



COUNTY CONNECTION

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Marion County Commissioners
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Stan McClain, Chairman, District 3
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Earl Arnett, District 5

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Bill Kauffman

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MISSION STATEMENT

Marion County provides professional and resourceful public services for our citizens through strategic planning and cost-effective implementation of county initiatives, generating positive results that set the standard for quality local government.



- ☑ **13:** The number of colonies on July 4, 1776.
- ☑ **56:** The number of signers to the Declaration of Independence.
- ☑ **70:** The age of the oldest signer of the Declaration, Benjamin Franklin. The youngest, Edward Rutledge, was 26.
- ☑ **2.5 million:** The estimated number of people living in this newly independent nation in 1776. 318.9 million: the estimated population of the U.S. in July 2014.

Source: Census.gov

LOOK INSIDE:

Enjoy fireworks **THE SAFE WAY.**

BEYOND THE BBQ –
celebrate our independence this 4th of July!



BUDGET TIME

By Elaine Delorio McClain

What does it mean to me?

The budget process for your county government isn't just for accountants and elected officials. Much of it is funded with taxpayer money and goes to fund services and programs for all of us who live, work and play in Marion County. That means the budgeting process and the yearly commission decision on the tax rate ultimately affects all of us – both in our wallets and in the levels of county government services we receive. But Marion County is a large county with dozens of funding sources, and government budgeting processes are by nature complex. We hope this issue will help explain some of the process and show you how to become involved or follow along this year.

📺 **Click for a short video**
ABOUT THE COUNTY BUDGET

INSIDE { Budget timeline and terms decoded.

The Board of County Commissioners' responsibility

The Marion County Commission is responsible for **establishing** the budget for the 23 departments and offices that make up county government (e.g., the Public Library System, Animal Services and Marion County Fire Rescue).

The commission **approves** the budget for the five, independent constitutional offices (Marion County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Marion County Property Appraiser, Marion County Sheriff's Office, Marion County Supervisor of Elections and Marion

County Tax Collector), but each officer makes its own funding priorities, staff salaries and purchasing decisions.

The commission is **not involved** in the budgets or operation of Marion County Public Schools; the cities of Ocala, Dunnellon or Belleview; or the towns of Reddick or McIntosh.



Budget Timeline

Preparing the annual budget is nearly a year-round process with budget development beginning in January for county departments. Smaller departmental budget changes or transfers can take place throughout the year, but major appropriations and spending priority changes can only take place when planning for the new budget each fiscal year.

What's a mill? Decoding budget terms:

Millage rate – A millage rate is a property tax rate calculated per \$1,000 of property value. The current countywide millage rate is 3.90 mills. This means that for a home appraised at a value of \$67,000 (the 2014 average residential taxable value in Marion), the property tax would be \$261.

The **countywide millage rate** is paid by all property owners in Marion County. It funds county government services that all residents (both those living in incorporated cities and towns and those living outside them) receive. Libraries, the ambulance service, the Clerk of the Court and Supervisor of Elections are a few examples.

Non-countywide millage rates fund departments or portions of departments that don't serve the whole county and are called municipal services taxing units (or MSTU). These are also used for residents in certain geographic portions of the county for services or projects that only benefit those residents. Residents can request an MSTU to fund a project for their community (e.g., street lighting, road paving or community centers).

Did you know? – Some county departments are not funded by county tax dollars. They're listed below, along with their primary funding sources.

- **Marion County Solid Waste** – funded primarily through the solid waste assessment and solid waste disposal fees.
- **Marion County Utilities** – funded primarily through customer water and waste water bills and grants.
- **Marion County Airport** – funded primarily through fuel sales and hangar/tie-down rentals.
- **Marion County Building Safety** – funded primarily through license and permit fees.

Marion County Board of County Commissioners
 601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala, Florida 34471

How are county departments funded?

BUDGET 101

For what services do taxpayers pay?

Click here!

A basic guide to the Marion County government budget and the funds that support county public services

Published by the Marion County Office of Public Information
 as a public service of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners
 For more information:
 Telephone: 352-438-2300
 Online: www.MarionCountyFL.org/Budget

Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County – check the online **calendar of events!**

2015 Budget Timeline

Jan. 22



BCC **strategic planning workshop**. This is when the BCC sets its priorities for the upcoming budget year. Based on this direction, staff begins to work on their department budget and can reprioritize spending, evaluate programs and plan for potential cuts or increases.

*May 20-21



BCC **departmental strategic plan workshops**. This is when the BCC reviews the strategic planning efforts by county departments that fall under the BCC. These do not include constitutional offices.

*July 14-16\
20-22



BCC **budget workshops**. These public meetings are where the board reviews the departments' proposed budgets and gives additional direction. Not all of these dates may be used.

*Sept. 10



First **public hearing to discuss the countywide budget for FY 15-16**, as well as MSTUs. The board establishes the tentative millage rate (the countywide property tax rates that fund services received by all county residents).

*Sept. 24



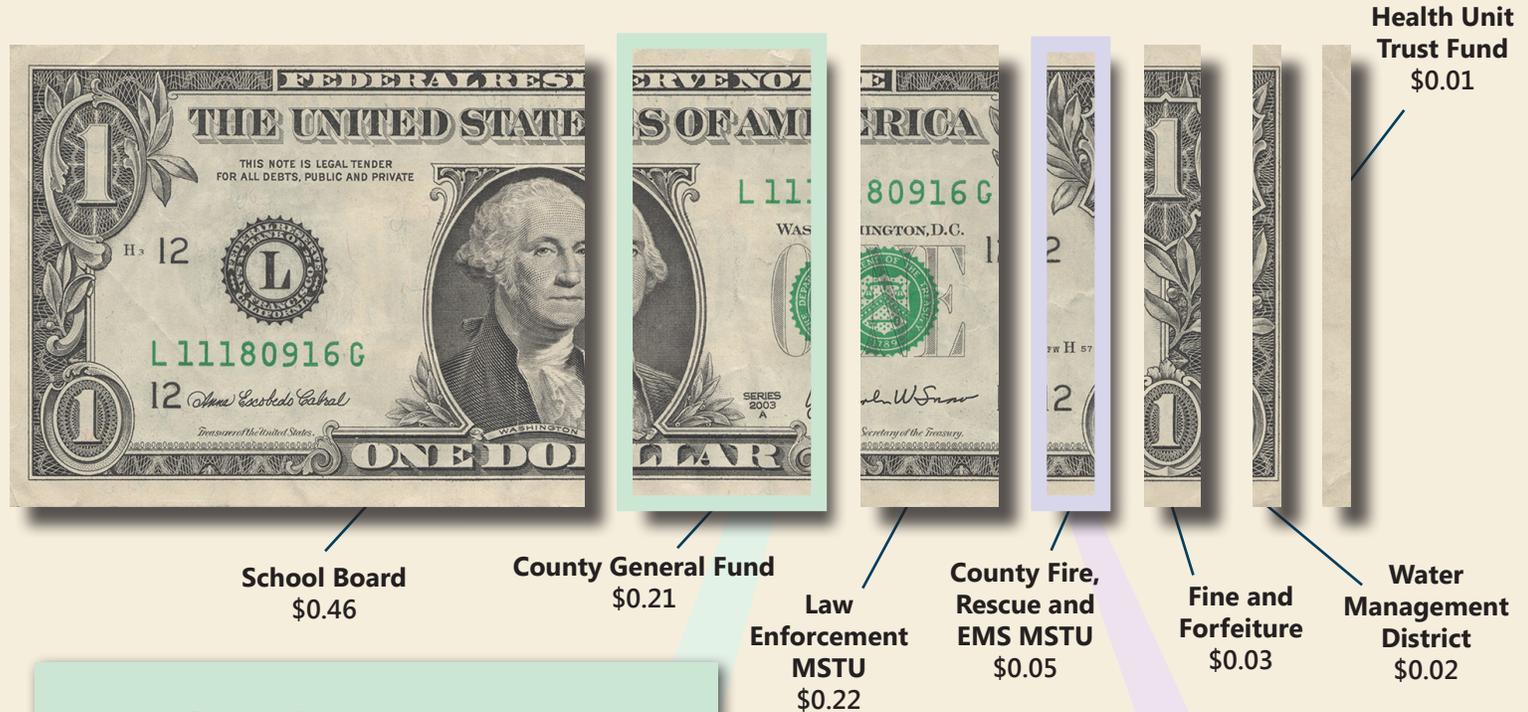
Second **public hearing to discuss the countywide budget for FY 15-16**, as well as MSTUs. The board establishes the final millage rate (the countywide property tax rates that fund services received by all county residents).

Note: all meetings are noticed and open to the public. Meetings denoted with * are streamed live on the county website.

Property taxes: where do they go?

Below is a representation of how each property tax dollar is divided for property owners in the unincorporated areas of Marion County*.

(This does not include MSTU/MSBU assessments within specific subdivisions or residential areas.)



General Fund

This funds the programs and services provided by Marion County departments, including: emergency medical services, public safety communications (911), animal services, parks, facilities management, libraries, veterans services, growth services (code enforcement, planning, zoning), administration, extension services (such as 4-H), procurement, community services, fleet management and more.

The general fund also includes the funding for four Marion County constitutional offices (Clerk of the Court, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections and Tax Collector), as well as for jail operation and emergency management services managed by the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

Fire, Rescue and EMS MSTU

This is a Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) paid by property owners in the unincorporated areas for fire rescue services.

Property owners in unincorporated Marion pay only **\$0.26 per property tax dollar** for all of the countywide services provided by Marion County Board of County Commissioners departments. Examples of those services are highlighted in the green and purple boxes.



All other property tax funds are overseen by separate entities, as follows:

Marion County School Board - School Board funds

Marion County Sheriff's Office - Law Enforcement MSTU and Fine and Forfeiture funds

Southwest Florida/St. Johns River water management districts - Water Management District funds

Florida Department of Health - Health Unit Trust Fund

* Based on FY 2014-15.
6/2015

For more information, please contact Marion County Office of Fiscal Review at 352-438-2300.

NEWSFLASH

Ocala/Marion County tourism industry has record year

Compiled by Office of Public Information

More than 1.7 million visitors traveled to Ocala/Marion County last year, enjoying its natural beauty, businesses, hotels, restaurants and recreation opportunities, and they left more than footprints. According to research provided to the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB), from April 2014-March 2015, those visitors spent more than \$600 million in Marion, translating to an economic impact of \$912 million.

"These latest numbers show a significant increase over previous years," said Loretta Shaffer, executive director of the VCB. "But we've seen a positive trend over the last few years, a testament to the efforts of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and the Ocala/Marion County Tourist Development Council."

Ocala/Marion County's hotel occupancy rate rose nearly 21 percent between March 2012 and March 2015, according to reports from Smith Travel Research. Additionally, hotel revenues rose more than 33 percent over the three-year span, climbing to a record \$70.5 million, with the demand for hotel rooms in the county up by about 17 percent in that same period.

Marion, Florida's fifth largest county, has grown its brand awareness and image with tourists through award-winning marketing efforts that included the launch of a new website in late 2013 and an aggressive social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter.

Recent awards for the VCB's efforts include:

- 2014 Henry Award from VISIT Florida.
- 2014 Florida Outdoor Writer's Association Award for Corporate Travel and Tourism.
- 2014 Adrian Award from the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) for its newly-designed website.

- 2014 Golden Image Award from the Florida Public Relations Association for its social media engagement campaign.
- 2014 Social Media Campaign Silver Flagler Award from VISIT Florida.



Photos courtesy of the Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau



Register today!

Join us for the 2nd annual
**Marion County 4-H
 Color Me Green 5K Fun Run**

352-671-8413

Saturday, Aug. 1
 Tusawilla Park
www.marioncountyfl.org/4-H




Firefighters remind residents to enjoy fireworks safely



Compiled by Marion County Fire Rescue

Like turkey on Thanksgiving and egg hunts on Easter, fireworks are an indispensable part of the 4th of July tradition for many families. If not enjoyed safely, fireworks can be a dangerous side to the holiday festivities.

On a typical Independence Day, more U.S. fires are reported than on any other day and fireworks are responsible for more than half of those fires, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

But wait – don't plan on giving up the excitement of fireworks this year; many firework disasters are preventable. **Just follow these tips from Marion County Fire Rescue firefighters to enjoy them safely.**

- Attend a professional firework display.
- Do not purchase or ignite illegal fireworks (anything that leaves the ground, explodes or shoots projectiles is illegal in Florida, including firecrackers, bottle rockets, shells, mortars, Roman candles and M80s).
- Read and follow labeled directions, only using fireworks for their intended purposes.
- Keep a fire extinguisher or water hose handy just in case an emergency arises.
- Light one firework at a time, and never try to re-light a "dud."
- Never throw or point fireworks at people, or run while using them.
- Never shoot fireworks indoors or into metal or glass containers.
- Wear eye protection and gloves when igniting fireworks.
- Ignite sparklers and other legal novelties outdoors on a flat, hard surface in an open area away from grass and other combustibles.
- Never allow children to use sparklers or fireworks without adult supervision.
- Do not leave sparklers, fireworks or combustible materials where children may access them.
- If your sparklers or fireworks cause a fire, you may be held responsible for suppression charges and/or face criminal charges.
- Soak used fireworks in water for at least 15 minutes before throwing them away.
- Never experiment with or make homemade fireworks.
- Call 911 immediately if someone gets hurt or burned or if a fire erupts.

Celebrate our nation's independence this Fourth of July

By Elaine Delorio McClain



In a hot, stuffy room in the Pennsylvania State House, the delegates of the Continental Congress likely knew they were making history by bravely signing their names to the Declaration of

Independence on July 4, 1776. The document officially established the 13 colonies' independence from England. As the delegates put their quill pens to paper, a ragged army of colonists already fought fearlessly for this now-declared independence. More than 4,000 soldiers died in battle during the Revolutionary War, sacrificing their lives for the nation formed in word on the first Independence Day, but in spirit long before. Since then, countless men and women in our nation's military have continued to sacrifice to defend our country and its ideals here and across the globe. We're forever grateful for our military veterans throughout history, for we owe our freedom and our nation's greatness to their bravery, determination and sacrifice.

This Fourth of July, we invite you to take a walk through our nation's history at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park, a lasting memorial featuring more than 5,000 bricks, 22 benches and 100 plaques honoring veterans from the birth of our nation forward.

The Park features:

- A sequential history of all wars, conflicts and battles beginning with the Native American Wars in 1628 and continuing to the present.
- History of the American Civil War with plaques and battle commemorations for both the Union and Confederate armies.
- Plaques of veterans organizations and other groups to recognize their support of the park.
- Pedestals, bricks, plaques and benches - all donated by veteran/community organizations, individuals and families