

2016



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES *for* MARION COUNTY

For more information, please contact:

Mounir Bouyounes, Interim County Administrator

Email: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org

Phone: 352-438-2300

**Jeannie Rickman, Assistant County Administrator,
Public Services**

Email: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org

Phone: 352-438-2300

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





Marion County Board of County Commissioners

McPherson Governmental Complex

601 SE 25th Ave.
Ocala, FL 34471
Phone: 352-438-2323
Fax: 352-438-2324

District 1 – David Moore, Commissioner
District 2 – Kathy Bryant, Vice Chairman
District 3 – Stan McClain, Chairman
District 4 – Carl Zalak III, Commissioner
District 5 – Earl Arnett, Commissioner

Sept. 14, 2015

Honorable Rep. Charlie Stone, Senators and Representatives:

Marion County continues to enjoy an outstanding working relationship with our state delegation, and we appreciate your continued efforts to serve the needs and interests of our residents and businesses. Your partnership will be pivotal in helping our community drive areas of veterans services, natural resource protection and economic potential into reality.

This year we are asking you to consider the following priorities: 1) Marion County's readiness to become home of the 8th state veterans' nursing home, 2) Local Discretionary Sales Tax reform 3) Land and water resources, and balanced distribution of funding for land acquisition and water quality/quantity projects, 4) Southeastern Livestock Pavilion, 5) Mental health and 6) Road dedication in eastern Marion County.

In June 2014, Marion County witnessed one of the largest demonstrations of support for our patriots during a community rally in support of Marion becoming the home of the next state veterans' nursing facility. We commend St. Lucie County on being awarded the 7th state veterans nursing home, and remain committed to becoming home of the next such facility. We are asking you and your fellow state legislators to **support funding appropriation for Florida's 8th proposed veterans nursing home to Marion County.**

The next priority we ask you to consider is a Local Discretionary Sales Tax. Existing laws do not provide the flexibility local governments need. Therefore, we are asking you to **support modifications to existing laws to allow for a discretionary sales tax that can be used for general purposes, including operations expenditures and enactment of the transportation sales surtax for non-charter counties.**

Land and water resource protection is vital to Florida's fifth largest county. This year, we respectfully request you to consider the following:

- **Balanced distribution of funds for land acquisition and water quality and quantity projects throughout the state.**
- **Continued funding of the Florida Forever Project List, specifically the projects which focus on springs protection, such as Florida's First Magnitude Springs and other line item appropriations.**
- **Funding in the amount of \$150,000 for a University of Florida study to determine the nutrient load that beef cattle operations contribute to groundwater.**

As "Horse Capital of the World," our community is proud to be among the strongest supporters of agriculture. This industry is vital to Marion, and we are honored to serve as home of Florida's arterial agriculture complex - the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion. To maximize this state-of-the-art facility's economic development potential for the region and the state, we are requesting that you allocate funds toward Phase III of the Southeastern Livestock Pavilion's master plan for boosting Florida's agriculture. Specifically:

- **Support funding in the amount of \$3,821,768 (balance for the project), which will be requested through the Florida Department of Agriculture budget: "Agriculture Education and Promotion Facility Request for Funding" Section 288.1175 Florida Statutes.**

"Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations"

Marion County's financial commitment to this facility over the past decade nears \$4.6 million. We are proud of this investment and our joint ownership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Each year, the pavilion generates \$11.2 million in economic activity and more than \$200,000 in state sales tax.

Mental health continues to be a top priority for Marion County, as an estimated 1 in 4 incarcerated adults battle some form of mental illness. Funding for mental illness has greatly decreased over the years and the number of behavioral health and substance abuse cases have continued to fill our jails. As part of this priority, we ask you to:

- Support statewide mental health initiatives, as well as funding local Marion County Diversion Programs that keep the mentally ill out of jail and divert them to community programs. Diversion Programs produce more effective outcomes at less expense to taxpayers.

Services that diversion programs could provide are as follows:

- A treatment program that diverts mentally ill persons from jail and provides expedited intake and wrap-around services.
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings for Law Enforcement to better equip them with how to address the population.
- Operation of a central location/shelter to allow immediate intervention, prevention, re-entry and other social service options 24/7.

Wrapping up Marion's legislative priorities list is the Davis road dedication initiative. In early 2015, the County Commission supported a local request to designate a road in honor of Elijah and Elizabeth Inez Davis. This designation was supported by the Florida Department of Transportation, but the corresponding bills died when the legislative session adjourned in April. Today, we **request legislative action and support as follows: that portion of S.R. 35/N.E. 58th Avenue between C.R. 314/N.E. 7th Street and S.E. 20th Street in Marion County be designated as "Elizabeth Inez and Elijah Davis Highway."**

Enclosed with this letter are supporting materials to further illustrate why we feel these legislative actions are important and needed to support our veterans, remove sales tax roadblocks, protect our water and land resources, promote the state and our region's agriculture and economic vitality, and aid other local efforts. As always, I remain available to answer any questions you may have about our priorities or positions on any issue.

On behalf of the Marion County Board of County Commissioners, I thank you for the opportunity to present our legislative priorities. We look forward to working with you during the next legislative session to address the issues that are critical to our citizens.

Sincerely,



Stan McClain
Chairman



Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300
Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

In 2014, the State of Florida gave its veterans an additional, invaluable resource – the 7th State Veterans Nursing Home. As a qualified applicant and the top finalist in the state selection process, Marion County championed the awarding of said facility, along with various other counties, for the benefit of our state’s great patriots. We were and remain strong partners with the state in supporting funding for the next home.

The 8th State Veterans Nursing Home is the next, best resource we can offer our veterans jointly through state, county and federal partnerships. It will give some of our neediest heroes the high-quality healthcare and nursing services they so tremendously deserve. **Our leaders, community members and veterans know all too well the**

desperate need for such a facility, as well as the assets it would provide: prompt access to health services, supportive emergency response and a caring environment for hundreds of veterans at a time, to name just a few.

Marion County fully supports our more than 1.5 million Florida veterans – some 650,000 of which reside within our service region – and promotes the advancement of services for their well-being.

We respectfully request the Legislature’s allocation of the needed monies to fund the 8th State Veterans Nursing Home. Marion County stands ready to serve and deliver on the ideal location upon funding allocation for this honorable state initiative.

REQUESTED ACTION

Support funding appropriation for Florida’s 8th Proposed Veterans Nursing Home to Marion County.



State Veterans Nursing Home





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300
Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Existing laws governing local discretionary sales surtax revenues do not provide the flexibility local governments need to more equitably distribute tax burden among its population.

Tax reform measures that simplify administration and provide an economic boost to Florida's taxpayers are essential. These measures must consider and minimize the collective and cumulative negative impact on local revenues, including state-shared and local discretionary revenue sources that are critical to local governments in providing community services.

To accomplish this objective, Marion County recommends the following two initiatives:

- Modify the existing law to allow the use of the **local discretionary sales surtax for local government for general purposes**, including operational expenditures within the general fund in addition to the traditional expenditures identified as Capital Improvements.
- Enact a law allowing Marion County (a non-charter county) the opportunity to levy a transportation sales surtax similar to charter counties. This law will help not only Marion County, but other non-charter counties in Florida.

Impact:

The flexibility, if approved, in the use of the local discretionary sales surtax for operational expenditures will help Marion County in reducing the Ad Valorem tax levied on property owners who are burdened with the largest share of taxation under the existing tax structure.

The potential reduction in Ad Valorem could be substantial. If approved to use Discretionary Sales Tax funds for operational expenditures, the property tax Ad Valorem for Marion County residents would be reduced equally by that amount, alleviating some property tax burden.

The enactment of the transportation sales surtax for non-charter counties will provide a most needed revenue source to fund transportation capital projects, especially since the local gas tax is not indexed and it has lost most of its purchasing power due to inflation. Marion County has an annual shortfall of approximately \$10 million for capital maintenance projects and a backlog of \$300 million for local transportation capacity projects.

REQUESTED ACTION

Support modification to existing laws to allow for a discretionary sales tax that can be used for general purposes, including operational expenditures and/or enactment of the transportation sales surtax for non-charter counties.

Discretionary Sales Surtax





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Marion County continues to be conscientious of our responsibility to protect and preserve our natural resources, extending to both our lands and waters. There is a high level of interaction between what happens on the land surface and the groundwater below due to our karst geology.

Our land uses influence the quality and quantity of the runoff that feeds our ground and surface waters, which in turn feed the Floridan Aquifer and downstream water bodies such as Silver

and Rainbow Springs and the St. Johns and Withlacoochee Rivers. We look for our economy to thrive by promoting our land and water resources, their connectivity, and their quality.

The environmental and economic benefits are immense, not only for Marion County, but for all of the state of Florida. Our success is Florida's success and we seek to establish partnerships, research, funding and solutions that promote stewardship, obtainable goals, and sound land use practices.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

1. Fund state programs for the acquisition, restoration and management of lands that are vital to the protection of natural and groundwater resources, promote wildlife migration, and further connectivity of our waterways and trails.

- Silver Springs Sandhill is included as part of the Florida's First Magnitude Springs project which is currently identified as a High Priority Work Plan item within the Florida Forever list. Appraisals for the project have been conducted by two state-approved appraisers with an estimated cost of roughly \$4.5 million.
- Promote public land management to create quality outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as protection of natural areas.

2. Fund programs that remediate domestic wastewater systems. These are necessary to meet the water quality standards set by Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and protect our springs and groundwater.

- Require wastewater systems to be retrofitted to meet Advanced Wastewater Treatment Standards.
- Support opportunities to develop backbone infrastructure. Future septic tank (Onsite Sewage Treatment Disposal System) and package plant abatement will depend upon developed infrastructure to support wastewater collection.
- Promote septic system and package plant abatement through Public-Private Partnerships. The funding needs exceed the funding availability. Public-private partnerships are necessary.
- Marion County supports restricting said funding to infrastructure development.

3. Fund and implement regional verification of the effectiveness of agricultural and industry best management practices (BMPs). Unjustified sanctions against any industry that contributes minimally to nutrient load will not result in cleaner water, but can be very damaging to the industry and economy.

- An assumption of compliance with state water quality standards for implementing BMPs is not adequate without verification.

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Land and Water in Marion





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

- Further, if agriculture is in compliance with BMPs, how can reduction allocations be assigned to them in the Basin Management Action Plan process (BMAP).
 - Cattle producers in Marion County are requesting additional science to identify an accurate load contribution. They are seeking 1/3 funding for a study project developed in partnership with the University of Florida at a cost of \$450,000.
4. Continue to fund alternative water supply projects and programs to promote the efficient use of water, including public education, and water quality improvement projects.
 5. Fund water projects throughout the state, with equitable allocation irrespective of a project's urban or rural nature, or its coastal or inland location. Marion County is the heart of much of Florida's recharge and our protection efforts provide an immeasurable benefit outside our jurisdictional boundaries. Marion County continues to be a donor county and should be getting a larger return on our tax contribution.

REQUESTED ACTIONS

Support a balanced distribution of funds for land acquisition and for water quality and quantity projects throughout the state.

Support continued funding of the Florida Forever Project List, specifically the projects which focus on springs protection, such as Florida's first-magnitude springs and other line item appropriations.

Support funding in the amount of \$150,000 for a University of Florida study to determine the nutrient load that beef cattle operations contribute to groundwater.

Land and Water in Marion





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300
Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

The Southeastern Livestock Pavilion is working on Phase III of the Master Plan for the site. Phase I was completed December 2004; Phase II was completed February 2011. Phase III is the development of the north portion of the property, including a covered roping arena and addition of a 99-stall barn. Total cost for this project is estimated at \$5,268,748. During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Livestock Pavilion was awarded \$750,000 toward this project by the Legislature, and in 2015 an additional \$696,980 was granted for a total of \$1,446,780. We anticipate this will allow the facility to purchase and erect the covered portion of the arena. This effort is expected to begin in fall 2015.

Facility Impact: Current funding will allow covering the roping arena. The proposed additional funding, build out of the project, will increase rentals; we anticipate 20/52 weekends the first year.

Financial Impact: Revenues for all rentals at the Livestock Pavilion are \$208,975. We anticipate this facility will increase rental income by 25%, or \$52,244.

Economic Impact: A 2004, UF/IFAS Study indicated the Livestock Pavilion contributes \$11 million annually to the local economy. Of this, over \$200,000 is in state tax dollars. The Pavilion brings dollars to Florida: it is estimated that about 30% of

visitors are from outside Florida and the 2004 study indicated over 60% of visitors are from outside Marion County. The activities of the Pavilion bring new dollars to Florida that are spent on gasoline, food, lodging, and tack and feed.

Business Impact: The Pavilion's responsibility includes the promotion of agriculture. Activities at the proposed addition will further the role of agribusiness in Marion County and Florida, and will heighten public awareness of the industry. This facility complements the activities of the Florida Agriculture and Horse Park. Together, these entities promote the equine image of Ocala/Marion County and further Florida's image as an equine hub.

Educational Impact: The Pavilion provides a venue where 4-H and FFA students learn to become responsible adults. Hundreds of school students attend various events during the year, including Southeastern Youth Fair, Farm Bureau Ag Ventures, Black Stallion Literacy, rodeos and other activities. The on-property IFAS Extension program offers educational sessions in agriculture for regional producers.

Social Impact: Activities at the facility lead to opportunities for participants to meet others with like interests. Business and quality of life opportunities arise from these interactions.

REQUESTED ACTION

Support funding in the amount of \$3,821,768 (balance for the project), which will be requested through the Florida Department of Agriculture budget: "Agriculture Education and Promotion Facility Request for Funding," Section 288.1175, Florida Statutes.

Southeastern Livestock Pavilion





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

Mental health continues to be a top priority for Marion County as an estimated 1 in 4 incarcerated adults battle some form of mental illness.

Funding for mental illness has greatly decreased over the years and the number of behavioral health and substance abuse cases have continued to fill our jails. Marion County, in partnership with several nonprofit organizations, has worked to provide funding for the mental health needs within our county (i.e., State of FL 5th Judicial Circuit, Vets Helping Vets, The Centers, Marion County Children's Alliance and Ocala Consulting and Prevention).

For example, a local organization that impacts the community through mental health initiative funding is The Centers. The Centers utilizes a diversion program to help safely divert participants at risk for arrest or re-arrest with mental health or co-occurring disorders from the criminal justice system, emergency rooms, or crisis stabilization units to a pre-determined location where they will be able to access and receive suitable mental

health, substance abuse and other needed social/medical services expeditiously.

QUICK FACTS:

- 125,000 people with mental illness requiring treatment are arrested and booked in Florida jails.
- 31% of women and 14% of men booking into our jails have a major mental illness.
- The majority of these arrests were for non-violent charges like crimes against the public order or property offenses. Many experienced repeat arrests.
- People with a mental illness spend three times longer in jail than those without a mental illness, due to the unavailability of appropriate community treatment and support.
- Approximately 28% of people with serious mental illness were arrested in a 10-year period.
- Law enforcement often feel that they don't have many options other than to arrest.

REQUESTED ACTION

Support for statewide mental health initiatives as well as funding local Marion County diversion programs that keep the mentally-ill out of jail and divert them to community programs. Diversion programs produce more effective outcomes at less expense to taxpayers. Services that diversion programs could provide are as follows:

- A treatment program that diverts mentally-ill persons from jail and provides expedited intake and wrap-around services.
- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings for Law Enforcement to better equip them with how to address the population.
- Operation of a central location/shelter to allow immediate intervention, prevention, re-entry and other social service options 24/7.

Mental Health Priorities





Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300
Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300

On Feb. 3, 2015 and March 3, 2015, Ms. Gracelyn Davis Honor came before the Marion County Board of County Commissioners to request a road designation in honor of her parents, Elijah Davis and Elizabeth Inez Davis. The Commission approved her request with a resolution adopted on April 7, 2015. This designation was supported by the Florida Department of Transportation, under HB 7093, SB 388, as follows:

“That portion of S.R. 35/N.E. 58th Avenue between

C.R. 314/N.E. 7th Street and S.E. 20th Street in Marion County is designated as “Elizabeth Inez and Elijah Davis Highway.”

Unfortunately, both bills died on calendar on April 28, 2015, when legislative session adjourned. On August 4, 2015, the Board again supported Ms. Honor’s request in continuing to support a resolution (*enclosed in this packet*), thereby requesting legislative action in 2016 for the S.R. 35 road designation.

REQUESTED ACTION

Request legislative action and support as follows: That portion of S.R. 35/N.E. 58th Avenue between C.R. 314/N.E. 7th Street and S.E. 20th Street in Marion County is designated as “Elizabeth Inez and Elijah Davis Highway.”

Davis Road Dedication



RESOLUTION NO. 15-R-326

A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA, DESIGNATING STATE ROAD 35/NE 58TH AVENUE FROM COUNTY ROAD 314/NE 7TH STREET TO SE 20TH STREET IN MARION COUNTY IN HONOR OF ELIZABETH INEZ DAVIS AND ELIJAH DAVIS.

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Inez Davis, Elijah Davis and their families have lived in Ocala in the township of Mt. Canaan all their lives; and

WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. Davis were very instrumental in the fundraising and reconstruction of the Mt. Canaan Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Davis raised money to purchase a school for a community youth center in 1966 and the Elizabeth I. Davis Scholarship was created in her honor, which helps children in pre-K through college with educational expenses; and

WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. Davis devoted their life to the youth and both have over 60 years of volunteer work in many charities including the United Way, Sickle Cell Society, March of Dimes, Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, and the Guardian Ad Litem Program to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Davis was the recipient of the prestigious "J.C. Penney's Woman of Distinction Award" because of her outstanding contribution and dedication to the youth center;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Marion County, Florida that;

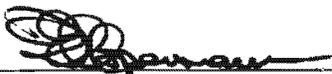
Section 1. The Board of County Commissioners of Marion County, Florida hereby supports the Florida Legislature with the road designation of State Road 35/NE 58th Avenue from County Road 314/NE 7th Street to SE 20th Street in Marion County in honor of Elizabeth Inez Davis and Elijah Davis.

Section 2. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

DULY RESOLVED this 1st day of **September, 2015**.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA



DAVID R. ELLSPERMANN, CLERK



STAN MCCLAIN, CHAIRMAN



Marion County, Florida

Mounir Bouyounes / E: Mounir.Bouyounes@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300
Jeannie Rickman / E: Jeannie.Rickman@marioncountyfl.org / Ph: 352-438-2300



MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

David Moore, District 1

Kathy Bryant, District 2

Stan McClain, District 3

Carl Zalak III, District 4

Earl Arnett, District 5

MARION COUNTY ALSO SUPPORTS LEGISLATION TO:

- **Strengthen** small businesses and job creation.
- **Invest** in local development efforts to attract growth industries.
- **Reduce** regulations to attract new industry.
- **Minimize** unfunded mandates.
- **Redistribute** water management district funds to their geographic source.
- **Promote** and support open space trails and connectivity.



Located in north central Florida, Marion County covers 1,652 square miles and is home to a population of 339,000. Known as the “Horse Capital of the World,” the county’s rich equine and agricultural heritage is internationally renowned.