

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

January 26, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) met in a workshop session in Commission Chambers at 9:01 a.m. on Monday, January 26, 2026 at the Marion County Governmental Complex located in Ocala, Florida.

INTRODUCTION OF WORKSHOP BY CHAIRMAN CARL ZALAK, III

Chairman Zalak advised that the workshop was scheduled this morning to discuss the County's Budget Strategic Planning.

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 Carl Zalak, III, District 4; Vice-Chairman Matthew McClain, District 3; Commissioner Craig Curry, District 1; Commissioner Kathy Bryant, District 2; and Commissioner Michelle Stone, District 5. Also present were Clerk Gregory C. Harrell, County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Tracy Straub, ACA Angel Roussel, ACA Amanda Tart and Director of Internal Services Mike McCain.

The Deputy Clerk was in receipt of a 63 page Agenda packet to follow along with the PowerPoint presentation.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

1. Constitutional Officers

The following information was presented by County Administrator Mounir Bouyounes, Administration:

Description/Background: Updates from the Constitutional Officers for FY 27

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

County Administrator Bouyounes advised that he communicated with all 5 Constitutional Officers in writing asking them if they have any items, issues, or concerns that would have an impact on the upcoming budget to please share with staff as early as possible. He presented a 1 page letter dated January 22, 2026 from Marion County Sheriff William "Billy" Woods, Marion County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), which contained a list of anticipated budget adjustments for Board consideration. Mr. Bouyounes stated personnel wise, the Sheriff is thinking he will need 10 to 15 new detention deputies, 30 new deputies, as well as additional support personnel. He referred to the note at the bottom of the letter, noting the Sheriff stated those are very preliminary numbers as his staff have not yet been through their budget process to determine the exact needs for next year.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff have not had the opportunity to perform a preliminary forecast as to how much the Sheriff's requests would add to his budget, noting he did provide a copy of the Sheriff's letter to the Budget Department this morning. He stated he was sure that the Budget Department would follow

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up with the MCSO to try to put a dollar amount into the information he provided.

Mr. Bouyounes noted the letter also indicated the Sheriff was looking for a 3 percent (%) pay increase for all of his employees.

Clerk Gregory C. Harrell commented on last year's budget cycle versus this year's, noting last year he was cautiously optimistic and this year he is even more cautious. He stated the stock market continues to perform well, but there are certainly signs of volatility and uncertainty, probably more so than last year. Clerk Harrell advised that the State of Florida's tax timeline is not necessarily great as it relates to the County's timeline for purposes of preparing a budget, especially if any referendums were to be passed (i.e., property tax reform). He commented on the percentage of the General Fund that is made up of ad valorem property taxes and the amount of those funds that are spent on public safety. Clerk Harrell opined that even in a normal year, this is the right and prudent thing to do to start meeting in January to talk about the County's upcoming budget; however, it can be difficult when it comes to forecasting what property values will be in 5 or 6 months. Clerk Harrell advised that in regard to the Clerk's budget, he will be presenting a very conservative budget with modest, if any, increases. He stated the Clerk's Office would not be asking for any additional positions or any substantive increase in the way of software or hardware; however, he may request a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Clerk Harrell opined that another big challenge is going to be looking at the use of non-recurring funds in last year's cycle versus recurring expenditures, noting the Board is going to see that information in the materials that Budget Director Audrey Fowler will be presenting.

2. Introduction - Mounir Bouyounes, PE, County Administrator

County Administrator Bouyounes presented the following:

Description/Background: The following items are being highlighted as they will have an impact on the upcoming budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27:

1. Property Management Update
2. Parks, Airport and Southeastern Livestock Pavillion Update
3. Sales Surtax Update
4. Budget Cost Drivers
 - 4.1. Parks & Recreation Staff Shift from Fees Fund to General Fund
 - 4.2. Dash Cameras Initiative
 - 4.3. Pay Adjustment
 - 4.4. Fire and EMS Services
5. OCE Projected Revenues/Expenditures for the Upcoming Year

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

County Administrator Bouyounes stated he had 3 items to give the Board an update on; Item number 4 would be what staff are expecting to be cost drivers for the budget; and Item 5 is the Office of the County Engineer's (OCE) projected revenues and expenditures. He stated last year the Board had discussions about the property management unit and at that time, he questioned where that work unit is placed at, which is presently at OCE. Mr. Bouyounes stated this unit provides services for right-of-way (ROW) acquisition, eminent domain, and property appraisals. Staff currently have one position in that unit funded by the General Fund that handles all the leases and other property needs for all County Departments. He advised that after evaluation by staff, they are recommending the County keep that work unit at OCE; however, staff need to look at the staffing level in

the upcoming budget to ensure there is enough staff to cover the amount of work this unit is being asked to perform. Staff are also talking about renaming that work unit to be more representative of the work they do and to create some standard operating procedures (SOPs) so that it is clear for every Department what to expect from that work unit and to allow for internal billing. For example, when this unit is doing work for Solid Waste, Utilities or Fire Rescue, then that unit will be able to bill that specific Department, and the revenue will go into the General Fund to offset some of the cost. Mr. Bouyounes stated it is his recommendation to keep this unit at OCE and evaluate those items he mentioned as the Board goes through the budget process.

Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief update relating to Parks, the Airport and Southeastern Livestock Pavillion (SELP), noting this subject was discussed last year during the budget workshops as to whether or not to keep the Airport and SELP Departments under the Parks Department. He opined that there is a huge benefit to keeping the Airport and SELP under the Parks and Recreation Department, noting the County currently has 10 full time employees (FTEs) in the Parks and Recreation Department that assist those other two operations and there is one FTE in SELP that is part of that group to do all the administrative and project type accommodations. Mr. Bouyounes stated the recommendation is to keep that arrangement the way it is and see if staff can augment with FTEs the project management that will relieve the pressure that administratively is felt today at the Parks and Recreation Department. He clarified that this is not a Staff Assistant type workload, but is related to accommodate projects that are being designed and need to go out to bid and construction. Mr. Bouyounes commented on the involvement of the Parks and Recreation Department in the Land Development Code (LDC) process when it comes to plan reviews and inspections out in the field. The Board has asked staff to be a little bit more aggressive in reviewing landscaping and buffer conditions to ensure they are up to date and are being maintained.

Commissioner Bryant questioned why there is not a position in the Growth Services Department that would handle those responsibilities. Mr. Bouyounes stated that option was not recommended because the Growth Services Department already has a landscape architect on staff; however, if the Board chooses to add another landscape architect position in the Growth Services Department, it can be discussed during the budget process.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Zalak commented on the need to ensure the County gets this right so that no matter what happens when somebody comes in with a development whether it is a building permit or a developer permit or whatever that permit is, that the fees cover that service cost.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Bouyounes stated he is unsure if the fees are enough to cover all the cost, but staff try to recoup as much of the cost as possible.

Parks and Recreation Director Jim Couillard clarified that the workload the Parks and Recreation Department is carrying on right now, through the development review process, is on him and Project Assistant Susan Heyen, as his designee. He noted Ms. Heyen does all of the plan reviews, all the field visits, etc. Mr. Couillard advised that Ms. Heyen's job is meant to help the Department manage its capital improvement projects (CIP) and smaller jobs in the field. The Department does a tremendous amount of smaller projects such as playground equipment replacement, sidewalk updates, etc. All those little things are designed and managed internally. He stated a majority of Ms. Heyen's time is stuck behind a computer reviewing plans and calling meetings with consultants, which places

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the rest of the workload back on him and Parks Designer Joey Amodo. Mr. Couillard advised that Mr. Amodo is currently running about \$10,000,000.00 to \$15,000,000.00 worth of CIPs, trying to get his landscape architectural license, trying to do all these other things with the Department, but at the same time he does not have any help, noting this is the issue staff is trying to address. He stated it is up to the Board whether it hires a different landscape architect to go work at the Growth Services Department to perform the work that he does or just simply move positions. Mr. Couillard opined that from a customer service perspective, having design review and a one stop station is better than bouncing them from office to office to get permits from here and there. In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Couillard advised that his recommendation would be to hire professional staff that operate out of the Growth Services Department with support staff for the field operations side of it as well. He expressed concern that putting all of this on one person is a catastrophe and can be a big contributor to the burnout which staff are experiencing now and is one of those things that need to be addressed.

Mr. Couillard addressed the Airport and SELP, noting the County has tremendous people in place right now and the relationships across all divisions is phenomenal.

Mr. Bouyounes commented on Mr. Couillard's recommendation to hire professional staff that operate out of the Growth Services Department, noting the information he was provided was that staff were looking to augment the Parks and Recreation Department to offset that workload.

Commissioner Curry referred to page 8 of the Agenda packet in regard to the County's surplus property and requested the Board be provided with a list of current surplus property. Mr. Bouyounes noted staff does have a list and he would provide that information to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Curry advised that on that same page, there is a recommendation by staff that the Property Management (PM) unit should remain with OCE, but the title of the team would change to Real Estate Property Services. He questioned if that would be for anything regarding property management.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that the unit would assist all the Departments in acquiring property and formalizing and finalizing leases; however, this unit will not manage the leases. For example, if there is a lease at the airport, the PM unit will perform/execute that lease and get it signed and finalized, but then it will be the Airport Manager who will manage the lease.

Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of the Sales Surtaxes and referred to the slide as seen on the overhead screen (page 14 of the Agenda packet). He advised that this is a summary of revenues and expenditures of Surtax 1 and Surtax 2, noting Surtax 1 is the tax that was approved in 2016 for four years and Surtax 2 is the one that was approved for four years in 2020. Mr. Bouyounes noted later the Board will hear information relating to Surtax 3 which was approved in 2024 for a 20 year time frame. In regard to Surtax 1 and Surtax 2, the County collected about \$319,000,000.00 and so far, still has \$124,000,000.00 in the fiscal year (FY) 25/26 budget. He referred to the list of the significant projects that are still funded from Surtax 1 and Surtax 2, noting most of those projects are in the works; however, they will probably not be finished this year and all the money that is not spent this year will be carried forward into FY 26/27. Mr. Bouyounes clarified that he misspoke, noting the County collected approximately \$443,000,000.00, spent \$319,000,000.00, and has approximately \$124,791,000.00 in the fiscal year (FY) 25/26 budget. All the funds not spent this year will be carried forward into FY 26/27.

Commissioner Bryant noted if you look at the projects that the County has left, they come up to be about \$122,000,000.00.

Mr. Bouyounes clarified that there are additional smaller project costs that are not included in that list.

Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of Surtax 3, noting he tried to focus on only the first five years, starting from FY 24/25 to FY 28/29. The split allowance, based on the direction from the Board, was 74% Transportation and 26% Public Safety. The 26% for Public Safety breaks down to 4% for Emergency Management and Public Safety Communication, 11% is for Fire Rescue and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and 11% is for MCSO. However, if you look at the five year budget or the five year time frame, the split reflects 4.8% Public Safety Communication and Emergency Management, 14.9% Fire Rescue and EMS, 13.9% MCSO, and 66.4% Transportation. The reason for this is sometimes the County has Public Safety projects that need to advance and transportation projects that can be delayed. He stated every 5 to 10 years, staff try to ensure that balance stays in place very close to the direction of the Board. For that 5 year time frame the County is looking at \$338,851,000.00 that is being budgeted. Mr. Bouyounes noted the next 3 slides contain the list of projects from Transportation and Public Safety.

Chairman Zalak expressed concern that the proposal reduces the percentage for Transportation from 74% to 66.4% and opined that staff needs to adjust the projects.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that later in the meeting County Engineer Steven Cohoon is going to give the Board an update on all the Transportation projects staff is doing in the five year plan to show those numbers and how much more money the County will need for Transportation projects and what the solution would be.

Chairman Zalak opined that the first thing the County needs to make sure is that the Sales Tax is funding Transportation projects and easing congestion in the first five years of this Tax. He advised that the Board would continue to give plenty of funding for Public Safety projects as it has over the last decade, but noted the number one concern in the community is transportation.

Mr. Bouyounes stated staff will revisit this matter after Mr. Cohoon's presentation.

Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of the budget cost drivers for FY 26/27 other than Florida Retirement System (FRS), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), life and health insurance cost increases that will continue to impact the budget every year. He stated there are 7 positions and seasonal staffing requests for the Parks and Recreation Department that are budgeted every year from the Park Fees. He recommended moving those FTE costs/personnel costs to the General Fund. The impact is about \$850,000.00. If staff are able to do that and shift that cost from the Park Fees to the General Fund that will free up those fees to be used for capital maintenance type projects in Parks. Mr. Bouyounes advised that the number one priority is the Baseline Trailhead, noting the playground needs to be upgraded and replaced. Also, staff would like to add some additional fields at Shocker Park. The \$850,000.00 is not going to fix all of that, but would be one step in that direction. In addition to that, staff are still waiting for the final answer from Legal on how much Tourist Development Council (TDC) funds or what projects would qualify for TDC money to bring forward during the budget process.

County Attorney Matthew G. Minter, Legal, stated the Board should have an answer by the end of the week.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Bouyounes stated staff is anticipating approximately \$338,851,576.00 in Surtax 3 revenue for the 5 year timeframe of FY 24/25 through FY 28/29.

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Mr. Bouyounes advised that the next item is an initiative and is not in any of the budgets yet; however, the County has a few Departments who are using dash cameras in County vehicles. He stated staff would like to expand that program further and it will be in the proposed budget to go to dual facing dash cameras. Mr. Bouyounes advised that there are a multitude of benefits from using those cameras, noting the intention is to focus first on the heavy vehicles because of liability and risk type benefits. He stated this would include transport ambulances, fire engines, solid waste hauling trucks, OCE dump trucks, down to pick-up trucks, etc. to determine what the benefits would be, noting the cost of that initiative will be presented in the proposed budget. The current cost per unit is approximately \$55.00 per month. It is a subscription type arrangement, and the County does not have to buy the units, but rather pay a monthly subscription. Mr. Bouyounes requested Commissioners reach out to him if there are any questions relating to this initiative.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Mr. Bouyounes stated the County currently has a hands free policy for all County vehicles.

Commissioner Bryant advised that she is interested in learning more about the dash camera, especially in today's litigious world, noting staff have been talking with Lake County, who initiated this about a year ago and they have seen a huge drop in risk claims. In those kind of situations, even when they have a claim, the video from the dash camera has been very helpful in disputing the litigation claims.

Commissioner Stone stated she is very familiar with dash camera interfacing and out facing and she highly supports the initiative, especially for high risk vehicles.

Mr. Bouyounes referred to page 22, which shows the estimated pay adjustments for FY 26/27. The slide reflects what the cost would be for 1% pay adjustment and what the cost would be for the 5% pay adjustment. He stated it was his intention in the proposed budget to do what the County did the previous year, which was a 2% across the board in October and then a 3% set aside for pay for performance. Mr. Bouyounes provided a brief overview of the costs associated with pay adjustments for each Fund.

Commissioner Bryant opined that a 5% pay adjustment is too high, noting the Board needs to cover the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and then what ever is left over should be used to cover pay for performance bonuses.

Commissioner Stone stated she is more inclined to give everybody a 1% raise with a maximum of 3% overall and then the 2% pay for performance, if not, then just a pay for performance all the way across the board.

Chairman Zalak opined that the Board was very clear last year that it did not want to consider anything over the CPI.

General discussion ensued in regard to employee pay adjustments.

In response to Commissioner Curry, Mr. Couillard addressed the CIP for Ray Wayside Park, noting there is funding in the budget right now for the design and staff should be able to push that out next month and then it will go through the solicitation process to find the right consultants for the project. He advised that there is a cost estimate in the FY 27 budget of over \$3,700,000.00 for construction, but that is in the Fees Fund, which is currently not funded. Mr. Couillard stated the Department will go through the design process and then shelve the plans until the Department receives sufficient funding to move forward.

General discussion ensued.

Commissioner Curry opined that a bond is ultimately going to be the answer to help resolve this issue. He commented on the need for the Board to form a consensus so that

staff can bring back some sort of a comprehensive approach to fix the parks.

Commissioner Stone advised that as much as she would love to agree with Commissioner Curry, not knowing what property tax issues the County is going to be facing, parks may be the least funded if things move in a direction that takes away property tax revenues. She opined that the Board may have to make some hard decisions on who gets funded, noting public safety is going to have to be top priority.

General discussion resumed.

Mr. Couillard advised that he has been scheduling one-on-ones with Commissioners to discuss the engagement of Trust Republic Land, which is a nonprofit organization to conduct feasibility research here in the community at no cost to Marion County. He stated Trust Republic Land has a subsidiary called Live Wildly that is privately funded through major philanthropists across the Country. Mr. Couillard advised that Trust Republic Land is a big organization that does a lot of conservation and park funding across the Country. He stated the organization reached out and asked if Marion County was interested in having them conduct that research, noting a Letter of Interest from this Board would kick start that research. Mr. Couillard provided a brief overview of the information the study would contain.

General discussion resumed.

It was the general consensus of the Board to have the Chairman execute the Letter of Interest and to direct staff to schedule a workshop with the organization.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that staff are in the middle of Union negotiations with the Professional Firefighters of Marion County, Local 3169, which is going to have some financial impact on the General Fund and the Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) for Fire Rescue. He stated at least three to five new stations are scheduled to be added over the next five years, which means additional personnel.

Mr. Bouyounes referred to the chart on page 23, which provides information relating to the projected revenues and expenses for the OCE Department for the upcoming FY, noting this operation is not self-sustaining financially. He stated the whole operation for road maintenance and design, which is the operation of the County's roadway system, is funded 100% by the Gas Tax. Mr. Bouyounes clarified that the Gas Tax has a diminishing value and is not keeping up with the cost or with the operation, noting the Department has been operating in the red. The beginning balance is at the top of the chart, that is where the Department is today with regard to Fund Balance. Also on the chart are the projected revenues and projected expenditures on an annual basis. Those numbers are for OCE to do the bare minimum of what the Department has to deal with and keep looking throughout the next five years.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Bouyounes stated the Gas Tax per gallon is approximately 13 cents per gallon, but only 8 cents of that can be used for operational costs. He noted the other pennies are dedicated to capital projects.

Commissioner Bryant stated Marion County has a big gas station coming into town (Buc-ees) and questioned whether staff have been able to do any revenue projections as to what revenue will be created once that operation comes to the community. Mr. Bouyounes stated staff have not been able to quantify that number, but did reach out to other communities that have this business in their area for more information. He noted that operation probably will not be in place until the end of 2028.

Commissioner Bryant opined that there is going to have to be another revenue source to keep up with maintenance when it comes to roads because the Legislature is continuing to do things to make it easier for development to occur, which means more people, and

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more cars on the roads. She advised that globally there is going to be a need for larger discussion to see what else can happen when it comes to funding roads.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Bouyounes noted the Gas Tax has been a top priority topic for Florida Association of Counties (FAC) over the last few years.

General discussion ensued relating to road assessments.

Mr. Bouyounes reiterated that the County does not use the Sales Tax for local subdivision roads.

3. Financial Projection Update - Audrey Fowler, Budget Director

The following information was presented by Budget Director Audrey Fowler:

Description/Background:

Audrey Fowler, Budget Director will present a financial projection update for FY 2026-27.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action:

For information only.

Budget Director Audrey Fowler presented 18 page handout entitled, "Strategic Planning Workshop Financial Projection". She commented on population growth trends, which drives a lot of what the Board will see in terms of the County's economic viability. Ms. Fowler addressed the Bureau of Economic & Business Research (BEBR) forecast number of 448,000 residents, noting last year was 433,000. She advised that she spoke with Commissioner Curry on Friday who requested that she go back in time and provide a better idea of what the County's growth has been historically. Ms. Fowler stated in 2005, Marion County's population was 305,000 and in 2010 it was 331,000, which was an 8.6% increase over those 5 years. During the recession from 2010 to 2015, the County grew by 9,900 residents, so 3% over those five years for less than 1% population growth. After that recovery from 2015 to 2020, the County grew by 26,930. The pre-recession growth rates again were 7.9%, 1.5% average. Over those five years, from 2020 to 2025, the County grew by 65,630 people. That was 17.8% over those five years, or an average of 3.56%, more than twice what the normal population's historic growth has been. From 2024 to February 2025, it was 14,255 people or 39 people per day on average and that is the impact that Marion County is seeing as far as current growth.

Ms. Fowler stated the Property Appraiser's Office (PAO) is in the early stages of assessments for this upcoming year so in light of that staff relied on the January presentations on the State of Florida's estimates from their revenue estimating conference in August. Their numbers for 2026/27 were a 6.78% increase, declining in 2028 to 6.23%, then down to 5.51%. The last two years staff have seen the actual numbers that Marion County receives percentage wise to be between 1% and 2% higher than their August estimate. The new growth (new construction) that is being seen in Marion County that was in place on January 1, 2026, indicates that it may see a similar type of situation.

Ms. Fowler addressed the CPI, noting the December over December was just published, which was the 2.7% that will be in effect for the upcoming FY. That does two things, it caps the increase in the taxable value of a home. For example, for a homesteaded property, the taxable value cannot increase more than the 2.7%. In addition to that, the second homestead exemption will increase by 2.7%, so the second homestead exemption amount will be approximately \$26,416.00.

Ms. Fowler addressed the Federal Reserve rates, noting staff have been tracking these for several years because those rates track with what the County will see as far as interest rates and CPI impacts. The Federal Reserve rates have dropped three times this year and are currently sitting at 3.5% to 3.75%. There have been some early discussions about seeing some increase in resales and housing market sales after the latest reduction.

Ms. Fowler addressed the Fund Balance requirements, noting Marion County maintains a 20% Fund Balance requirement in the General Fund as this is what it uses for its rainy day fund. Anything else that goes awry, this is where the County comes back to because it can be used for any purpose. In FY 2025/26, that balance was at \$21,752,000.00 in the adopted budget. The calculated Fund Balance requirement for FY 2026/27 is \$24,340,000.00, which is calculated by the Clerk's Office Comptroller. This is going to be funded by the prior year Fund Balance, excess revenues and under expenditures and is not going to be taking funds out of recurring revenue in the subsequent year.

Ms. Fowler referred to the chart on page 5 of the handout, which addresses the General Fund revenue by category. She advised that Property Taxes make up 43.8% of the recurring revenue in the General Fund and State Share revenue makes up 18%, noting these two items combined make up more than half of the revenue for General Fund operations. There are also ambulance fees and services which help offset their costs, plus there are other Departments' generated revenue (i.e., all of the Constitutional Officers contribute), as well as transfers in from other funds to pay into the General Fund for services that are provided. There are also some grants, donations, and a few Interlocal Agreements (ILAs).

Ms. Fowler referred to the chart on page 6, which addresses General Fund expenditures, noting the total budget for the General Fund is \$358,000,000.00. The two largest expenses are the MCSO, which makes up the Jail and Emergency Management; and Public Safety, which makes up Ambulance Services, Animal Center, Public Safety Radio and Public Safety Communications. These two elements combined are 41.7% of the General Fund budgeted expenditures (\$149,000,000.00 out of the \$358,000,000.00).

Ms. Fowler referred to the graphs on page 7 and provided a brief overview of the General Fund taxable property value and property tax revenue for FYs 2025/26 through 2029/30 projected. She stated the property tax revenue graph at the bottom of the page starts with a 3.0900 mileage rate, which is the current FY rate and then looks at the forward years going back to the County's recurring revenue needs to fund the expenditures.

Ms. Fowler addressed the Local Government Half (1/2) Cent Sales Tax and State Shared Revenues for FYs 2020/21 through 2029/30. She advised that the State of Florida made some adjustments to taxable items, noting from the FY 2024/25 to the FY 2025/26 projected there is a decrease in revenue that reflects changes in items that are now exempted that were not previously exempted. Projected collections for future years are presented with 1% annual increases. Ms. Fowler noted for Sales Tax and State Shared Revenue, the percentage increase does not keep up with inflation.

Ms. Fowler referred to the graph on page 9, which reflects the State of Florida revenue sharing model, noting there is a very large decrease from FY 2025/26 due to changes that the State made having a bigger impact on this revenue source than the Half Cent Sales Tax.

Ms. Fowler addressed Ambulance Revenues for FYs 2020/21 through 2029/30 projected, noting staff have done a very good job in sustainably collecting these fees, and keeping up with the population increase. The fees collected are holding steady and increasing, taking an average of the percentage of population increases over time and holding at the

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2%, well under the population increase, but still being able to allow for some growth due to volume.

Ms. Fowler referred to the graph on page 11, which reflects the General Fund Financial Forecast FY 2021 through FY 2030, noting the main assumptions here are about a 3.5% increase for combined growth and inflation for both operating and personnel. Part of that for personnel would be COLA, but the other part would be new staffing. She provided a brief overview of the increase in operational costs to reflect the increases in FRS and health insurance rates. Ms. Fowler stated in the out years, staff targeted a Reserve for Contingencies that maintains the 20% Reserve. For FY 2026, there is a very large expenditure exceeding the revenues as the County used one time money. She advised that there are also several large Capital items that are projected to be completed in this current year that are paid from the General Fund, noting there is also a little bit of a deficit on the expenditure to revenues in FY 2027.

In response to Commissioner Bryant, Ms. Fowler stated the County is currently at a millage rate of 3.0900 mills, which is an \$8,000,000.00 recurring General Fund deficit.

Ms. Fowler provided a brief overview of the taxable property value and property tax revenue for the Fine & Forfeiture Fund (pages 12 and 13). She advised that the County is looking at the same increases in taxable property values as the General Fund, noting the expenditures and taxable value revenue, is actually pretty close, and staff expect that FY 2026/27 will be very close to maintaining the same mileage depending on the costs associated with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Ms. Fowler stated the financial forecast in the Fine and Forfeiture Fund Reserves/Fund Balance has been at a very good, very stable consistent rate over the years.

Ms. Fowler provided a brief overview of the taxable property value and property tax revenue financial forecast FYs 2025-26 through 2029-30 projected for the MSTU for Law Enforcement (pages 14 and 15). Historically, the MSTU rates are higher than the Countywide rates because the County's growth right now is in the unincorporated areas. She advised that staff would continue to maintain an open dialogue with the Sheriff's Office to ensure a Fund Balance that is adequate enough to cover expenditures for the first 3 months while waiting for property taxes to come in, noting 85% of this Fund is property tax. Ms. Fowler stated the MCSO does have some contracts with Marion County School Board (MCSB) and a couple of other entities that help mitigate the cost, but the majority of its revenue is taxable property value.

Ms. Fowler provided a brief overview of the taxable property value and property tax revenue FYs 2025-26 through 2029-30 projected for the Fire Rescue and EMS Fund, noting their revenue increases are a little bit higher than the Countywide as well (pages 16 and 17). She stated staff anticipate maintaining the mileage at that same rate throughout all five years because of the recent assessment increase. Ms. Fowler addressed the financial forecast for the Fire Rescue and EMS Fund, which reflects a large increase in the Fund Balance. This does not include any assumptions in regard to the contract negotiations and salaries that are going on at this time. This also does not include any capital expenditures for fire stations, etc. She opined that once those things start to be added in, the Board will see the expenditures come up closer and closer to the revenue in the future.

In response to Commissioner Byrant, Ms. Fowler reiterated that there is an \$8,000,000.00 recurring deficit in the General Fund, noting the County would need to go to a millage rate of at least 3.3200 mills.

4. Fleet Facility Cost Allocation - Angel Roussel, PE, Assistant County Administrator

The following information was presented by ACA Angel Roussel:

Description/Background: Angel Roussel, PE, Assistant County Administrator, will present the proposed cost allocation associated with the new Fleet Management Facility, including how costs are distributed across departments and funding sources.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

Commissioner Bryant out at 10:27 a.m.

ACA Angel Roussel advised that this presentation is a comeback item from the Fleet Department presentation that was given at the end of December 2025, based on the interest of the Board to consider possible cost allocation related to construction costs for the new Fleet facility. He noted staff reviewed the billing data for the last two full FYs, billed and non-billed. Mr. Roussel clarified that General Fund items are not billed, but they are tracked through work orders the same way as when the Department bills. He referred to the Table on page 41 of the Agenda packet, which included each Departments pro-rata share of the cost of construction. Mr. Roussel advised that General Fund Departments include EMS, Code Enforcement, Animal Control Services, Facilities, Parks, etc., noting the awarded cost for construction of the \$22,100,000.00 to give an idea of what that number would look like for each one of these functions. Staff are particularly looking at Building Department, Fire Department, Solid Waste and Utilities as the funds that would be considered. He stated as far as implementation, that would be the discussion from the Board and direction on how to proceed with implementing, if implementing at all.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Roussel stated the total pro-rata share for the Building Department, Fire Department, Solid Waste and Utilities would be approximately \$10,000,000.00.

Commissioner Bryant returned at 10:29 a.m.

Mr. Roussel advised that each of those four funds are in a different position, noting some of them may be able to afford it quicker, some of them may need more time. He stated if the Board wants to implement pro-rata share on those four funds, then the County Administrator would review how the budget is looking for each one of those Departments to ensure that they have appropriate level of Reserves and then create a payment plan based on each one of the funds position.

Mr. Bouyounes advised that he is looking at a one to five year payout timeframe, noting some funds may be able to do it in one year; other funds may need some more time.

General discussion ensued

It was the general consensus of the Board to direct staff to review this matter further and to bring that information and a pro-rata share plan back to the Board for consideration.

5. Office of the County Engineer Projects Funding Update - Steven Cohoon, PE, County Engineer

The following information was presented by County Engineer Cohoon, OCE:

Description/Background: Steven Cohoon, PE, County Engineer will provide an update on project funding for the Office of the County Engineer. The presentation will include an overview of costs on current and upcoming capital projects and

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highlighting several future projects. A preliminary Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) will be also presented which will illustrate upcoming funding needs.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

County Engineer Steven Cohoon, OCE, provided a brief update of transportation projects from October 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025, noting the County has spent almost \$125,000,000.00 on construction projects with \$110,000,000.00 of that being directly related to purchase orders for construction projects. He stated some of those future projects include the Emerald Road extension project, which is going to be a huge relief to Maricamp; as well as the SW 49th Court Road extension project that is going to connect to Marion Oaks Manor. Mr. Cohoon advised that there are an additional 18 projects that staff expect to be awarded before the end of this FY, noting fourteen of those are going to be rehabilitation projects at a cost of around \$71,000,000.00 additional dollars going out before the end of this FY for construction related projects. He noted over the last 4 months the Department has been able to be fully staffed and is close to being where it needs to be in regard to the Property Management team. Mr. Cohoon commented on the SE Maricamp road project, noting staff were able to secure a \$20,000,000.00 safety grant, which is an example of how staff are trying to leverage funding that is not just Sales Tax, Gas Tax, or Impact Fee related. He advised that when the fly-over comes through Marion Oaks Manor there will be a connection from the west side of Interstate 75 (I-75) through the Marion Oaks community to Highway 42, near the Pedro area. That is going to relieve Highway 484, but also going to create some additional demands on other roadways in the County with Highway 42 being one of those. Mr. Cohoon addressed several other road projects as shown on pages 45 through 49.

Chairman Zalak requested any road work that will be performed on Highway 484 be done at night. Mr. Cohoon stated that road work will be done at night.

Mr. Cohoon advised that the Banyan Road Extension is another opportunity to attempt to relieve some of the congestion on Highway 464; however, there is still quite a bit of coordination that has to happen with the Greenway authorities. Staff are attempting to set the table in order to move forward with a capacity improvement project through that section of the Greenway.

Mr. Cohoon addressed the need for additional capacity along SE 92nd Place Road, as well as the need for some congestion relief on SE 95th Street.

General discussion ensued relating to road congestion relief over the next 15 to 20 years. Mr. Cohoon advised that there are 3 bridges within the County that are currently in the design phase, noting two of the three have reached their life expectancy, so staff are working to get those completed in design. He commented on the bridge on County Road (CR) 316, which was constructed back in the late 1960's and was intended to accommodate the barge canal that was coming through, which did not occur. Mr. Cohoon stated the Department of Transportation (DOT) has taken the approach of lowering that bridge and putting it at grade crossing. He advised that DOT has funding allocated just for bridges and Marion County has several "just bridge" projects, noting being shovel ready for these bridge projects makes it that much easier for the County to obtain grant funding.

Mr. Cohoon addressed various options for transportation funding including the possibility of bonding road projects. He stated in FY 2027/28 the Department is seeing around a \$266,000,000.00 shortfall. This does not take into account what happened with the change of Transportation Impact Fees (TIFs), which should lessen the deficit. Mr. Cohoon

advised that bonds are typically over a 20 to 30 year timeframe, noting in this instance the County cannot bond more or further out than what is backing the bond. He clarified that the 20 year Sales Tax dwindles down on how long that bond life is, noting the County could not go into a 20 or 30 year bond today on Sales Tax or a Sales Tax project if that source of revenue is going to be gone before the bond is repaid. Mr. Cohoon stated it would probably have to be a 15 year bond if that is something that is considered. Also, there are two different types of bond, the General Obligation Bond and the Revenue Bond. The first one does have to go to the constituents for a vote, and the second one does not. He provided a brief overview of the pros and cons of utilizing the bonding process for transportation projects. Mr. Cohoon opined that bonding would help a project get done quicker and lessen any kind of impact on the General Fund. It also provides the County with a predictable way to repay. He stated the cons include long term commitment, interest cost and revenue risks if there is something bad that happens in the economy. General discussion ensued.

Mr. Cohoon advised that some of the key takeaways are that over the last 15 months staff have delivered and will continue to have that momentum; seeing issues before they become problems; and aligning projects where they can with the growth that is coming. He stated the interchange is coming and commented on the importance of having appropriate roadways to connect to that.

General discussion resumed in regard to bond requirements.

Chairman Zalak advised that he wants an analysis on total funding, what the Department needs over the next five years, and a list of projects available to go to bond today (grouped together), versus projects that are going to linger a little bit.

General discussion resumed.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Cohoon stated right now property acquisition remains a pinch point because staff have to get in the court system in order to take someone's property legally, noting there are a few of those cases involved in larger projects. He opined that by the first of next FY staff should be ready to come back to the Board with a formal plan to see what projects need bonding.

General discussion resumed.

In response to Chairman Zalak, County Attorney Minter advised that in regard to eminent domain, staff currently has one project where the attorney is working with staff to try to allow them to do some work in advance. He opined that the speediest thing with the condemnation process is what is called the "quick take" procedure. For that procedure you have to have all your ducks in a row, you have to have the appraisal, you have to file the lawsuit, and you have to get the hearing on the court docket for an order of take hearing. Mr. Minter advised that sometimes the attorneys will try to legally block the hearing, noting the County only has so much control over how the land owners' attorneys respond to the County's petitions. He clarified that the order of taking is what gives the County title to the property, noting the County cannot just start building on somebody's private property.

General discussion resumed.

Mr. Bouyounes stated the County still has approximately \$72,000,000.00 worth of road projects happening in FY 2026.

In response to Chairman Zalak, Mr. Cohoon advised that staff is working on the Traffic Management Master Plan, noting staff has met with the vendor and the City of Ocala and it is moving forward. He stated the TIP has funding improvements for interconnectivity, signalization, etc.

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6. Facilities Management Capital Projects - Jared Goodspeed, Facilities Management Director

The following information was presented by Facilities Management Director Jared Goodspeed:

Description/Background: This item provides a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) update on active vertical construction projects managed by Facilities Management in support of Marion County operations. The presentation summarizes current project status, key milestones, and anticipated completion timelines.

The update also describes the current CIP project delivery process, from initial department request through design, construction, and closeout. Based on recent project experience, staff will present proposed enhancements to Board notification points to improve communication, transparency, and coordination among the Board, Administration, and departments as projects move forward.

Budget/Impact: None.

Recommended Action: For information only.

Facilities Management Director Jared Goodspeed provided a brief update on the County's vertical construction projects and processes. He stated in the first quarter of this year, staff have some major construction projects that are being completed. Mr. Goodspeed advised that the larger projects include Freedom Library, Fourth Floor of Judicial Center 3 (JC3), as well as the construction of Fire Station 11, noting staff just poured the concrete for the foundations. He stated the Animal Services project will be completed at the end of March, and will be move-in ready in April, 2026. Mr. Goodspeed advised that staff got approval for the fleet building and just completed an early release for the steel package. Staff are starting that project off very successfully, saving the County approximately \$170,000.00 before it even begins. He stated staff also completed the demolition and started the remodeling for the Sheriff's Operation Center that is projected to be open October 2026. This is about \$80,000,000.00 worth of projects that staff have either started or will be completing in this FY.

Mr. Goodspeed stated he wanted to go through what the current processes are today and then provide suggestions of how staff can add some transparency and therefore actually expedite the process more smoothly. He stated currently, the end users will submit an approval request for that project during the budget cycle (if it is not a capital replacement project from facilities). Mr. Goodspeed advised that staff then assess the project, noting there is usually not a very detailed scope, nor does staff get into the detailed programming or initiate with an Architect or a Construction Manager (CM) to develop what would be called the "detailed scope" where it can have an accurate rough order of magnitude cost for the project. He clarified that staff assess the project costs internally using RSMeans data, historic costs, data from recent builds, etc., which provides a ballpark of whether the project is going to be in the \$2,000,000.00 or \$10,000,000.00 range. The project then gets put into the CIP 5-Year cycle. Once that project comes up in the 5-Year CIP, staff are able to start work on it when the funding is allocated. That is when staff actually start going through the design phase. Staff will bring the end user and contractors in to go through the program in order to understand the details of what is needed and do conceptual and schematic designs, then go into construction documents. The important part of that is through that entire process the Board and the public typically only see these projects when they come to be put into the cycle or when staff are actually bidding them in order to approve the construction manager and the architect. Mr. Goodspeed recommended two different approval processes or at least updates to the Board, one is

when the projects get to schematic design in order to review the projects' square footage, etc., and the other is when there is a change to that project in order to review how that affects the funding, the schedule, and the scope of the project. This way when the project comes to the Board, there would be no controversy or questions at that time, which would make for a smoother process. He recommends that staff provide the Board updates when changes to a project affect the funding, the schedule, and/or the scope of the project changes.

Commissioner Stone stated she supports the proposed CIP process.

Chairman Zalak concurred and stated in some cases, especially on the big projects, it can catch the Board off guard from what it went into and what it came out at two years later.

Commissioner McClain concurred, noting he likes the new CIP process as well.

UPDATE: Mr. Bouyounes advised that he had some positive news as it relates to the billing costs of the DJJ, noting it appears that the billing days are going down. For example, in January 2025, the DJJ started at 2,000 billable days and in December it is down to 1,539 billable days.

Commissioner Stone opined that as the Board continues to see what is happening in Tallahassee, there is a chance that it may need to come back with another workshop to address some priorities relating to niceties versus necessities in the community.

General discussion ensued.

Chairman Zalak expressed his appreciation to staff for a great workshop.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting thereupon adjourned at 11:16 a.m.

Carl Zalak, III, Chairman

Attest:

Gregory C. Harrell, Clerk

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