

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

July 15, 2021

CALL TO ORDER:

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 9:04 a.m. on Thursday, July 15, 2021 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN JEFF GOLD

Chairman Gold advised that the workshop was scheduled this morning regarding the fiscal year (FY) 2021-2022 proposed budget.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

9:00 AM ROLL CALL

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Jeff Gold, District 3; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Kathy Bryant, District 2; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5. Vice-Chairman Carl Zalak, District 4, was absent due to a prior commitment. Also present were Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Fiscal Manager Michael McCain, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Jeannie Rickman, ACA Angel Roussel and ACA Tracy Straub.

OPENING REMARKS – Audrey Fowler, Budget Director

Budget Director Audrey Fowler presented a 5 page handout entitled, “Marion County Board of County Commissioners Budget Adjustments Tentative Budget Fiscal Year 2021-22, Adjustments through July 13, 2021”; and a 1 page handout entitled, “Marion County Board of County Commissioners Revenue Estimates – Florida Office of Economic & Demographic Research Fiscal Year 2021-22”.

Ms. Fowler advised that the Office of Economic & Demographic Research published a portion of their Revenue projections, noting there is an increase of approximately \$1,400,000.00 of County Revenue Sharing, and an increase of \$620,658.00 in the Local Government Half-Cent Sales Tax, for a total increase of \$2,090,663.00 of additional recurring revenue for the General Fund.

Ms. Fowler commented on the County Transportation Maintenance Fund, which reflects several increases and decreases for a net reduction in revenue of \$98,395.00.

Ms. Fowler addressed the Gas Tax Construction Fund and the 2nd Local Option Fuel Tax Fund, noting there was a combined increase in revenue of approximately \$850,000.00.

Ms. Fowler stated the additional revenue is reflected in the Budget Adjustment handout under Reserve for Contingencies. The current balance for the General Fund Reserve for Contingencies is \$6,086,943.00. This reflects the additional costs for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) position revisions, as well as the Public Safety Communications (PSC) position revisions. Of this funding, \$2.5 million is recurring revenue.

In response to Chairman Gold, Ms. Fowler advised that costs associated with the transition from overtime to on-call is also reflected, noting what is not included is the purchase of any new ambulance units or associated staffing.

July 15, 2021

Commissioner Bryant noted the Board must set the maximum millage rate by August 3, 2021.

Ms. Fowler stated the Budget Adjustment handout also shows changes to different funds and reflects any impacts those changes had on Reserves. She noted the Solid Waste Disposal Fund and the Utilities Fund had the most noticeable changes outside the General Fund.

Commissioner Bryant questioned whether any determination has been made relating to previous discussion on Growth Management and possible cost allocation from the Building Department. Mr. Bouyounes stated that it has not yet been determined. Ms. Fowler noted staff will continue to research the matter.

OPENING REMARKS – William Gladsen, State Attorney

State Attorney William “Bill” Gladsen appeared to review the Department’s proposed FY 2021-22 budget for Cost Center 268, Early Intervention Program - (page 97); Cost Center 205 State Attorney (page 211); Cost Center 206, State Attorney – Technology (page 212); and Cost Center 207, State Attorney LOV (page 214). Also present were Executive Director Bridget Kiefer and Information Technology (IT) Director Dan Gonnsen for the State Attorney’s Office.

Executive Director Bridget Kiefer advised that the majority of the budget requested supports IT services. She expressed her appreciation for the good relationship between the State Attorney’s Office and the County.

Ms. Kiefer stated this past fiscal year the State Attorney’s Office requested a fund shift in some fund categories to help the Department accomplish a new software implementation for case management, noting some of the funds had to be used this FY to begin the process. She advised that because of that implementation there is a cost savings of \$60,000.00.

Chairman Gold expressed his appreciation for the transparency shown by all Constitutional Officers this year.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Gladsen advised that when trials opened again this past March, the State Attorney’s Office hit the ground running, noting the Judges have been working methodically through cases. He stated these unprecedented times have been very stressful on staff, the Clerk’s Office, and the Public Defender’s Office; however, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

In response to Chairman Gold, Mr. Gladsen stated it was his understanding that the Ocala Police Department does not use Evidence.com., which is a data management system for video evidence utilized by other law enforcement agencies. He advised that many of the agencies throughout the Circuit have begun utilizing body cameras, noting Marion County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) Deputies all utilize them.

Mr. Gladsen advised that the State Attorney’s Office meets every week with Department leaders from Lake County, as well as other surrounding Counties, noting he reminds them if they make an IT decision regarding body cameras that they need to let him know so they can work together to ensure IT compatibility. He expressed appreciation to the Board for providing 4 additional part-time positions to review body cameras.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the State Attorney’s Office budget.

OPENING REMARKS – Michael Graves, Public Defender

Public Defender, Michael Graves appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2021-22 budget for Cost Center 200, Public Defender Administration (page 74); Cost Center 201, Public Defender Technology (page 75); Cost Center 202, Public Defender LOV (page 76); and Cost Center 268, Early Intervention Program (page 97).

Mr. Graves advised that this FY the Public Defender's Office is requesting a budget increase of approximately \$55,400.00. He stated the request is mainly for IT services and required new computers, as well as the apparatus that goes along with them. Mr. Graves stated the request includes 55 new Surface Pro tablets, which are used universally throughout the office. He stated the older models will be rotated down to those lesser tasked employees to increase the tablets lifespan. Mr. Graves noted this is the first major request for new computers since FY 2014. He stated there is a request for approximately \$10,000.00 due to changes in payroll issues (i.e., increase in minimum wage, insurance, etc.).

Mr. Graves expressed his appreciation to all the partners who have worked hard to help the Court system get back on schedule, noting Marion County is far ahead of other Counties within the Circuit.

Chairman Gold expressed his appreciation to Mr. Graves and his staff for the services they provide to citizens.

Mr. Graves noted that Cares Act funding provided by the County has been extremely helpful in catching up and moving forward with cases.

Clerk Gregory C. Harrell expressed his appreciation to Mr. Graves and Mr. Gladsen, noting they could not be better partners to work with to help citizens that must navigate through the legal system. He expressed his appreciation to former Clerk David R. Ellspermann who established the good working relationships.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no more questions in regard to the Public Defender's Office budget.

OPENING REMARKS – Jimmy Cowan, Property Appraiser

Property Appraiser Jimmy Cowan appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2021–22 budget for Cost Center 113, Property Appraiser – Transfer (page 35).

Mr. Cowan advised that the 2021 preliminary assessment roll reflects Marion County taxable property values have increased more than 8½ percent (%) for a total of approximately \$22,000,000,000.00 in taxable values. He stated the County has added more than \$700,000,000.00 in taxable value, which is attributed to new construction. Each year the Property Appraiser's Office submits an assessment roll to the Department of Revenue (DOR) for approval based on the standards of measures and guidelines. As required by Florida Statute (FS) 195.087, the Property Appraiser's Office has submitted its budget to the DOR for their review and approval and a copy has been provided to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for its review. Mr. Cowan advised that the Property Appraiser's budget for FY 2021/2022 is \$5,131,019.00, noting the increase in the budget is attributed to 5 vacant positions that were unfunded, insurance and retirement rate increases, as well as the 4% employee raises.

Mr. Cowan stated it is the goal of the Property Appraiser's Office to continue to operate in a manner that is fiscally conservative and responsible. He noted growth in Marion County has continued to remain steady and is an important factor of the Property Appraiser's Office to continue to meet the requirements and duties of the law.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Cowan stated the Property Appraiser's budget for FY 2021/2022 is \$5,131,019.00.

July 15, 2021

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Ms. Fowler advised that the Property Appraiser's budget is distributed amongst all of the millage based funds (i.e., General Fund, Fine & Forfeiture, Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) for Law Enforcement).

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Property Appraiser's Office budget.

Commissioner Bryant requested Constitutional Officers provide a little more detail in their budgets for Board review.

Ms. Fowler advised that transmittal letters and all backup documentation are provided in the back portion of the supplemental budget document previously provided to the Board. She stated any additional information provided by Constitutional Officers can also be included in the supplemental budget document.

OPENING REMARKS – Wesley Wilcox, Supervisor of Elections

Supervisor of Elections Wesley Wilcox appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2021-22 budget for Cost Center 123, Supervisor of Elections – Transfers (page 38).

Chairman Gold congratulated Mr. Wilcox on becoming President of the Florida State Association of Supervisor of Elections. He thanked Mr. Wilcox and his staff for the outstanding performance during the last election, noting he served on the Canvassing Board and was able to see firsthand all their hard work.

Commissioner Stone noted she would welcome the chance to be a member of the Canvassing Board for the next election.

Mr. Wilcox commented on the great working relationships Constitutional Officers have with the BCC. He opined that the Supervisor of Elections Office is one of, if not the best, operating Supervisor of Election's Office in the State of Florida, as well as one of the most innovative and fiscally conservative offices in the State.

Mr. Wilcox stated the 2 major areas where the budget will increase this FY are Printing and Binding (line item 547101) and Postage and Freight (line item 542201). He advised that the County will be performing redistricting, noting every voter in Marion County will have to be issued a new voter information card. Mr. Wilcox noted there are currently 270,000 registered voters in Marion County.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Wilcox referred to line item 544401, Rentals and Leases Buildings, noting the Department must rent more space for polling sites. He addressed the costs associated during the times those spaces are rented, including janitorial services, utilities, etc.

Commissioner Bryant commented on the number of mail-in ballots last year and questioned whether there were any areas where polling locations could be consolidated. Mr. Wilcox expressed concern with consolidation due to the unknow factor of whether it had to do with the convenience of mail-in ballots or was it due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He advised that there are currently 124 Precincts at 119 locations, noting he would like to reduce that number to 110 locations. Mr. Wilcox stated another issue with consolidation is the fact that Marion County is in 3 different Congressional Districts.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Curry expressed his appreciation to the staff at the Supervisor of Elections Office. He commented on parking issues citizens have at the primary Supervisor of Elections location, noting the Board may need to address that issue in the future.

Mr. Wilcox advised of previous discussions by the Board back in 2006 and 2007 to address the parking situation by utilizing surrounding property; however, hard times fell upon the community and those plans fell through. He advised that there are only about

20 to 25 public parking spots at the main office, noting during early voting the Department services approximately 2,000 voters per day at that site.

General discussion resumed.

In response to Chairman Gold, Fire Chief James Banta, Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) advised that the future Emergency Medical Services (EMS) central station is proposed at that site; however, he is not opposed to vacating the spot as long as another place is located that would have ample storage.

General discussion resumed.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there are no further questions in regard to the Supervisor of Elections Office budget.

OPENING REMARKS – George Albright, Tax Collector

Tax Collector George Albright appeared to review the Department's proposed FY 2021–22 budget for Cost Center 126, Tax Collector - Transfer (page 39).

Chairman Gold expressed his appreciation for the Department's transparency during the budget process, as well as Mr. Albright's service to the citizens of Marion County.

Mr. Albright stated he is committed to returning a minimum of \$50,000.00 to the General Fund.

Chairman Gold expressed his appreciation for the efforts by Mr. Albright to find ways to turnback money to the Board.

Mr. Albright advised that line item 512101, Regular Salaries and Wages, increased by \$194,154.00 due to the 4% salary increases; line item 522101, Retirement Contributions, increased by \$87,000.00; and line item 523101, Health Insurance increased by \$62,000.00. He referred to line item 534101, Contract Services Other Misc, which also increased by \$130,000.00 due to hiring part-time greeters at all locations. Mr. Albright opined the greeters pay for themselves by prescreening customer materials to ensure they have the necessary documents upfront.

Mr. Albright advised that other Counties have not fully reopened, so the Marion County Tax Collector's Office is getting overwhelming business from all over the State of Florida. He stated the Department earns money off every transition it makes, which is returned to the BCC.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Albright commented on the many services provided by the Tax Collector's Office (concealed weapons licenses, park passes, utility payments, etc.). He stated the Department also works with the Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) to help provide identification (IDs) for inmates who will be transitioning out of the jail. Mr. Albright advised of a new program to help inmates receive their driver's license.

In response to Chairman Gold, Mr. Albright advised that by utilizing services provided by Heart of Florida (HOF) he is saving money every month on his prescriptions. He encouraged employees to sign up, noting the HOF staff is very professional. Mr. Albright suggested the County place a HOF flyer in new hire packets.

Commissioner Bryant commended Mr. Albright for the cross training he provides employees and for his continuing efforts to find new ways to create revenue for the County.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Albright stated the Tax Collector's Office issues renewals for concealed weapon permits onsite.

Commissioner Bryant expressed her appreciation to Mr. Albright, noting several years ago Mr. Albright received an award for being "Legislator of the Year".

July 15, 2021

Mr. Albright commended Marion County's local automobile dealerships, noting they generate a great deal of sales tax revenue.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the Tax Collector's Office budget.

OPENING REMARKS – Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk of the Circuit Court

Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Gregory C. Harrell appeared to review the proposed FY 2021–22 budgets for Cost Center 110, Clerk to County Commission – Transfer (page 34); and Cost Center 110, Clerk to County Commission – Transfer (page 208).

Clerk Harrell presented a 2 page handout entitled, "Marion County Board of County Commissioners Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget Workshop" and a 4 page letter dated June 1, 2021 to Chairman Gold detailing the FY 2021-22 budget requests.

Clerk Harrell expressed his appreciation to the Board for making his first six months as Clerk and Comptroller go so smoothly, noting he is truly honored and privileged to work with each Commissioner. He advised that two weeks ago, at the Florida Court Clerks and Comptroller's (FCCCs) annual summer conference, the Marion County Clerk's Office was presented with Certificates of Excellence in the areas of Recording Fundamentals and Marriage Licenses, both of which are County-funded services. Those types of accomplishments obviously could not happen without Board support. Clerk Harrell expressed his appreciation to Budget Director Audrey Fowler, Assistant Budget Director Jaime McLaughlin, and their team, noting they are an asset to the County. He noted his predecessor Clerk Ellspermann used to quote Henry Ford's famous line, "Don't find fault, find a remedy." From day one, Ms. Fowler and her team have approached this year's budget process with that mentality, looking carefully and skillfully at ways to find straightforward and smart remedies to what is otherwise a complicated and complex set of issues. This allows the Board to fulfill most, if not all, of the requests made by each Department and Constitutional Officer to meet the demands of the tremendous growth Marion County is experiencing, without having to raise the millage rate.

Clerk Harrell referred to the letter dated June 1, 2021, detailing the FY 2021-22 budget requests, noting the Clerk's Office was able to decrease its overall Operating Expenses by \$77,285.00 (from \$464,496.00 to \$387,211.00 as set forth in line items 531109 through 555501). He commented on the COVID-19 pandemic, noting throughout the past year when much of the Court system had to shut down, the Clerk's Office remained open to provide services on behalf of the County, as well as the Court system. Clerk Harrell noted there are some health insurance rate and retirement rate increases (\$35,473 in health insurance rate increases and \$24,522 in retirement rate increases), comparable to the other Constitutionals and County Departments, as well as \$119,482.00 for the 4% cost of living adjustment (COLA) adjustment.

Clerk Harrell addressed the request for funding of \$31,467.00 for the remaining 6 months of an Internal Auditor position that was previously approved and funded halfway through FY19-20 mid-year, but was put on hold during FY20-21. He advised of his request for an additional 2.31 new positions (including salary & benefits), which factor into line item 512101, Regular Salaries & Wages. Clerk Harrell stated the first of two full-time positions is a Senior Accountant at a loaded cost of \$83,412. He stated

the position is necessary to properly address the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB87) requirements relating to County leases and the financial reporting and audit requirements of American Rescue Plan (ARP) monies and anticipated ancillary Federal grant allocations for infrastructure and housing. Clerk Harrell noted that due to the urgent need for this position, he will be placing the Senior Accountant position as an Agenda Item at the next regularly scheduled BCC meeting. He advised that the second full time position is for a Commission Records Clerk at a loaded cost of \$49,060, noting this position will provide much needed support for the increased demand in meetings, document research, and public records requests. Clerk Harrell noted the importance of transparency and the need to provide information to the public upon request. The final position is a fractional part of a new position (31%) to add to the Information Technologies (IT) Department. This position will help provide IT support for electronic records and data management. He expressed his appreciation to County IT Director Tom Northey and his team for the positive interaction with Clerk IT staff. Clerk Harrell expressed his appreciation to Human Resources Director Amanda Tart who has helped realize some efficiencies in the way payroll and IT work together.

Chairman Gold expressed his appreciation to Clerk Harrell and his staff who perform a very complex and amazing amount of work, noting the County could not run efficiently without their support.

It was the general consensus of the Board that there were no further questions in regard to the Clerk's Office budget.

The meeting recessed at 10:14 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:23 a.m. with all members present except Commissioner Zalak.

UPDATE:

Chairman Gold stated he would like to hold another workshop with the MCSO to readdress their budget. He noted there were a two dates available on the Commission calendar, either August 11 or 12, 2021 to be held at Green Clover Hall or the Growth Services Department. It was the general consensus of the Board to direct staff to schedule the workshop.

County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes expressed his appreciation to Department Directors, for the professionalism and information provided to the Board during the budget workshops. He noted the Board had several questions during those workshops and he is prepared to provide the information today.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that Commissioner Bryant had questions relating to Zoning Technicians and funding from Building Permits. He stated staff is working on this and will bring that information back at a regularly scheduled BCC meeting for Board review.

Mr. Bouyounes requested the Board consider including one single certified unit and one dual certified unit, along with the cost of the personnel, into the proposed budget for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). He clarified that if the Board places the funding for this into the budget, then when the time comes for implementation, the monies would already be set aside.

General discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Fire Chief James Banta, MCFR, advised that from

July 15, 2021

a capacity standpoint staff realizes that additional units are needed. He stated the other component of this request is what the financial impact will be versus balancing the workload.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that for a single certification unit the cost is \$505,000.00 for personnel costs and for a dual certification unit the cost is \$590,000.00.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Bryant commented on the partnership between AdventHealth and the County.

Mr. Bouyounes stated his recommendation would be to place the funding in a non-active personnel line item, so if the time comes when the Board is ready to add a unit, the money is available.

Ms. Fowler advised that if the Board places the money into the Regular Salaries & Wages, it will be there so a Budget Amendment Resolution would not be necessary. She clarified that a Human Resources item would have to go before the Board to approve the positions.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Bryant questioned the necessary timeline should Rainbow Lakes Estates (RLE) choose to allow the County to provide their Fire Rescue services.

Chief Banta advised that citizens in Rainbow Lakes Estates already pay into the 1.1 MSTU for Fire Rescue, noting the County also provides ambulance services.

Commissioner Bryant stated RLE residents only pay a \$35.00 annual Fire Rescue assessment per improved parcels, which is much lower than the rest of the County.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Bryant requested staff bring back more information relating to this matter. Chief Banta advised that the Rainbow Lakes Estates Advisory Board would need to make a decision relating to Fire services and enter into a contract similar to the one with the City of Dunnellon, which will bring them into the regular County assessment.

General discussion resumed.

Ms. Fowler stated the County could create a Reserve Non-Operating account for the proposed salaries and wages, should the Board decide to provide Fire services to citizens in RLE.

General discussion resumed.

Commissioner Stone suggested a list be created of proposed projects that the Board has yet to decide on in order to review those items and the impact they would have on the final budget.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Ms. Fowler advised that as of this morning there is \$6,000,000.00 in Reserves, which includes all the additional revenue that has been identified, including the State Shared Revenue and the Half Cent Sales Tax. She clarified that the County has added an extra \$3.1 million of Revenue and approximately \$700,000.00 of expenditures. Ms. Fowler stated out of the \$6,000,000.00 in Reserves, there is \$3.5 million that is one-time Carry Forward monies. The recurring number is \$2.5 million. She noted 0.01 of a mill is the equivalent of \$209,000.00.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that he would bring back a finalized list of proposed requests and projects that have not yet been included in the budget, noting the Board can consider them at a later date.

General discussion resumed.

Chairman Gold commented on the number of calls for emergency services and noted his support for the request for one single certified unit and one dual Certified unit, noting if

the County is not already behind, it will be soon.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Chief Banta stated \$200,000.00 was added for the on-call program, noting the funds would come from the reduction of overtime expenses. He advised that on-call personnel (single certification employees) would be utilized during peak times, vacancies, special events, etc.

Commissioner Bryant suggested the County add one single certification ambulance full time instead of the on-call program.

Chief Banta stated some of the savings with the on-call program would include not having to pay into FRS, insurance, etc., for the part-time personnel although their hourly pay rate would be higher. He advised that this would be a pilot program in hopes that it can help augment the system by supplementing whenever possible.

General discussion ensued.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS:

Chairman Gold advised that staff will be bringing back the date to hold a workshop with the MCSO.

Commissioner Bryant suggested another workshop be held after meeting with the Sheriff to discuss all of the final requests and settle the budget.

Commissioner Bryant noted she may not be able to attend the budget workshop scheduled for tomorrow morning. She suggested staff reach out to the Community Foundation and request that the organization provide information on how it delivers a direct benefit to the community utilizing the funds from the County, similar to the information provided by the Early Learning Coalition.

Commissioner Curry reminded the Board that they will be choosing their appointments to the Litter Task Force at its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. He advised of conversations he had with the Attorney General's (AG) Office and the County's Legal Department concerning whether the Litter Task Force is a Board that is required to meet under the Sunshine law, noting the consensus was that it will be a Sunshine Law Board with 7 voting members; however, the liaison members (Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), City of Ocala, and other municipalities) are not held under the Sunshine Law requirements.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff will review the County's Ordinance to determine whether appointments to the Litter Task Force are allowed to serve on more than one Board or Committee.

****REMAINDER OF PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK****

July 15, 2021

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

Jeff Gold, Chairman

Attest:

Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

DRAFT