



COUNTY CONNECTION

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 9 • SEPTEMBER 2015

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Marion County Commissioners
David Moore, District 1
Kathy Bryant, Vice Chair, District 2
Stan McClain, Chairman, District 3
Carl Zalak III, District 4
Earl Arnett, District 5

Acting County Administrator
Mounir Bouyounes

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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.

PROJECT UPDATE: FY 14-15 EDITION

County departments improve facilities, customer service and more

TOP STORY



Although the calendar year doesn't sunset until the end of December, county government's fiscal year closes Sept. 30. During this last month of the fiscal year, join us as we look back at some of the projects that county departments completed in FY 14-15.

The newest plaque in the **Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park** is dedicated to our hometown heroes, the 351st Military Police Company (Combat Support). The plaque honors the company's service during Operation Enduring Freedom in Bagram, Afghanistan in 2014. About 80 members of the company helped unveil it at the dedication in August. The plaque was sponsored by Friends of Marion County Parks, Ocala Jaycees and Ocala Runner's Club.

Treated wastewater will soon be irrigating another local golf course, since **Marion County Utilities** installed about 20,500 linear feet of reclaimed water main in the southeast portion of Marion County. This effort conserves water, since the golf course won't need to pump as much groundwater for irrigation and also means that the treated wastewater will be further filtered as it's



sprayed over the large golf course.

Also in the southeast area, Marion County Utilities installed 21,500 linear feet of PVC water main to be used instead of the existing older pipe. PVC is more durable and has a longer expected lifespan.



A lot of people park at KP Hole, a **Marion County Parks and Recreation** park that sees about 70,000 visitors a year. And now, those visitors will enjoy a newly-resurfaced parking lot, new ADA parking and access, ADA access to the picnic pavilion and improvements to the boat ramp livery area. Fencing around the area is still being completed.

See more about this story • Turn to page 2



has been done to track visitors. How does this help tourism efforts? By understanding the field of visitors, staff can better target those who will be interested in the tourism opportunities Marion has to offer.

The study will also help with branding and sales; staff can focus on specific interests and portions of the year to effectively attract those in the right niche and during the right time period.

Also, the study highlighted the strengths of Marion's attractions, identifying what is being promoted well.



By law, government agencies are required to keep a lot of records, and that means a lot of storage. **Marion County Facilities Management** staff managed the renovation of an existing county-owned building so that it'd be able to be used as a records storage center for the Clerk of the Court. Staff reduced the cost through value engineering the original design and using in-house staff to perform mechanical, electrical and plumbing work, as well as some of the painting – producing savings of more than \$619,000. By renovating and bringing up to code an existing building, the county was able to vacate prime real estate that could then be used by private sector businesses, selling it for nearly \$2 million.



The road to adventure is new and improved, or at least the road that bisects Brick City Adventure Park. In cooperation with the City of Ocala, Marion County Parks and Recreation has renovated Southeast 22nd Road, including upgraded stormwater management systems, parallel parking, bike lanes, streetlights, ADA access into the park and a beautified entry area.

There's a window to faster service, and it's now found at **Marion County Building Safety**. The department's new express window enables customers to be served in a timelier manner when submitting permits for certain services.



If you've driven Northwest 35th Street between Northwest 35th Avenue and US 441, you've experienced the initial phases of the **Office of the County Engineer's** east/west corridor traffic capacity improvement project. A four-lane divided roadway was constructed with a grassed/landscaped median, sidewalks, bike lanes, drainage improvements, traffic signalization/striping and water, sewer, and

electric work. The project will ultimately run from County Road 225A to Northeast 36th Avenue. In the shorter term, one of the planned improvements within this corridor includes a connection of Northwest 44th Avenue to Northwest 35th Avenue (the westerly terminus of this portion of the project) and an interchange at I-75.



After a year of research, **Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau** produced an economic impact study, reporting the impact tourism had on Marion County's economy. In addition, the results provided an overview of who is visiting Marion County (the visitor type, travel party, age, etc.) – the first time that this type of study



NEWSFLASH



Stormwater Section awarded for excellence

By Stacie Causey

The Florida Stormwater Association recently presented the **Marion County Stormwater Section** with high honors for demonstrating innovative accomplishments and an outstanding commitment to best management practices that benefit the environment and local citizenry.

Stormwater Engineer Gail Mowry accepted the **2015 Excellence Award for a Stormwater Program** citing the “program’s comprehensive approach to watershed management and innovation in addressing water quality and flooding issues” that led to achieving this year’s recognition.

Water quality protection efforts by Marion County Stormwater Section have been reducing pollution since 2002 with high-profile projects such as the Silver Springs Pollution Reduction Project on State road 40 near Silver Springs and the 31st Street stormwater retrofit project, which helped and continues to remove tons of pollutants from Silver Springs and Silver River. Stormwater staff is also responsible for the popular “Corporate Run for the Springs” 5K event held in April each year to increase public awareness of issues facing Silver and Rainbow Springs.



Marion County Utilities recognized with national management award

By Elaine Delorio McClain

Marion County Utilities received national recognition for its management practices when the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), awarded the department the **2015 Excellence in Management Gold Level Award**.

The awards program honors agencies that have adopted successful management practices and made progress toward implementing the organization’s 10 attributes of effectively managed water sector utilities (covering administration and operations excellence) and six resource efficiency and protection activities (covering environmental responsibility). Marion County Utilities achieved mastery of seven attributes and three activities, earning the department a prestigious gold award on its first nomination.

Focusing on continued improved efficiency, financial viability and operational optimization, the department has been able to compete with much larger utilities in benchmarking comparisons, maintain stable utility rates and set the example for operational excellence. In addition, protection of Marion County’s water resources drives many of Utilities’ practices. These efforts include regionalizing 11 poorer-performing wastewater plants into five advanced waste treatment facilities that discharge cleaner effluent, better protecting groundwater quality. The department also has established a reclaimed distribution system to irrigate local golf courses, reducing groundwater withdrawal.

Fire Rescue Wrap-up

By James Lucas

July 31, 2015: Fire Chief M. Stuart McElhane retired from the position of Fire Chief, Marion County Fire Rescue. Chief McElhane faithfully and honorably served the citizens and visitors of Marion County for 21 years in his position. His leadership, vision and dedication will be missed by the men and women of Marion County Fire Rescue.



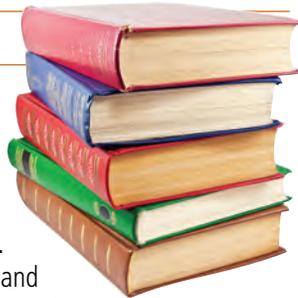
July 21, 2015: Marion County Fire Rescue Crews from four stations battled a residential structure fire in Del Webb Spruce Creek. The homeowner was able to safely evacuate the home after a lightning strike sparked an attic fire. Crews began an interior attack on the fire when the structural integrity of the roof was compromised. Emergency evacuation tones were sounded and firefighters took a defensive stance against the fire. The fire was called under control at 2:33 p.m.



September is Library Card Sign-up Month

By Stacie Causey

As the transition of back-to-school eases, the Marion County Public Library System reminds readers of all ages to renew or get a new library card during National Library Card Sign-up Month. Libraries play an important role in the education and development of children. Studies show that children who are read to in the home and who use the library perform better in school and are more likely to use the library as a source of lifelong learning.



Marion County libraries offer books, magazines, audio- and videotapes, DVDs, public access computers, online databases and other multimedia materials. There is also a wide range of items available for loan to children and their families, most of which can be borrowed for home use simply by showing a library card.

Trained library staff members are always on hand to help recommend materials suitable for various ages and interests.

For more information on how to sign up for a library card, visit any of the nine Marion County Public Library System locations, call 352-671-8551, or visit <http://library.marioncountyfl.org>.

MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

WHAT'S COOLER THAN BEING COOL?

HAVING A LIBRARY CARD. GET YOURS TODAY!

September is Library Card Sign-up Month!

library.marioncountyfl.org



New Marion County Fleet Management Director Takes the Helm

By Danielle Damato Doty

Marion County Fleet Management operates under new leadership with the appointment of Brian Hing as Fleet Management Director on Aug. 4. Hing replaces John King, who resigned in June.

Hing joined the department in April as Operations Manager. In the three years prior to joining Marion County, he served as Maintenance Supervisor for Sarasota County Area Transit and as Lead Fleet Technician in Charlotte County. As Fleet Management Director, Hing will oversee 19 staff members.



Hing brings 34 years of fleet experience to his new role. His family owned a dealership in Arcadia, Florida for 30 years, where he began his career in fleet management and services. Hing also holds three master's certificates from the

Canadian Department of Colleges in the areas of automotive, heavy equipment and truck coach.

"I have a vision to take Fleet Management into the future," Hing said. "I look forward to using new innovations and technology to meet modern industry challenges."

Marion County Fleet Management is a department of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners and provides total repair service for the county's 1,400 vehicles and equipment from one central location. Most work, including preventive maintenance, is performed in-house. Fleet Management has earned the nationally-distinguished National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Blue Seal of Excellence designation. Visit www.MarionCountyFL.org/Fleet or call 352-671-8570 for more information.



Color Me Green Fun Run

By Stacie Causey

Marion County 4-H began August with clouds of green at their second annual Color Me Green Fun Run held in Tuscowilla Park on Saturday, Aug. 1. Participants of all ages enjoyed the beauty of the park's art features and fountains while sprinting past, or bravely strolling through, showers of green in the name of raising funds to help support Marion County 4-H's program efforts.

4-H members, volunteers and club leaders helped to check participants in, toss green cornstarch at specified sections of the course, hand out donated bottles of water and cheer on participants.

The event raised more than \$1,200 to support 4-H member travel expenses to advanced competitions and the 4-H Farm (Southeast Maricamp Road and Southeast Baseline Road, Ocala). To get involved in 4-H, please contact the Marion County Extension Service at 352-671-8400 or visit www.marioncountyfl.org/4-H.



Did you know?

- 4-H offers clubs and programs for youth ages 5-18.
- More than 220,000 youth participate in Florida 4-H programs, including members of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.
- Florida 4-Hers show higher academic competence, maintain better grades and enjoy elevated levels of school engagement.
- Check out the clubs, programs and competition divisions and join more than 3,000 Marion County youth by visiting: www.MarionCountyFL.org/4-H.



INCASE YOU MISSED IT



Hotel coming to Dunnellon

Commissioners joined community leaders on Aug. 13 to celebrate the groundbreaking on Dunnellon's Comfort Suites hotel. The hotel will support the county's eco-tourism opportunities and is equipped with a boat parking area and environmentally-friendly elements that fit right in with the area's springs and other natural resources.



Stuff the Bus a Success

County Commissioners joined the Stuff the Bus Tuesday celebration on Aug. 4. Marion County staff collected more than 3,000 items to help needy children be ready for school this year. The donated items were then distributed by the Homeless Children Program to each school's guidance offices.

Calendar of Events

Find out what events are coming up in Marion County – check the online [calendar of events!](#)

New assistant county administrator and county engineer appointed

During the Aug. 4 regularly-scheduled commission meeting, the Marion County Commission approved the appointment of Jeannie Rickman to the position of Assistant County Administrator for Public Services, and Tracy Straub, PE to the position of County Engineer.



As Assistant County Administrator for Public Services, Rickman will oversee nine county departments and offices: Tourist Development, Veterans Services, Community Services, Office of Public Information, Animal Services,

Information Technology, Public Library System, Public Safety Communications and Office of Strategic Services. In addition, Rickman will continue to spearhead the county's legislative efforts and supervise the administrative staff. She joined Marion County government in 2004 as a legal assistant in the county attorney's office and was promoted through the ranks to her most recent position of Director of Governmental Affairs in 2014.

"I appreciate the support and confidence of the Board in providing me the opportunity to serve in this new role," Rickman said. "I look forward to partnering with our talented county staff as we face the challenges and opportunities ahead of us."

Straub will now lead the Office of the County Engineer, taking on responsibility for overseeing the county-maintained roadway and stormwater systems. This includes managing the county's traffic operations, road maintenance, right-of-way permitting, engineering, development review and stormwater management, as well as developing long- and short-range planning efforts associated with roads and stormwater. Straub joined Marion County as Drainage Engineer with the Office of the County Engineer in 2001 and was promoted through the ranks to her most recent position of Deputy County Engineer in 2014.

"I'm proud to be part of this team and appreciate the continued support of the Board and the staff at the Office of the County Engineer," Straub said.

Straub replaces Mounir Bouyounes as the County Engineer, who formerly served in a dual-capacity as the County Engineer and Assistant County Administrator of Public Works. The Commission appointed Bouyounes as the Acting County Administrator in July, and tasked him with reviewing the organizational structure and bringing back any immediate and longer term recommendations to support moving forward. Under the approved reorganization plan, Bouyounes would retain the position of Assistant County Administrator for Public Works once the new county administrator is hired.

What your **TRIM notice** means this year.



TRIM (Truth-In-Millage) notices are mailed each year around this time to inform property owners of the proposed property taxes for the following year. Specifically outlined in the notices are the proposed County millage rates, or the amount per \$1,000 that is used to calculate taxes on a property. For the past

seven years, the Marion County Commission has been able to maintain the total of County millage rates at a steady 3.90 or less. **This year, your TRIM notices will show proposed County millage rates at a total of 4.31. The proposed MSTU for Law Enforcement is 3.84, compared to 3.47 currently.**



What is a TRIM notice?

The Commission is responsible for setting the budget for 24 departments and offices that make up county government, as well as approving the budget for the five, independent constitutional offices (Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Property Appraiser, Sheriff's Office, Supervisor of Elections and Tax Collector).

Increases in the proposed property tax rates for Marion are primarily reflected in the General Fund and in the Municipal Service Taxing Unit for Law Enforcement. **The increases are largely attributable to public safety related services.** This includes budget increase requests from the Sheriff's office that, by law, must be

included and funded in the tentative budget and may only be addressed and adjusted by the Commission during final budget hearings. Increases are also reflected in the county's ambulance service budget, as the county is currently in negotiations regarding compensation of the County's fire rescue and ambulance personnel. In all other areas of property tax funded operations, the County budget reflects current or reduced levels of expenditures in the upcoming year.

Florida Statute requires the Commission to establish proposed millage rates that will fund the proposed budgets and provide those rates to the Property Appraiser for use in preparing the TRIM notices.

Your TRIM notice also reflects a **1.0 millage rate increase for schools which was voter-approved in a referendum.** The Commission has no control over this millage rate increase.

Why the change?

Setting the proposed millage rate is not the end of the budget review process. Per statute, the Commission will have the opportunity to amend the budget in September, when the final public hearings to set the tentative and final millage rates are scheduled to take place. **The Commission remains committed to pursuing opportunities to adjust the budget prior to final adoption to minimize any increase in property tax rates.**

Both public hearings will be held in the McPherson Complex Auditorium (601 SE 25th Ave., Ocala).

Upcoming public hearings:

Sept. 10, 7 p.m. – First public hearing to consider the adoption of the county tentative budget and millage rates.

Sept. 24, 7 p.m. – Final public hearing to establish the final county budget and millage rates.

For more information, please contact the Commission Office at 352-438-2323.



What's next?