullivan advised that the company is based in Florida and operates throughout the Country and internationally.

Mr. Sullivan provided a brief overview of the SFC's role as the consultant. He advised that the County had previously commissioned a report by Hunden Strategic Advisors that identified a need for both indoor and outdoor sports amenities in the County. Mr. Sullivan stated the economic impact of the first phase of the facility is approximately \$17,000,000.00 annually and over \$80,000,000.00 annually at full build out.

Mr. Sullivan provided a brief over of other projects completed in different areas and the economic impacts, as well as the layout of the proposed WEC facility.

In response to Chairman Bryant, David Tillman, Tillman & Associates Engineering, LLC, SE 16th Avenue, advised that the access point will be further down Highway 40 and will not be the existing entrance to the WEC.

Mr. Sullivan continued the overview of the proposed facility layout.

Commissioner Stone questioned if there is any intent to keep any of the vegetation along Highway 40. Mr. Tillman advised that the applicant does intend on maintaining the vegetation, with the exception of species that are not viable or a nuisance. The applicant will also be filling in the gaps. He stated the buildings are a huge distance from the roadway, noting the trees and turf are what will be visible from the roadway.

Mr. Sullivan commented on the ancillary buildings that will be located onsite.

Mr. Sullivan advised that Phase 2 of the project will include the indoor sports amenity building. He stated the site entry and monument signage will keep with the same styling and feel as the current WEC campus.

Commissioner Stone questioned the phasing timeline. Mr. Sullivan advised that pending approvals phase 1 of the project will begin in spring of 2026, phase 2 in summer/fall of 2027 and phase 3 in 2028.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Sullivan advised that directional light-emitting diode (LED) lighting will be utilized, noting it will light the playing field and not the surrounding areas. He stated evening and weekend usage is more for practice, games or tournaments and they do not normally run later than a 9:00 p.m./10:00 p.m. start time. Mr. Sullivan advised that fields may be utilized for soccer, football, lacrosse, field hockey, marching band, baseball, softball, turf training, basketball, volleyball, cheer, dance, martial arts, wrestling, hockey and figure skating. He stated there will be youth and adult activities onsite, but the primary focus will be on youth and amateur sports.

Chairman Bryant reiterated the timeline for the project. She questioned if all the fields would have covered seating. Mr. Sullivan advised that the championship field will have covered seating and some of the fields will have shade structures.

In response to Mr. Gooding, Mr. Sullivan stated the championship field will host more elevated events. He advised that the indoor facility will not be limited to frozen events,

noting there will also be hard courts in the facility. Mr. Sullivan stated the baseball fields are designed to be able to accommodate different age groups.

Mr. Minter questioned where the spectators will be located on the baseball fields. Mr. Sullivan advised that the spectators will be located on the first and third base lines.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Sullivan advised that there will be normal noise of a sports activity, noting the only amplified sound would be attributed to an emergency use or within the championship field areas. He commented on the size of the property and buffering.

Commissioner Curry advised that this is a Commercial for profit project, noting there will be a large impact from tourist and travel ball. He questioned how this facility will benefit the local youth. Mr. Sullivan advised that a lot of the tourism events will happen on long weekends or over the weekend, noting weekday and daytime usage is almost entirely going to be local. He stated leagues, after school programs, camps and instructional clinics are the types of programs that will be open and available for public use.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Tillman advised that the property to the west is forested and vacant fields. He stated the owner did come to one of the hearings years ago and expressed no desire to develop the property with anything other than agriculture. Mr. Tillman commented on the surrounding residential properties in the area, noting there is a considerable distance before reaching the horse farm area.

Mr. Gooding advised that the WEC has a platted subdivision to the north of the proposed project.

Commissioner Stone advised that there is a nearby 50 acre Commercially zoning property owned by Dizney Double Diamond, LLC.

Commissioner Curry questioned why this project is not considered urban sprawl. Mr. Gooding advised that there is no need for the extension for public infrastructure because it is already onsite, it is furthering a mixed use project with the WEC, it is related to the existing WEC use and is contiguous to existing Urban development; therefore, it is not considered urban sprawl. He stated the property is located within the UGB and is not part of the FPA.

Chairman Bryant requested staff respond to whether or not this would constitute as urban sprawl.

Mr. Rison advised that the subject property is within the UGB, is part of the Urban designated area, has an Urban land use designation and the applicant is expanding an existing WEC designated area. He stated while someone may enjoy the horse activities all of the family may not and some may want to consider alternative options. The proposed use would be an onsite option that could be enjoyed without having to leave the property to go out into the community.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Rison opined that the proposed use does not create a transitional issue for the area, noting the property to the west is already part of the UGB even though it is rural land today and zoned A-1. He stated the property to the west is also eligible to participate in the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program to increase the development rights for that property through a PUD rezoning consideration.

Mr. Gooding advised that the Hunden gap analysis indicated the County needed a 7,000 square foot multipurpose facility and the applicant is proposing a 7,500 square foot facility. He commented on the positive economic impact the indoor and outdoor facilities will have on the community, as well as the types of events that can be brought to the area. Mr. Gooding addressed other sports fields within the County, which do not have the capacity

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to handle the need. He stated the Hunden report determined that the current supply of relevant baseball and soccer fields in the market cannot accommodate the current demand for youth sports teams and there are waitlists for both soccer and baseball leagues offered in the area. Flag football has seen an uptick in demand with two local leagues formed, but no permanent facility to play.

Mr. Gooding introduced Wyatt Stephens who runs the WEC's soccer programs as the Director of Sports, a former attorney for Gooding & Batsel, PLLC and as a member of the Roberts family.

Wyatt Stephens, NW 31st Lane Road, advised that it is a misconception that WEC is only for equestrian activities or events, noting since 2022 the WEC has hosted 7 volleyball tournaments, gymnastics (2024 and 2025), cheer/dance (4 times), Taekwondo (2 separate years), and DEKA (3 times) (similar to a spartan fitness event). He stated the WEC purchased almost 100,000 square feet of synthetic turf and installed it in the Exposition Center (EXPO) 2 center where they hosted their first soccer camps, field rentals and open play nights. Mr. Stephens advised that last year there were only 2 soccer camps, but due to demand and popularity this year there were 4 weeks of soccer camps. Those camps are averaging 80 to 100 kids per camp.

Mr. Stephens opined that the facilities are not available in Marion County to pursue athletics at a higher level, noting he was fortunate to go on to play Division 1 soccer at the University of Tulsa (TU) and then the University of Cincinnati (UC). He stated none of the training received growing up was local, noting his parents had to drive him to Orlando daily because Marion County did not have the opportunities here. Mr. Stephens advised that the Rotary Complex and Big Sun cannot do the kind of things that WEC facility is proposing.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Stephens commented on the amount of time and effort put into the proposed project. He stated the Roberts family cares a lot about the community and everything they do is done to the highest standard and done exceptionally well. Mr. Stephens advised that the fields will be located far away from the roads and the buildings are pushed back even further; therefore, this will not appear to be or be a nuisance to anyone. He stated the horse farms are not the only communities in Ocala and some of those communities are underserved such as the sports community. Mr. Tillman advised that there are farms owned by the applicant for sale and the WEC horse facility next to the proposed facility; therefore, they have to be good stewards in order to not affect their own uses. He stated the applicant is hiring professionals to review the acoustics to ensure the sound does not travel offsite and is directed into the site. Mr. Tillman advised that the lighting can also be cast internally.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Tillman advised that the sound systems will be minimalized and directed internally.

Mr. Sullivan clarified that for tournament type games there will only be announcing for the finals on the championship fields. There will be Public Address (PA) systems for emergency situations, but not for announcing for pool play games.

General discussion ensued relating to noise and lighting.

Chairman Bryant advised that the Conditions for a potential Developer's Agreement is not being addressed today, noting the hearing today is to determine if the Board wants to move the project forward for transmittal to the State.

Chairman Bryant opened the floor to public comment.

Mayor of the City of Ocala Ben Marciano, SE 43rd Street, commented on the positive impact the proposed development of a regional sportsplex will be on the community,

particularly for the children. He stated many children have to travel to compete, which can make it difficult for families to attend, noting with a local facility it will allow them to have the support of their family and give them an opportunity to be seen. Mayor Marciano advised that recruiters scout at competitions. He stated beyond offering a place to play this facility can serve as a community hub for youth programs, mentor initiatives and activities that are designed to uplift children. These programs can inspire confidence, teach leadership, promote healthy lifestyles and offer safe alternatives to the negative influences children are facing in the community today.

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

Commissioner Bryant out at 3:32 p.m.

Matthew Brockway, ICard Merrill, Main Street, Sarasota, on behalf of Horse Farms Forever (HFF) presented 13 handout to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation. He stated also present with him today are Brian Aungst, Jr., Truett Gardner and Addie Clark, noting they have a joint presentation and will take turns addressing the slides. Mr. Brockway requested denial of the transmittal of the application.

Commissioner Bryant returned at 3:34 p.m.

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

Brian Aungst, Macfarlane Ferguson and McMullen, Court Street, Clearwater, on behalf of Misty Lane, LLC, advised that the Comprehensive Plan of Marion County preserves, protects and promotes it as the "Horse Capital of the World". He urged the Board not to amend the Comprehensive Plan, noting the proposed use is a radical departure from what has been the vision, goals, policies and objectives of the County. Mr. Aungst stated Equestrian related uses are what is supposed to be the primary use in the WEC land use and zoning. Those uses are principally rural and equestrian in character and associated with the support of equestrian sports. Examples of equestrian uses include polo fields, equestrian arenas, equestrian instruction facilities, veterinarian clinics, farriers, stables and barns, feed stores and tack shops. He questioned if the Board wants to alter that so radically to make this particular area a high intensity, high traffic volume, sports tourism facility with a concert arena. Mr. Aungst advised that in the history there is a settlement agreement, a Development Agreement and the goals, policies and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, noting all of those will have to be amended if this project moves forward. He opined that it is not appropriate to move this project forward before it is determined that the proposed amendment is consistent with the traffic engineering policies and FLUE, noting there will be thousands of additional trips for the concert arena, additional hotel rooms and high intensity sports tourism use. Mr. Aungst stated the Developer's Agreement limits the concerts to four annually/1 per quarter and each concert has to provide a traffic impact analysis specific to that concert. He advised that the applicant is requesting the Board to get rid of any limitations on concerts and to get rid of the seat limitation on the arena from 13,500 and replace it with an acreage limitation. Mr. Aungst advised that all these request are being made and a traffic analysis has not even been submitted. He requested the Board deny the application.

Truett Gardner, Gardner Brewer Hudson, N. Ashley Drive, Tampa, on behalf of Charlotte Weber/Live Oak Stud, provided a brief history of the subject property and the land use/zoning changes.

Addie Clark, Gardner Brewer Hudson, N. Ashley Drive, Tampa, advised that the amendments presented today represent a clear and direct violation of the 2016 settlement agreement, noting what was intended to be a buffer between the intense WEC uses and horse farms to west and south is now being proposed to be transformed into a high

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intensity sports and entertainment complex. She stated the proposal for an unlimited capacity event venue and non-equestrian sporting arenas directly counters both the spirit and the intent of Policy 10.5.1 and the carefully negotiated terms of the settlement agreement. This is not just a departure from the promises agreed upon in 2016 it is a blatant abandonment of the agreement and disregard for Policies 10.5.1 and 2.1.28. Ms. Clark advised that the map and text amendment proposed replacing what is currently designated as a rural neighborhood under Policy 2.1.13 with a large scale non-equestrian sports and entertainment complex. One that may have serious and adverse impacts today. She opined that what was carefully planned and protected for many years is in no way comparable to what is being proposed, noting given this areas location being very close to the FPA and surrounded by thousands of acres of active horse farms the introduction to a high volume sports and entertainment complex is entirely incompatible with the surroundings.

Mr. Brockway advised that the LDC requires a traffic impact analysis be included as part of the application package in order for the application to be considered complete. He stated a traffic impact analysis has not been submitted. Mr. Brockway advised that the Comprehensive Plan must be based upon adequate data and analysis, noting the LDC identifies what those data and analyses are, including the traffic impact analysis.

Mr. Brockway commented on letters previously emailed to the Board, which include thorough analysis of the consistency of this project with the Comprehensive Plan. He provided a brief overview of the Policies that are not consistent with the proposed project. Mr. Brockway urged the Board to deny transmittal of the application.

Commissioner Curry advised that it sounds like most people are not opposed to the project, but are opposed to the location of the project. Mr. Brockway concurred.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Gardner advised that a study could be commissioned to determine what impact the proposed use would have on surrounding farms. He stated the sports facility would change the nature of the area, which is what his client is passionate about.

Commissioner Zalak out at 3:53 p.m.

Greg Wheeler, NW 19th Place, advised that his property is approximately 0.5 of a mile from the proposed project. He commented on the benefits of having the WEC in the area, but expressed concern with the increased development and loss of the horse farms. Mr. Wheeler addressed the economic impact of the equine industry on the State economy and opined that 60% of that comes from Marion County.

Mr. Wheeler commented on the changes across Florida as development increases. He urged the Board to deny the proposed application.

Donna Wheeler, NW 19th Place, expressed opposition to the proposed sports facility.

Commissioner Stone clarified that the current proposed facility is not planned to be where the polo fields are located.

Chairman Bryant advised that this application is not within the FPA, noting it is within the UGB.

Bonnie Heath, NW 76th Court, commented on traffic concerns and the increased population in the area. He opined that this is not the correct location for this use.

Chairman Bryant addressed the population increase in Marion County, which can be attributed to Florida remaining open and free during the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated the Governor has encouraged people to come to Florida, noting Ocala/Marion County is on the map and the BCC cannot stop people from moving here.

Kenneth Davis, NE 95th Street, thanked the Commissioners for their hard work. He

expressed concern with the sports facility and urged the Board to deny the transmittal. Carol Rike, NW 90th Avenue, opined that the WEC has become one of the most beautiful and prestigious equestrian venues in the world, noting it has significantly increased the value of surrounding properties. She stated this was named the “WEC effect” by a 2024 study conducted by SVN McDonald & Company. The study documented the monumental rise in property values in a 15 mile radius to the WEC. Ms. Rike advised that it is her professional opinion as a realtor in this community that the disruptive nature of this expansion could have a detrimental impact on property values. She stated this type of project would better fit on a property zoned for industrial or high impact Commercial use, but not within the heart of Marion County’s equestrian residential community.

Rachel Meyer, NW 73rd Terrace, commented on a recent fundraiser held by teachers to provide food and necessities to local youth. She opined that the investment should be suited for this type of endeavor instead of a youth sports complex. Ms. Meyer expressed concerns relating to noise, traffic, lighting and alcohol use at the facility.

Ira Stern, NW 135th Street, Reddick, presented a 3 page handout containing an article printed in the Ocala Gazette relating to the WEC on October 9, 2020. He expressed concerns regarding water usage.

Carol Demme, NW 13th Street, presented a 3 page handout containing a map of the area and pictures of the site and commented on the existing noise coming from the property. She opined that this project would be better suited elsewhere.

Solveig Cumston, NW 28th Place, expressed opposition to the sports facility and urged the Board to deny the transmittal request.

Tim Gant, SW 3rd Street, Micanopy, commented on the previous meetings that took place relating to Golden Ocala/WEC approvals, as well as expressed concerns regarding traffic the cost of road upgrades.

Nell Wade, NW Highway 225A, expressed concerns relating to the early morning and late night tournaments, as well as urban sprawl.

Peter Zaloom, NW 35th Lane Road, opined that this is not the right location for this type of activity and urged the Board to deny the request.

Nancy Thrower, NW 18th Street, opined that the sports complex is a monumental deviation from the original intent of the FPA, noting Ocala/Marion County is the “Horse Capital of the World”. She commented on a previous zoning controversy relating to Irish Acres Farm and a Walmart warehouse distribution center. Ms. Thrower stated other locations may be better suited for these types of facilities.

E. Ann Novkov, SE 43rd Terrace, commented on the factors that make the northwest quadrant of the County ideal for horses. She expressed concern relating to flooding and sinkholes in the area. Ms. Novkov stated there are smaller facilities (i.e. Jervey Gantt, Big Sun Soccer, Rotary Sportsplex, Shocker Park, Wrigley Field, etc.) to foster activity and comradery among the local youth. She urged the Board to deny the request.

Clinton Hart, NE 72nd Place, Silver Springs, commented on the change coming to the area. He opined that sometimes people have to embrace, accept and not be afraid of change. Mr. Hart advised that this facility is needed within the community, noting sports is an outlet for youth.

Randy Brown, NW 45th Lane, advised that he was a retired professor and extension specialist in soils and land use at the University of Florida (UF). He stated in the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a lot of publicity given to the National Agricultural Land Survey initiated by President Carter. The Survey included a map of prime and unique farm land in Florida, which highlighted northwest Marion County. Mr. Brown advised that

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a lot of effort was made as a result of that study to protect agricultural land, noting at that time the farm community fought against the measures taken because they felt it was taking away their rights.

Commissioner Curry out at 4:40 p.m.

William "Bill" Kearns, Marion County Road, Weirsdale, expressed support for the proposed facility, noting the owners of the WEC have brought a sustainable equestrian community.

Brian Donnelly, West Anthony Road, Anthony, advised that the proposal was originally recommended for denial. He questioned how the concerns of staff have been mitigated for them to change the recommendation to approval.

Commissioner Curry returned at 4:43 p.m.

Valerie Harris, SW 89th Terrace, did not appear when called upon to speak.

Cristina Larsson, West Anthony Road, opined that the proposed use is not compatible with the horses. She urged the Board to deny the request.

Commissioner McClain out at 4:46 p.m.

Nancy Dimaggio, NW 54th Court, advised that she is present today on behalf of Patrick Keebler, noting Mr. Keebler's family owns approximately 150 acres located adjacent to the proposed site. She commented on the increased traffic in the area and the importance of preserving the farmland.

Ashley Johnson, NW 90th Avenue, advised that no one visits a national park to play soccer or go to a concert. National parks are visited because of their pristine beauty and the ability to connect with nature. She stated Ocala is not a national park, but it does have a rare and precious resource, the equine industry. This is a place where Olympic athletes come to train and live. Where community members can visit and watch world class equestrian competition year round. A place where farmland is valued and preserved along with the way of life it represents.

Commissioner McClain returned at 4:48 p.m.

Ms. Johnson opined that a sports and entertainment complex so close to the FPA will not only cause direct negative impact to the neighboring countryside, but it will degrade the integrity of the community brand. She urged the Board to deny the request.

Aidan Balthazar, NE 120th Place, Belleview, advised that he has played soccer his entire life and when it came time to pursue a higher level of soccer Marion County could not provide the necessary opportunities to succeed. This forced him to seek out competitive teams in the Tampa/Orlando areas. He commented on the time and funds sacrificed by his family to travel. Mr. Balthazar stated every local player he knows who has made it to college soccer had to leave Marion County around the age of 13 to find opportunities elsewhere. He opined that the proposed WEC facility will provide local youth opportunities not previously available.

Karen Kraushaar, SW 65th Place, advised that she and her husband have lived in Marion County for the past 5 years, but have been visiting Marion County from the Washington D.C. area for the past 20 years to participate in equestrian activities. She stated her estimated economic impact to the area was approximately \$3,000,000.00 to \$5,000,000.00. Ms. Kraushaar commented on how growth and changes affected the agricultural community where they lived prior to coming to Marion County.

Lena B. Sandlin, W Highway 328, expressed opposition to the proposed project and opined that it is not compatible with the surrounding area.

Alyson Scotti, NW 14th Avenue, commented on the "WEC effect" and the impact this will have on property values. She urged the Board to deny the request and opined that the

sports facility could be placed in another part of the County.

Adrian Droese, NE 25th Court, Anthony, advised that he wanted to play soccer at the collegiate level, but there were no facilities in the area that were good enough to get to that point. He stated he had to travel to Tampa and join the Tampa Bay United Soccer Club, noting he has been there for 4 years. Mr. Droese advised that he is now playing at the collegiate level. He stated not everyone has the financial means or time to travel 4 times a week to Tampa.

Cathryn Ungermann, NW 34th Street, advised that she is in favor of the sports complex, but not at this location. She expressed concern about the impact the complex would have on the surrounding horses.

John Ivory, SW 76th Lane, advised that he is the Director of Marion County National Football League (NFL) Flag Football, noting the non profit organization has been servicing the community since 2015. He stated the program started with 115 children and now has over 1,000 participants. Mr. Ivory commented on the struggles associated with youth sports relating to space, lighting, practice fields, game fields etc. He stated there are people who have opposed this project who sold property attributing to the huge development along State Road 200.

Tim Feigenbaum, Pecan Road, expressed support for the proposed facility, noting more resources are needed for the youth in the community. He commented on how youth sports impacted his childhood. Mr. Feigenbaum advised of the financial strain traveling can have on a family.

Jim Hilty Jr., SE 18th Street, advised that in order for his children to realize their dreams of playing at the next level they have had to travel outside of Marion County because the resources were not available here. He commented on the cost associated with traveling for a sport and how those funds could have been spent locally. Mr. Hilty stated Marion County had to grow to accommodate Horse Shows In the Sun (HITS) and opined that it is time they returned the favor. He stated the owners of WEC can do this project with class and distinction.

Tim Sada, SE 9th Avenue, stated this project is for the youth and for the future of Marion County. He advised that he was an all state basketball player for Trinity Catholic High School and considered a top player in the State, but did not get enough views to be recruited for college basketball; therefore, he had to travel to Orlando for exposure. Mr. Sada stated a lot of athletes rely on the sport to further their education, which in turn changes their lives. He opined that the beautiful and natural area of Marion County can remain intact, while still having a facility that can accommodate athletes and their futures. Michael Jackson, SW 159th Lane Road, commented on the positive impact sports has on the youth and how this facility would benefit the community.

John Penn, SW 52nd Court, commented on the need for this type of facility on the southwest portion of the County. He urged the Board to approve the request.

Mark Savage, SW 177th Court, Dunnellon, expressed opposition to the proposed request. Linda Mccollum-Brounley, NW 193rd Street, Micanopy, commented on the increased development throughout Florida. She requested the Board wait to move forward until a traffic and water impact study have been completed.

Nick Demeric, NW 130th Avenue, advised that activity has already begun on site and questioned what will happen to the property if this is denied. He opined that residents are not opposed to this project, but are opposed to the location.

Elna Schwank, NW 55th Avenue Road, expressed support for a sports complex, but not at this location. She commented on the cost of activities at the WEC.

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Lisa Ciesnieski, NW 63rd Street, expressed concern with water quality and the impact this would have on the springs. She stated this facility will bring people from all over the Country above and beyond what Ocala is capable of having. Ms. Ciesnieski commented on the potential crime issues associated with concerts.

Blake Hunter, SW 2nd Avenue, opined that this is the wrong location for this type of facility. John Stephens, NW 150th Avenue, Morriston, expressed support for the proposed facility, noting without sports some children will not be able to attend college.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Stephens advised that the thoroughbred industry has slowed down. He commented on the impact WEC has on the equine industry in Marion County. Mr. Stephens opined that without the WEC property values would have decreased drastically and farms would have closed.

Peter Smith, SE 135th Street, commented on the need for the sports complex.

Chairman Bryant advised that public comment is now closed.

There was a recess at 5:32 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 5:41 p.m. with all members present.

Chairman Bryant reiterated that the hearing today is to consider transmittal of the Large Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendments, noting if this is approved for transmittal any details pertaining to the project would be worked through at a later date.

Mr. Minter advised that Section 2.8.2 of the LDC states "an application shall not be considered complete until the following have been submitted" and subsection 3(g) states "a traffic impact analysis". He stated there was a question relating to whether or not this application would be under the State expedited review process or the coordinated review process. The expedited review requires the amendment be transmitted with the applicable data and analysis. The coordinated review requires the complete proposed plan and amendment with data and analysis. Mr. Minter advised that at the final adoption hearing the Comprehensive Plan Amendment must be supported by adequate data and analysis.

Mr. Minter advised that since 2011, the State no longer reviews local issues and just focuses on State facilities. He stated both staff and Mr. Gooding will provide input relating whether or not the traffic impact analysis and data and analysis that are required as part of the transmittal process. Mr. Minter advised that many issues have been litigated under Comprehensive Plan Amendment cases, but he is unaware of any cases actually litigated and reported on outcome of a transmittal to the State without complete data and analysis. He stated any action the Board takes today is not a final adoption, noting the Board can choose to transmit and still deny the Comprehensive Land Amendment when it comes back. Mr. Minter commented on the AZ Ocala Ranch case, which was transmitted and later denied.

Mr. Minter advised that State Statute requires that all Comprehensive Plan Amendments can only be amended in a way that preserves the internal consistency of a plan. This does not mean that what is proposed has to be consistent with the existing plan as long as all the amendments that are being made in total would result in an internally consistent plan. He stated at some point before the final adoption the Board will have to ensure that the proposed plan is internally consistent, noting some of the issues raised by opposing counsel may be worked out during the adoption hearing.

Mr. Minter commented on the December 2016 settlement agreement, which was a challenge to a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. It provided for a period of time where

all parties involved agreed to hold the challenge to the amendment in abeyance to see if the County would consider several plan applications that would be presented. He stated there was no guarantee that the County would approve any of those, but the terms of the agreement provided that this action shall be deemed to have occurred when the County Commission has adopted an Ordinance adopting the Text Amendment and the Future Plan Amendment. Both of these actions did occur. Mr. Minter advised that the Ordinance 17-13 that was adopted makes no reference to the settlement agreement, it does not incorporate by reference any of the terms of the settlement agreement, and does not adopt the settlement agreement. He stated there is no provision in the Ordinance that would preclude the application from ever in the future coming back for another plan amendment. Mr. Minter opined that the settlement agreement was addressed to the specific challenges that were being made in 2016, noting there was a methodology developed by all the parties of how that would be addressed. This resulted in particular amendments coming before the Board and the Board adopting those amendments. He stated the settlement agreement does have a provision that it could only be amended with the concurrence of all parties, but that is related to accomplishing those amendments that were occurring in 2016. Mr. Minter advised that there is nothing in the settlement agreement that states the applicant or the intervenor in that case could never hence forth apply for another Comprehensive Plan Amendment; therefore, he does not read the settlement agreement as barring this particular application from being presented to the Board.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Minter advised that staff and Mr. Gooding will address the traffic impact analysis.

Commissioner McClain referenced the AZ Ranch application and questioned if the State made any substantial comments during their analysis. Mr. Rison advised that he did not recall as it had been a number of years since that took place.

Mr. Minter advised that Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. did a study on State Road (SR) 200 because AZ Ranch fronts on SR 200. He stated the County did not receive a lot of feedback from the State in that case.

Chairman Bryant questioned why the staff changed their recommendation. Mr. Rison advised that several departments gave recommendations to the Development Review Committee, noting Office of the County Engineer (OCE) was the department to bring to light the need for a traffic study to be completed. He stated Growth Services staff recommended approval with the note that this needs to go through the review process and a traffic study does need to be completed.

Chairman Bryant clarified that Growth Services staff reviewed the application and have never recommended denial. She stated this application has never come before the BCC and been denied. Mr. Rison concurred.

Mr. Rison advised that there is a requirement in the current Concurrency Management Agreement and Developer's Agreement that the applicant will do a study to true up what was done in the past.

County Engineer Steven Cohoon, OCE, advised that the denial comment received from staff was an informational denial, noting the intent was to alert the applicant of all the things that would be necessary in the future PUD consideration. He stated he has shared with staff and the applicant the West Marion study that was approved back in September 2023. In that study staff looked at a 2045 build out year for not only the area being discussed today as well as other areas throughout this node, in and around the SR 200 area. Mr. Cohoon advised that based on the projection out to 2045, the methodology and

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needs already noted in the Ocala/Marion Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) identified for SR 40; therefore, staff felt it was appropriate to allow this to move forward for transmittal to the State.

Commissioner Zalak questioned what improvements are being proposed. Mr. Cohoon advised that the TPO identified SR 40 to be a 6 lane facility from NW 27th Avenue all the way back to NW 60th Avenue, noting staff is requesting the applicant to consider this in the methodology.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Cohoon advised that he is unable comment on the Department of Transportation's (DOT) progress on the SR 40 and Interstate 75 (I-75) interchange.

Ms. Straub stated she spoke with DOT today regarding the northern stretch of the I-75 project, noting they have gone through the 3 day conflict period and the contractor has been appointed. She stated it is meant to be a 4 lane interchange with the County completing from I-75 to SW 70th Avenue or County Road (CR) 225A prior to the construction of the interchange.

Chairman Bryant clarified that the request was for an update on the I-75/SR 40 interchange. Ms. Straub advised that there is not a plan for SR 40.

Commissioner Zalak opined that improvements to SR 40 may not be cost feasible long term.

Commissioner Curry commented on development impacts on the roadways in this area. In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Cohoon advised that there are some interchange improvements scheduled to be made at SR 40 and SW 80th Avenue, noting staff are working with one utility company to release an easement now and once it is completed the project will go out for advertisement. He stated the projected completion is approximately 18 months.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if there is enough information provided today for the State to evaluate SR 40. Mr. Cohoon advised that he has only been involved in one other transmittal and that was not in Marion County. He stated that the County had a very good traffic impact analysis, but was not to the standard of Marion County. Mr. Cohoon advised that not every County is on the same playing field. He opined that there is a lot of valuable data available, which is sufficient for the State to provide fruitful comments.

Mr. Gooding advised that the Code does require a traffic analysis, but what is not being recognized is the history of this project. He stated when the WEC was originally developed there was no code for equestrian center; therefore the developer utilized the highest count applicable (Race track). Mr. Gooding advised that the Developer entered into a concurrency agreement with the County, which is still in place and applies to the entire project. It has an equivalency matrix attached to it that states if there is something in the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Manual that this can be compared to then trips for that can be used. He stated the agreement required the developer do two things: 1). Provide a "True Up Analysis", which would try and determine the actual trips being generated; and 2) eventually create a full blown analysis for the additional entitlements. Mr. Gooding advised that the short answer is a traffic analysis would be required, but in this case a concurrency agreement is already in place.

Mr. Gooding advised that he agrees with Mr. Minter relating to the settlement agreement. He stated nowhere in the agreement does it say the WEC will not seek future Comprehensive Plan Amendments or rezonings. Mr. Gooding advised that the agreement has a clause requiring everyone's consent in order to amend it, but the applicant is not requesting an amendment because the agreement does not deal with future

amendments. He stated the BCC cannot make a decision that binds the hands of future Legislatures.

Mr. Gooding commented on the pushback the Board received when the original WEC project was brought forward. He advised that the WEC has entered into a water agreement with the County to contribute significantly towards building a new water well in that area. Mr. Gooding stated the WEC has caused an impact on Marion County, but they are paying their way for that impact and are not solely responsible for the additional growth that has taken place.

Mr. Gooding advised that the applicant is not converting agricultural/FPA property to Commercial or WEC, noting the site is Low Residential and inside the UGB.

Mr. Gooding clarified that the cost of the soccer camps currently held at the WEC are \$275.00 per week, not \$1,300.00 per week as previously stated.

Mr. Gooding advised that there is nothing in the Comprehensive Plan that prevents this type of activity from taking place near the FPA. He stated the Board has gone to great lengths to protect the FPA and opined that it is odd to think that the Board would approve something that would jeopardize it given the steps taken to preserve the area. Mr. Gooding advised that based on the evidence provided it can be determined that the proposed use can coexist with the surrounding uses. He urged the Board to move forward with transmittal to the State.

Commissioner Curry advised that the WEC property was previously within the FPA and the boundaries were modified to exclude this property. He opined that Low Density Residential is a perfect buffer between the existing FPA lines and the WEC. Commissioner Curry commented on the time the Board has spent over the last year reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and LDC.

Mr. Gooding provided a brief history of the FPA boundary changes.

Mr. Tillman advised that the language was different in the Comprehensive Plan back when the original WEC cases were occurring, noting over the years the Board has hardened the FPA to keep it from being moved.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Bryant advised that the FPA was specifically created for transferring of developmental rights, noting there was no other stipulations or discussion about not being able to develop in that area. She opined that the name was misleading when it was first created. Chairman Bryant stated over the last 16 years the BCC has strengthened the FPA.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Utilities Director Tony Cunningham advised that on May 20, 2025 the Board approved an amendment to an agreement with Golden Ocala/WEC, noting the County is building a Northwest Regional Water Treatment Plant (NWRWTP) and Golden Ocala/WEC is providing upfront funds as part of the construction of that plant. Mr. Tillman advised that Golden Ocala/WEC also provided property for the treatment plant.

Chairman Bryant clarified that the treatment facility was in connection with the WEC's original DRI.

Commissioner Zalak questioned if the data shows that this system will be able to provide adequate water supply for the total DRI. Mr. Cunningham advised that there are two aspects to consider. First the physical aspect of the ability for the County to pump out the ground water and provide that to the community is part of the design of the plant that will be analyzed. Second the regulatory aspect, which is through water use or consumptive use permits (CUP). Staff is working through both of those as they move through the

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process and updating the water use permit at this time.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Gooding advised that the County will not be asked to share the cost of constructing this facility, but there does need to be discussion relating to the transportation improvements. He stated some improvements are needed in the area and they are not a result of the WEC only.

Mr. Tillman advised that Mr. Cohoon did request that the applicant modify the West Ocala study to provide long range effects of this project.

Mr. Gooding stated discussions have taken place with staff to determine if there are any incentives available.

Commissioner Zalak expressed appreciation to everyone who was present today to provide input. He provided a brief history of the WEC and the impact it has had on the community. Commissioner Zalak advised that more information is needed relating to lighting, noise, traffic and access to the property. He opined that Marion County can be the "Horse Capital of the World" and the home of a world class sports complex, noting both can coexist.

Commissioner McClain advised that he is in favor of moving a request forward for transmittal to the State. He commented on his experience being a third generation Marion County citizen and growing up involved in agriculture. Commissioner McClain stated his father, former Commissioner Stan McClain, assisted in creating the FPA when he was a part of the BCC in 2005, noting the FPA can be a lasting legacy for future generations. He opined that Marion County has an opportunity to preserve the FPA and still have business and industry within the County. Commissioner McClain stated what is being requested today does not eliminate one square inch of the FPA. He advised that there will need to be a lot of conversation to ensure the project can work, but as of today he is in support of transmittal to the State for review.

Commissioner Stone advised that when this matter is brought back before the Board for approval it should contain more information relating to hours of operation, what the concerts will look like, signage, buffers, setbacks, and parking.

Commissioner Stone stated she had the opportunity to go to Lexington, Kentucky and tour thoroughbred farms, noting jet planes continuously flew overhead. She advised that all of Lexington could fit within Marion County's FPA. Commissioner Stone expressed support for moving forward with transmittal.

Commissioner Zalak provided an overview of the information he would like to see come back before the Board when this matter comes back (i.e., buffers, building height, parking plan, golf carts, concerts, traffic plans, and hours of operation).

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Bryant commented on the WEC's economic impact on the community. She advised that the Hunden study found that this type of facility is needed in Marion County, noting if the Roberts family does not build it than it will fall back on the County to build it and taxpayers to fund the project. Chairman Bryant advised that as her children were growing up and participating in different activities she had to travel, noting having a facility like this locally would be a huge benefit to families. She commented on the positive impact sports have on children.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Minter advised that today's items will come back to the Board for adoption after the transmittal. He stated the land use amendments have to be adopted prior to any zoning changes, noting zoning changes do not go to the State for review.

General discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Zalak, to approve transmittal of Large Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 25-L01, agreeing with Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission recommendations, based on findings that the land use change will not adversely affect the public interest, is compatible with land uses in the surrounding area, is consistent with Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (FS) and the Marion County Comprehensive Plan. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

1.2.5. 25-L02 - Golden Ocala Equestrian Land, LLC, et. al., requests a Comprehensive Plan Large-Scale Map Amendment to Change the Future Land Use Designation on ±250.86-Acres from Low Residential (LR) to World Equestrian Center (WEC), on Parcel Account Numbers including 21081-048-00, and portions of 21069-007-01, 21081-000001, 21081-001-00, 21087-001-00, 21087-001-02, 21065-000-00, and 21069-010-03, Multiple Address and/or No Addresses Assigned

The Board considered transmittal of the Comprehensive Plan Large-Scale Map Amendment to Change the Future Land Use Designation on ±250.86-Acres from Low Residential (LR) to World Equestrian Center (WEC), on Parcel Account Numbers including 21081-048-00, and portions of 21069-007-01, 21081-000001, 21081-001-00, 21087-001-00, 21087-001-02, 21065-000-00, and 21069-010-03, Multiple Address and/or No Addresses Assigned

P&Z PUBLIC HEARING ON JUNE 30, 2025

25-L02 Planning and Zoning Commission Recommendation

Motion was made by Mr. Behar, seconded by Mr. Bonner, to agree with staff's findings and recommendation, and recommend approval of the land use change based on the following findings of fact:

1. Will not adversely affect the public interest
2. Is consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan
3. Is compatible with the surrounding land uses

The motion passed unanimously, 4-0.

This matter was addressed with Agenda Item 1.2.4.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stone, seconded by Commissioner Zalak, to approve transmittal of Large Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 25-L02, agreeing with Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission recommendations, based on findings that the land use change will not adversely affect the public interest, is compatible with land uses in the surrounding area, is consistent with Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (FS) and the Marion County Comprehensive Plan. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

1.3. Adoption of Ordinance

1.3.1. 25-S09

A motion was made by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Zalak, to adopt Ordinance 25-32 adopting Small Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 25-S09, agreeing with the Growth Services staff and the P&Z Commission recommendations, based on findings that the land use change will not adversely affect the public interest, is compatible with land uses in the surrounding area, is consistent with Chapter 163, FS and the Marion County Comprehensive Plan. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

Ordinance 25-32 is entitled:

July 21, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA; ADOPTING THE FOLLOWING SMALL-SCALE AMENDMENT TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP SERIES OF THE MARION COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

25-S09, RAYMOND RAINS, SERVING AS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ESTATE OF JOHN RAINS, SR.

+/- 20.0 ACRE PARCEL

PARCEL NO. 45984-000-00

FROM RURAL LAND TO COMMERCIAL

PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 163, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR APPEALS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

1.3.2. The Deputy Clerk presented Affidavits of Mailing and Posting of Notices received from Growth Services Director Charles Varadin and Deputy Clerk Mills-McAllister regarding petitions for rezoning and Special Use Permits heard earlier in the meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Zalak, to adopt Ordinance 25-33 amending the Marion County Zoning Map pursuant to individual decisions made by the Board on each application heard in the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board (5-0).

Ordinance 25-33 is entitled:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA, APPROVING A REZONING APPLICATION AND AUTHORIZING IDENTIFICATION ON THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Kathy Bryant, Chairman

Attest:

Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk