

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

November 17, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, November 17, 2025 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

**INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN KATHY BRYANT**

Chairman Bryant advised that the workshop was scheduled this morning to discuss the Workforce Housing Initiative.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

**ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call the following members were present: Chairman Kathy Bryant, District 2; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Matthew McClain, District 3; and Chairman Michelle Stone, District 5. Commissioner Carl Zalak, III, District 4 arrived shortly after the meeting commenced. Also present were County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Tracy Straub.

It was noted for the record that the Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 10 page Agenda packet to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

**WORKSHOP PRESENTATION**

1. Workforce Housing Initiative

ACA Tracy Straub presented the following recommendation:

Description/Background: Upward Communities has partnered with several Texas School Districts and Franklin County, Florida, to deliver essential housing solutions for critical personnel, including first responders, healthcare workers, educators, and various vital service providers. This workshop is an opportunity for Upward Communities to share its comprehensive approach to evaluating local workforce needs and affordability obstacles. Their initiative is designed to overcome current gaps impacting recruitment and retention efforts within communities. By offering targeted housing solutions, Upward Communities offers a partnership aimed to strengthen Marion County's essential services and enhance long-term workforce resiliency, thereby supporting the stability and growth of the local community.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: Information and discussion only.

ACA Tracy Straub advised that Jason Roberts with Upward Communities is present today to review a possible housing solution for the community.

Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jason Roberts, Upward Communities, stated this project is the largest of his endeavors and has the most impact that will be left behind. He advised that his organization is one of the only groups of professionals paying

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attention to the issue relating to workforce housing. Mr. Roberts stated he was invited to Marion County by Representative Kurt Kelly, noting his organization has been working extensively with the Marion County Public Schools (MCPS). He advised that the organization has learned a lot relating to Florida processes and law compared to Texas and Tennessee. Mr. Roberts commented on the impossible task essential staff have in being able to afford a single-family home to reside in today's economy. He stated over the course of many years the cost of living (COVID-19, inflation, etc.), has impacted individual's paychecks, noting somewhere between 30 percent (%) to 50% of overall income goes to cost of living. Mr. Roberts advised that essential staff employees end up driving further away from town where real estate is cheaper to keep more money in their paycheck. He clarified that it may be cheaper in quality or in price. Mr. Roberts stated individuals think affordable or government subsidized will solve this problem for essential staff; however, many of those workers earn just a little too much to qualify for the low-income quality product. He advised that most low income housing is immediately absorbed by those individuals with low-income qualifiers resulting in a waiting list. Mr. Roberts stated a lot of staff want to be in a highly desired community rather than feeling like they have to make a personal sacrifice just to have a job. He commented on the time his organization spent with end users (firefighters, police officers, nurses, road maintenance workers, etc.), which has enabled them to create a method to solve the problem. Mr. Roberts clarified that this project is only essential housing for essential staff, noting there is no essential/affordable housing for the public yet. He advised that the project is 100% privately funded and those dollars are sought through a number of different outlets largely depending upon the market and economy; however, they typically use a non-profit entity. The entity being used right now is called Public-Private Development Corporation (PPDC). Mr. Roberts stated this allows the organization to tap into tax-exempt financing for this purpose, which is the cheapest form of financing in the Country that they can get for long-term debt on their balance sheets.

Commissioner Zalak arrived at 10:08 a.m.

Chairman Bryant questioned whether the project will be privately funded through the PPDC and where the County's bonds would come into play.

Mr. Roberts stated Upward Communities seeks tax-exempt bond financing on lease revenue bonds, noting they are a certain bond structure that exists based off of leases. He advised that the bond debt would appear on his organization or the non-profit balance sheet subject to a lease with the County that is subject to appropriations risk. Mr. Roberts stated this is not the County's bond, it would be Upward Communities' bonds or the PPDC's bonds.

Commissioner Zalak questioned whether these bonds are similar to development bonds. Mr. Roberts advised that he believes so and he has heard that from his Counsel but does not know specifically.

Chairman Bryant stated there was some confusion as to how this goes against the County's bonding ability.

Mr. Roberts advised that the debt is his organization's, noting the County signs a master lease that is shown on the County's budget along with inflows from the sub-tenant leases of \$3,100,000.00. He stated there will also be a reserve account of \$1,500,000.00 that shows the County may have signed a 55 year lease with a 3 year lease payment, but it will show inflows of \$3,100,000.00 and a revenue reserve account. Mr. Roberts advised that the County's debt capacity will not be higher or lower due to signing a lease. He stated his organization will need to spend more time with the County's Bond Counsel and

Legal Counsel to ensure that the County is not being indentured more and harming its ability to raise the County's own bond debt and do more with its Capital. Mr. Roberts advised that this is one of the first things that need to be done, noting if this is harming the County's ability to raise its debt it does not make sense to pursue this option with Upward Communities.

Chairman Bryant commented on concerns the Clerk's office has regarding the financing and bonding capacity, etc.

Clerk Harrell advised of a conversation on Monday, November 19, 2025, with ACA Straub and Controller Tina Novinger from his office. He stated it gave staff an opportunity to have an initial conversation with the County's Bond Counsel, Nabors Giblin and Nickerson P.A., and the County's long-term debt finance and financial advisor PFM, noting there are some issues that need to be reviewed. Clerk Harrell commented on the scope of the project being between \$200,000,000.00 to \$300,000,000.00. While the County is in very good legal debt bond financing position, a lot of the funding it would use to qualify for that kind of financing is utilized for operations. He stated if the project were to not work out the way it seems to be envisioned, then before the lease is done, it is his belief that Mr. Roberts and Upward Communities would basically have the asset. Clerk Harrell advised that as staff understand it, it would not be a purely privately financed obligation whereby the County would not have some very serious potential liability. He stated it is the type of thing that the County's financial advisor and Bond Counsel will have to look at and sign off.

Mr. Roberts concurred, noting his organization would have to spend time with the County's Bond Counsel due to this being a lease. He advised that it is his understanding that if the lease is terminated, Upward Communities has to take back the property and cannot pursue the County for future payments. Mr. Roberts stated in Texas there is something called appropriations risk, noting if a party uses its non-appropriations capacity to non-appropriate for a lease, the next party that wants to do a lease subject to appropriations with that party will see it on their credit. He advised that he is unsure what the consequence of that would be relating to the County's other appropriations Capital. Mr. Roberts commented on ensuring this does not hinder the County's bonding capacity to incur more debt that is needed. He stated another consideration relates to whether County staff needs this product.

Clerk Harrell advised that Upward Communities is meeting a need that is being seen nationwide and not just in Marion County. He stated even if this project is a great success, there will be a private sector interest in this type of project. Clerk Harrell commented on the scale and scope of the project, noting if the County were on the hook for this debt, it would more than triple its debt obligations from year to year if not quadrupling.

Chairman Bryant advised that at this point there are still a lot of questions to be answered. Clerk Harrell concurred, noting the County's annual debt service right now is approximately \$4,500,000.00 and based on initial numbers relating to the scale of the project the County would be increasing that to over \$16,000,000.00 annually.

Chairman Bryant stated it is her understanding that it is not the intention or where Upward Communities is going and that is not how the proposed project is envisioned by Mr. Roberts.

Mr. Roberts advised that in other parts of the Country there are no private solutions/options and so those individuals are raising their own general obligation debt to fund these projects. He stated the intention of Upward Communities is to bear that balance sheet and that debt cost on their books. Mr. Roberts advised that all of the

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organization's bond investors understand this purpose and are anxious to put their capital behind something with this much meaning, noting they understand essential staff have a job and paycheck and are paying rent elsewhere. He stated if the project moves forward he will have his investment bankers interview the Board to determine if this is essential to the County. Mr. Roberts commented on the organization being the first private entrepreneurial entity to address this issue and offer an alternative option to the County using its own bond debt. He advised that when doing everything new and first there are certain levels of risk to assume, which is why usually they are offering the financial capacity and real estate expertise in every capacity. Mr. Roberts stated after interviewing staff he realized there is a waiting list twice as large as the number of units that will be available, noting the real issue is how many units can Upward Communities build. He clarified that the County will be very involved in talking with Upward Communities to ensure everything is transparent, expectations are clear and in determining what safety measures will be put in place prior to executing the lease. Mr. Roberts advised that the next step is to go through the legal process and get a formula that everyone is comfortable with and then begin interviewing staff to see how many individuals will be on the waiting list for 300 units.

Chairman Bryant questioned what will occur if there are not enough individuals to fill the vacancies and if there are any affordable housing restrictions that would require the Board only lease to essential personnel. Mr. Roberts stated there are no such restrictions. He commented on the ability of a private individual entity to take on the appropriation risk in addition to the political risk associated with a new County Commission coming in over the 55 year lease and wanting to cancel or not appropriate the previous lease due to politics. Mr. Roberts advised that Upward Communities wants more than 50% of the units to be housing essential staff. He stated his organization wants the County to have this \$300,000,000.00 asset as a tool to use to recruit and retain the best staff throughout the Country, but also to have the flexibility of an employee benefit for a certain sector of housing that is necessary to solve an essential need in the community. Mr. Roberts advised that the overall purpose is to provide amazing quality single-family homes for essential staff and after that it is whatever the Board and Upward Communities want to work together on, noting there are no restrictions relating to income. He stated they must follow the Fair Housing guidelines; however, Upward Communities has conquered all of those things with the Fair Housing Administration. Mr. Roberts advised that they have built in flexibility, which is important in allowing the Board to stay current with the lease. He provided an overview relating to the consequences his organization would face if the Board were to cancel the lease, including the impacts to the individuals living in those units. Mr. Roberts stated the organization goes through many layers of derisking prior to executing the lease.

Commissioner Curry questioned what other projects Upward Communities have done and what other communities they are working with. Mr. Roberts advised that in Texas they are approved by Hays Independent School District (Hays ISD) for up to 1,000 units, noting the first phase will have 364 homes and there are 650 individuals on the waiting list. He stated less than 30 miles away is Lockhart ISD, which came on with Upward Communities after losing 6 teachers immediately when Hays ISD made their announcement. Lockhart will have 115 houses and there are 205 individuals on that waiting list. Mr. Roberts advised that his organization is currently working with Franklin, Tennessee in Williamson County and expects a Statewide Legislative approval for the program in March, 2026. He stated they are approved in many communities and would

be a lot further along and have houses on the ground in Hays ISD had they not had to move the proposed location to another site. Mr. Roberts advised that the organization will probably break ground on the first few locations and houses in late January or early February. He stated nothing is built yet. Mr. Roberts commented on Mr. Kelly's persistence as a driver for bringing this project to Marion County, noting it looked like a safe place to start this endeavor in Florida. He advised that due to the costs associated with infrastructure, the smallest project Upward Communities could start with would be approximately 150 homes. Mr. Roberts stated it takes the same amount of energy and effort to do the paperwork and legal review for 150 as it does for 500 units. He advised that the organization uses DPZ CoDesign, noting for every unit in the project there is a certain percentage of each unit that goes towards amenities or the overall community. Mr. Roberts commented on the consideration given to the number of staff the County has in its different Departments relating to developments with 300 to 500 units and what percentage of those individuals is a safe number. He stated it is better for Upward Communities to design an overall community with amenities (dog parks, pools, fitness centers, etc.); however, they can build something smaller on a different piece of property. In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Roberts advised that this would be a leased product (not owner-occupied) without homeowners' association (HOA) fees unless individuals wanted additional services. He stated lawn maintenance and trash pick up would be included with the rent as would maintaining the common areas and amenities. Mr. Roberts advised that only 20% of actual tenants will use those amenities. He commented on designing amenities based on the demographics in the community such as an additional pool specifically designed with a splash pad in a development where there will be more children. Mr. Roberts stated those expenses are accounted for, noting Upward Communities runs financial models ahead of time prior to signing the leases. He advised that the rental increase goes up 3.75% each year due to increases relating to fuel and other operating expenses.

Chairman Bryant questioned if the final product will be homes or duplexes/apartment looking structures. Mr. Roberts stated Upward Communities tries to design units that have the same quality of life but provide several levels of flexibility depending upon the staff members. He advised that the 1 and 2 bedroom duplexes have attached walls; however, there are no units on top of another unit. Mr. Roberts clarified that the units are from ground to ceiling, which allows for a yard. He stated there are a certain percentage of units the organization would design with the County based on what is needed for staff. There would be some attached units, and 2 to 3 versions of 2 bedroom units and a higher end version of the 2 bedroom units. Mr. Roberts advised that 3 and 4 bedroom units are probably the most cost comparable product.

In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Roberts stated there will be a mix of products, noting the majority of the units will be detached. He advised that the only reason they would have attached units is to get units close to that community square and reduce the price points substantially. Mr. Roberts stated the communities are designed with sidewalks and ample parking. He advised that nearly 90% of the communities DPZ CoDesign have built have twice the square footage for their houses and fences as homes outside their fences. Mr. Roberts stated there are no special houses, just better layouts. He commented on the houses in Lockhart and Hays, noting 80% have front porches fronting a street and rear/alley loaded garages. The trash cans are located in the rear and pickup is on the same days, which is more efficient and keeps cars off the street. Mr. Roberts advised that the savings his organization gets from using a lower cost of capital is reinvested into a

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quality product, noting it makes it safer as an investor that the better quality of the product, the less likely the County or staff will want to terminate the lease.

Commissioner McClain commented on the possibility that the County's workforce may not be the same in 10 or 15 years; and questioned if there are mixes of product in anticipation of changes. Mr. Roberts stated everything Upward Communities does is a blend and based on what staff want. He advised that they begin by interviewing staff relating to what they need and want currently. Mr. Roberts commented on what happens if individuals cancel the lease. He stated consideration is given to whether they have a quality product that can compete with like units and whether a market rate tenant will want to live in this unit and pay this rental price. Mr. Roberts addressed the ability to rent a portion of units to market rate tenants who will pay an extra \$1,000.00 per month, noting it will provide additional revenue for the County. He advised that he is seeking the Board's support and feedback relating to which Departments will need the product in 5 or 10 years from now.

Commissioner Stone commented on not being restricted to only County employees if the need is to go out to the market or possibly open it up for senior living.

Mr. Roberts stated many government programs across the Country are not successful, noting to create a universal government subsidized program there are rules that do not give local communities the flexibility needed to thrive or succeed. He advised that is why Upward Communities has to design a community per zip code, area, and look. Mr. Roberts commented on the "Ocala look" that is highly desirable and gets more dollars per square foot (sf) than other houses, noting Upward Communities will be matching that look and absorbing that value. He stated the organization would come to the Board almost immediately to recommend they reserve 20 units for market rate tenants to generate additional income, but also to avoid moving out current employee tenants for other employees. Those units should be reserved for future needs allowing the County to move out market rate tenants when necessary. Mr. Roberts commented on Upward Communities working with the Board in the pre-leasing strategy to identify what is needed and provide a financial calculus that is longer term. He stated if the first program is very successful and there are supporting staff interviews, Upward Communities will build Phase 2. He commented on the size of Marion County and the need for strategic planning relating to locations.

Commissioner Stone stated she needs to understand what the balance sheet looks like for the County, what the obligation will be, and how it may prohibit the Board from anything they may need in the future.

Mr. Roberts advised that it is critical this is a good financial situation for the County and a better one than if the County did it alone. He stated there has been discussion with Bond Counsel, noting there are two really good Bond Counsels they will utilize. Mr. Roberts commented on the School District's recent Certificates of Participation (COPs) lease programs for some of their buildings, noting those revenues are pledged and subject to annual appropriations. He advised that if they did not appropriate that deal on the Upward Communities lease, it would impact their ability and default on the other COPs program. Mr. Roberts stated his program is so good that it could have jeopardized the COPs program; therefore Upward Communities refused to put the School District in that position and advised that it does not make sense for them to be the master lease signer. He noted that is when the organization was directed to the County due to its multiple revenue streams to choose from. Mr. Roberts advised that if they see the same risk during the process, they will be out, noting the organization will not put its balance sheet and funds

on the line for something that is not crystal clear. He commented on Upward Communities posting the reserve funds in addition to serving as the property manager for the County, noting if there is an issue they will be the party tasked with developing a solution or dealing with the financial consequences if it is not successful.

Commissioner Stone addressed the 3.75% increase on the rental rate annually, which is not a guaranteed salary increase for employees. She stated if an employee does not pay their rent, they will have to be evicted.

Mr. Roberts advised that in Texas every affordable housing complex that is government restricted on income went up 11%, noting there had to be an increase or the program would fail due to increases relating to maintenance, fuel, etc.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Roberts stated when the County's rent payment is calculated his organization is planning for a 55 year term of life. There will be \$5.00 set aside each month for replacing roofs, there are warranties on the filters and Upward Communities is responsible for changing the air filters in the air conditioning (A/C) systems every 30 days to get the full lifespan. He stated all of that is done in the rental calculation, noting his property management company manages over 200,000 units across the Country with many being single family units. Mr. Roberts commented on the enormous amount of data analysis relating to the 7 year lifespan for appliances and fixtures and the amount of funding that should be set aside from the monthly rental payment to replace those things after warranties have expired.

County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes commented on the two Texas developments that will break ground in early 2026 and questioned if there are already leases executed for those units. Mr. Roberts stated Hays ISD has signed off on the rental payments and leases; however, due to the change in location the lease for Lockhart ISD will likely be executed in the next 30 days.

In response to Mr. Bouyounes, Mr. Roberts advised that the leases will be public record and he will provide the Board with the same leases.

Mr. Bouyounes stated this initiative came to County staff's attention roughly 3 to 4 months ago and they have been trying to obtain as much information as possible. He advised that there are still a lot of questions. Mr. Bouyounes commented on the need to ascertain the liability for the County, determine the amount of funding to allocate annually and identify the process or approach relating to the budget. He stated the purpose of today's workshop is to have the Board and Clerk hear the information and provide feedback, noting it will take a lot to work out all the details.

Chairman Bryant commented on obtaining Board consensus to have staff work with Mr. Roberts and Upward Communities, as well as the Clerk of Court's Office, Bond Counsel and other entities that need to be included in the conversation to work out the details to determine if this project can move forward.

Mr. Roberts advised that to get firm answers on the costs associated with the properties it costs Upward Communities approximately \$1,000,000.00 to \$1,200,000.00, (testing water, sewer capacity, etc.) He provided an overview of the steps needed to deliver real facts and numbers, noting the funds are expended after knowing the Board is comfortable with the proposal and it makes sense.

He commented on the dollars spent to compete every year with pay for employees that are leaving, and what it costs to replace them with temporary employees.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Minter stated he has a question relating to the conclusion staff reached in regard to a Legal Request Memorandum (LRM), noting the matter should be revisited and it is not necessary to address that today.

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In response to Clerk Harrell, Mr. Roberts advised that Upward Communities has a project budding in Franklin County, Florida. He stated there is a Public-Private Partnership (P3) in the queue accepted and approved. Mr. Roberts commented on the small size of the community, noting multiple organizations there were very proactive in creating Team Franklin. He advised that they have a substantial amount of their workforce that draws from Tallahassee every day. They have 150 acres of land that they own and questioned if Upward Communities would be interested in designing the community. Mr. Roberts stated Upward Communities is looking at designing a 450 unit community, but probably only building 250 units in the initial phase. He provided a brief overview of next steps prior to submitting for an unsolicited P3.

Clerk Harrell commented on having conversations with Franklin County, noting he spoke with his counterpart who corroborated pretty much everything that has been discussed. He advised that he has shared with Mr. Minter during the course of the meeting today some of the public record information on that Board's decision making. Clerk Harrell stated he believes that Franklin County has the same Bond Counsel as Marion County, which will be helpful.

Mr. Roberts commented on the possibility of a 30 year lease, noting legal counsel has come up with 3 solutions that make that legally compliant. He advised of challenges relating to existing precedents for workforce housing and other things, noting Legislative language has been proposed.

Mr. Bouyounes stated if the County takes the lead on this type of project and based on Board direction the project will be open to MCPS employees, City employees, Constitutional Officers or public agencies in the community that are willing to work with the Board and be part of the project.

Mr. Roberts advised that it will be the Board's decision as to how charitable they want to be relating to other agencies.

Chairman Bryant opined that the project is a great recruiting tool.

Commissioner Curry questioned what the structure of the company looks like and what happens to the project if something happens to Mr. Roberts. Mr. Roberts provided a scenario whereby the market explodes after year 10 and market rents are \$6,000.00 a month while the County's units are \$2,200.00 due to the locked in rate. He stated it would be advantageous for the Board to stop taking care of the property so the lease is cancelled and they can get market rent for all the units and make a profit. Mr. Roberts advised that to prohibit that the project will be put into a local non-profit entity whose Board the BCC will be allowed to be on for full transparency. He stated if anything happens to him, the property management company (3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the Country), has everything set to be monitored and managed going forward for the County as well as ensuring he does not have the ability to take the development from the County. Mr. Roberts stated the purpose of the project is to solve the problem and give the Board the comfortability that if the lease stays current for that long period of time, Upward Communities will have recovered their investment/funds and give the County this asset, which could be worth \$900,000,000.00 at that time for a minimal fee. He commented on the belief that the project sounds too good to be true. Mr. Roberts advised that when the problem is solved for the staff member, many other things grow out of the project. Mr. Roberts commented on internet service providers (ISPs) and grocery stores that want to be involved. He stated this is not an affordable housing community, it is housing for essential staff, which businesses love. Mr. Roberts commented on corporate sponsorship opportunities, noting there are businesses that want amenity centers named after them for a donation to lower the staff member's

rent even more. He advised that by creating the value and getting individuals to the location, like a Publix store, all of the sudden the other retailers benefit financially. Mr. Roberts stated everything begins with solving the issue of taking care of essential staff. He commented on his many business endeavors. Mr. Roberts reiterated that this project will be designed to ensure everything is maintained and nobody can take it from the County if anything happens to him.

In response to Commissioner McClain, Mr. Roberts advised that the hard part of this project is making it really affordable and offering immediate satisfaction and change in income. He stated it is necessary to get very lean with Upward Communities' expenses on the operational side, and developing fees to keep the lights on, noting he is the party posting the reserves account for the County. Mr. Roberts commented on tax-exempt financing, which sometimes allows him to defer almost all of their developing fee until the 35<sup>th</sup> or 36<sup>th</sup> year. He advised that when that is deferred to the back end it aligns the interest to where if the lease is cancelled before 35 years, it is in default and he gets nothing. Mr. Roberts stated there are a number of things the organization does for this to work, noting they could earn revenue by leasing a cell phone tower to a carrier that also provides the community with fifth generation (5G) service it is helpful.

Commissioner Stone commented on the need to have the leases approved by legal prior to Mr. Roberts spending his funds to begin planning the project.

Mr. Roberts clarified that there is just a master lease with the County. He stated there will be an enormous amount of demand relating to individuals that will want to live in these houses. Mr. Roberts advised that his organization must work with leaders to ensure there is a focus on recruitment and retention, noting there are no special leases, it is the same universal sub-lease for all staff.

In response to Commissioner Stone, Mr. Roberts stated Upward Communities is following normal Florida real estate law due to the requirement to comply with normal rental psychology in helping County staff. He advised that his organization would not garnish an individual's wages if they were terminated or any of those complex arrangements; however, the County will have to pursue those individuals on their credit report just like an apartment complex would. Mr. Roberts stated the organization will meet with the County quarterly or biannually prior to renewing leases to determine how things are going and what needs to be done. He advised that his organization will be the operator and the County will be the owner.

Commissioner Stone stated it is an annual lease.

Mr. Roberts commented on his organization assisting with Human Resources (HR) functions like going to job fairs to recruit specific staff needed in the community.

(Ed. Note: The Deputy Clerk was in receipt of an LRM from Assistant County Attorney Thomas Schwartz.)

## **BOARD DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS**

It was the general consensus of the Board to move forward into the exploratory portion of this endeavor.

Chairman Bryant commented on the amount of work that staff will have to perform, noting this will not happen overnight. She stated this project is worth exploring.

Mr. Roberts advised that Upward Communities are willing to put their money where their mouth is and dedicate their time to the County relating to this project. He stated Marion County has a lot of things going for it, which makes it very safe from a monetary position.

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In response to Chairman Bryant, Mr. Roberts advised that if the Legal Department can commit to a weekly phone call, staff will be able to quickly determine whether or not they are comfortable with this project. He stated if Bond Counsel gives its blessing, the County could be breaking ground by the end of the first quarter. Mr. Roberts advised that it would be roughly 60 days until the next step at the latest, subject to the holidays.

Chairman Bryant requested a follow up meeting be scheduled after the first of the year, noting the importance for the Board to be able to meet and ask questions as they move through this process.

Mr. Roberts stated his organization usually works with staff to prepare a memo of a summary of findings.

Commissioner Curry was excused at 11:21 a.m.

Mr. Roberts advised that the memo provides the County with the opportunity to ask questions and they will revisit the matter until all parties are satisfied.

Commissioner Zalak stated it will be a great thing if they can pull it off. He advised that he wants to hear what Bond Counsel has to say and requested to be on the call or in that meeting.

Chairman Bryant advised that this will be in her District and she would like to be on that call. She requested she be the liaison on this project, noting if things are not done when she leaves office the remaining Board members will be abreast.

Commissioner Stone commented on the updates that will be provided at the next workshop.

Chairman Bryant stated Commissioner Zalak should be on that call if he chooses. She stated she wants to be able to actually be involved in the project.

Mr. Roberts clarified that he wants the entire Board to be involved and to know everything. In response to Mr. Bouyounes, Chairman Bryant advised that Commissioner Zalak will be on the call; however, she will be the liaison to the project.

Mr. Minter commented on the timeline Mr. Roberts provided and stated it is his assumption that the organization will not be performing the design work for this project on December 8, 2025 as previously discussed. Mr. Roberts concurred.

Mr. Roberts advised that he needs to update the land owner.

Chairman Bryant stated that individual is present.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

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Kathy Bryant, Chairman

Attest:

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Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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