

# MARION COUNTY ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS ASSOC., INC.

POST OFFICE BOX 1590  
NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FL 32170-9979  
(386) 424-0995 1-800-376-9045  
FAX (386) 424-0159  
www.AbsenteeLandowners.com  
email: mcala@cfl.rr.com

FALL 2009

MARION COUNTY #45

## MARION OAKS TO BECOME A CITY?

### *Dear Fellow Marion County Landowner:*

Will the 15,000 residents of Marion Oaks vote to become a city? That's the question on the mind of the Civic Association promoters. A feasibility study has been performed and a proposed charter draft at a cost of \$30,000. The state legislature will soon decide when the referendum will be held. If approved by the registered voters, Marion Oaks will be the second largest city in Marion County.

Proponents believe that government would be more responsive on the local level and the citizens better represented. Some worry, however, about taxes and fear incorporation may be more costly than remaining an unincorporated part of the county.

This will come before the full Legislative Body at their next session starting March 2010. If they approve, the registered voters of Marion Oaks will cast their votes on August 24, 2010.

A complete report outlined by your Landowners Association attorney will be provided to members only in our next newsletter.

### **REAL ESTATE MARKET UPDATE**

*by: Peggy Pittas*

#### **Marion county market trends**

Many of you have asked me to give you information on some of the smaller subdivisions. Take a look:

**Belleview Hts Estates:** Currently there are 78 lots for sale from \$4,000-\$45,000. 4 lots have sold since January, 1<sup>st</sup> from \$2,000-\$5,000.

For the most part, market values in Marion County declined modestly in the third quarter of 2009. This marks a reversal from the second quarter, where most data pointed to either a leveling off of values or a slight increase. While values declined, the number of sales increased dramatically compared to the first quarter, and were also up compared to the second quarter.

Home sales (828 sales in the third quarter compared to 792 in the second quarter and 526 in the first quarter).

Vacant lot sales (154 sales in the third quarter compared to 109 in the second quarter and 98 in the first quarter).

As has been the case over the past several years, many of the vacant lot sales have been in a few main subdivisions Marion Oaks, Silver Springs Shores, Rainbow Lakes Estates, Rolling Hills, and Ocala Waterway Estates. We are however seeing a slight increase in the number sales in several other areas as well.

The number of active vacant land listings countywide has also declined significantly, down from nearly 5,000 at the beginning of the year to slightly over 3,800 at present.

**Florida Highlands:** Currently there are 35 lots for sale from \$5,000-\$42,500. 4 lots have sold since January, 1<sup>st</sup> from \$9,000-\$11,000.

**Hog Valley:** Currently there are 6 lots for sale from \$2,000-\$15,000. No sales this year.

**MEMBER: CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NEW SMYRNA BEACH, FLORIDA**

**Orange Blossom Hills:** Currently there are 62 lots for sale from \$4,900-\$55,000. 7 lots have sold since January, 1<sup>st</sup> from \$6,700-\$15,000.

**Rainbow Park:** Currently there are 94 lots for sale from \$2,200-\$39,000. 3 lots have sold since January, 1<sup>st</sup> @ \$2,500 each.

**Rolling Hills:** Currently there are 83 lots for sale from \$9,900-\$69,000. 16 lots have sold since January, 1<sup>st</sup> from \$5,600-\$16,000.

**Woods N Lakes:** Currently there are 21 lots for sale from \$5,000-\$30,000. There have not been any sales this year.

The \$8,000 first time home buyer tax credit appears to have boosted the number of home sales which in the long run will help lot sales; however, this tax incentive is set to expire on December 1st of this year. It is uncertain if the credit will be extended or be allowed to expire. However, several members of Congress have submitted proposals to extend the tax credit.

*Before we see long term stabilization and sales prices increase, we will most likely have to experience an additional reduction in listings and stability in values.*

If you are considering selling your vacant lots, home or acreage, or if you just want to know what the current selling prices are for similar properties, please do not hesitate to contact me for a personal update on the market. You can call or e-mail me @

Peggy Pittas  
**RE/MAX ALLSTARS REALTY**  
 2325 SW HWY 484  
 OCALA, FL 34473  
 866-524-0476  
 352-732-0591  
[peggyp@remax.net](mailto:peggyp@remax.net)  
[www.ocalaallstars.com](http://www.ocalaallstars.com)

## ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SECTIONS MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

**MAP TO YOUR LOT:** Many members have never seen their property in Marion County. One of the year round services your Landowners Association provides is a map package. This map package contains the following:

- Your property information sheet**
- Two 8 X 10 unit maps (with your lot(s) highlighted)**

Below is statistical data on selected subdivisions and sections. Match the first four digits of your parcel number with the subdivision and unit column to see if your lot is located in one of the sections shown.

We will show different sections in the next newsletter so if your section does not appear here, please wait for future newsletters.

Subdi- vision & Unit	Total # of Lots	# of Homes Built	% Built Out	# of Sales in 2008	# of Sales in 2009
		1146			
8001	3011		38%	73	40
8002	2236	1385	62%	39	19
8003	2503	675	27%	65	38
1801	1037	318	31%	26	5
1802	749	128	17%	13	8
1803	311	294	95%	8	4
9001	208	196	94%	2	1
9002	292	288	98%	6	0
9003	23	16	70%	0	1
2001	584	148	25%	12	9
2002	1158	111	10%	27	10
2003	1195	88	7%	30	2
0741	32	6	19%	0	0
0742	527	7	1%	4	3
1740	988	182	18%	22	18
1741	148	14	9%	1	0
4701	20	87	43%	4	4
4702	215	37	17%	12	8
2301	90	32	36%	3	0
2302	106	37	35%	3	2

- 8 X 10 colored aerial photo (with your lot(s) highlighted)**
- Driving directions to your lot**
- Road map (with your lot marked)**

The road map will show other subdivision locations as well as the incorporated cities, street names in your area, interstate, federal and state highways, golf courses, county roads, railroads, parks, shopping centers, etc. This map package is not only valuable to you, but also to any prospective buyer if you decide to sell your property. Also, you will be able to drive directly to your property

with this package. The price for the map package is \$35.00.

If you want to receive either of the above services, just check the appropriate box on the membership application.

## DEED KIT FOR MEMBERS

We are providing a valuable service that is free to our members except for a small shipping and handling charge of \$12.00. In order to avoid many of the problems described in an article appearing in a past newsletter entitled *DO YOU HAVE POTENTIAL TITLE PROBLEMS?*, we now provide a free deed kit containing the basic forms and instructions to add a person's name to the title or give your property to someone else. The kit is not intended to replace the need for an attorney, but will provide all of the forms necessary to transfer title in a simple transaction whether you do it yourself or use an attorney. Any lawyer will find the kit very useful as well since the kit not only contains the deed forms, but also instructions on filing fees, documentary stamp tax and how and where to record documents. After reading the article referred to above, the value of the deed kit becomes very apparent. The deed kit is available to non-members for \$36.00 including postage and handling.

## COPY OF DEED

We are offering a new service to our members. If you would like to order a copy of your deed for your records, please see the membership application. The fee is \$10.00 per parcel.

## DON'T LET YOUR LIABILITY INSURANCE EXPIRE!

One of the most valuable membership benefits is the **FREE** liability insurance on your vacant land in Marion County. Your Landowners Association carries a \$1 million liability insurance policy on its members vacant land which covers damages and legal costs associated with claims brought for bodily injury or property damage arising from the ownership of your vacant land. Hidden hazards or "an attractive nuisance" may exist on your property without your knowledge, but you still could be subject to an expensive lawsuit if anyone, particularly a child, was injured. It may not seem very important to have this valuable protection, but even a trespasser hurt on your property could cause you financial disaster. Even if you were to win in a lengthy court battle, the legal expenses to defend yourself could consume most of your assets. The liability insurance policy covering our members' property would pay the legal costs, as well as the damages, in this type of suit.

Properties with bodies of water, structures, and being more than 10 acres in size are not covered. **You become eligible when you become a member for the 2009-2010 membership year.** Your Landowners Association holds the policy. Should it be necessary to file a claim, simply call us and we'll contact the insurance company on your behalf. **Members who renew by November 31<sup>st</sup> will not have any lapse in coverage. We must receive your membership check within thirty days in order for you to receive coverage.**

## GET YOUR NEWSLETTERS, AND MORE, ONLINE

We have received very favorable feedback from e-members in response to the interim updates. E-members like receiving information as it happens.

If you would like to take the opportunity to convert to an e-member, please check the appropriate box on the membership application. Your e-member status will be effective as soon as we receive your renewal.

Many of our members find this more convenient, particularly those members living in foreign countries and those that travel. Another major bonus for choosing to use email is interim updates on "hot button issues", which will be sent periodically on current events as they are happening. If there is any breaking news, an email will be sent to you immediately reporting the event instead of waiting two or three months for the next newsletter.

This method of sending newsletters and interim updates will greatly improve our ability to keep our members informed on a up-to-the-minute basis. Just think, if a major project is announced or the County Government passes an ordinance that affects your property, those of you that choose to use email will receive an interim update by email as soon as we find out. Other information such as property tax changes or other newsworthy events will also be immediately forwarded to our "e-members". Our e-members received an email alert on the stormwater assessment with information on how to file an objection. This saves valuable time. We believe that all of our members that have email available should take advantage of this valuable opportunity. Many of our foreign members are delayed in receiving regular mail. If those members choose to use email, they would receive their newsletters in seconds rather than months!

## NO TRESPASSING SIGN MAY DETER DUMPING

We have been asked by several members if this association would be interested in putting "No Trespassing" signs on

vacant property due the numerous inquiries in regard to Notice of Code of Violations being mailed to landowners from the county.

We asked our attorney if he thought there would be a benefit to landowners to install a "No Trespassing" sign on their property and his response is below:

*"Sometimes refrigerators, air conditioning units, construction debris -even old cars- are abandoned on vacant lands. Absentee owners of vacant lots usually find out that trash has been dumped on their land when they are contacted by local code enforcement officers who have received a complaint from an irate neighbor.*

*The county may institute code enforcement action against an owner who fails to remove the unsightly items. Fines and penalties may be levied against those who ignore the proceedings. What can you do to deter dumping? One solution is to put up a "No Trespassing" sign.*

*Florida courts have held that posting is a valid device for preventing the uninvited from trespassing on private property. Dumping trash on posted land is evidence of a trespass.*

*But when you live thousands of miles away from your land such a relatively simple task is not so easily accomplished. Here's a solution. Contact your Association and ask that it post a conspicuous "No Trespassing" sign on your property. For a nominal charge, the Association will take care of that matter for you.*

*The Association already provides its members with a policy of insurance that protects against liability from persons who may be injured on your land. Why not take the extra step of posting a "No Trespassing" sign? It may be just the deterrence that is needed to keep the uninvited off your land and to discourage dumping.*

*Law enforcement officers may arrest someone who is dumping on posted land. The penalty could be punishable as a third degree felony, depending on the situation".*

Due to the anticipated volume, we can do this for only

## **ADVERTISE YOUR LOT ON THE INTERNET FOR \$20.00**

\$75.00 per lot. If you have more than one lot together, we could install the sign between them for the same price. If the lots are not together there would be an additional charge of \$75.00 per lot. We will mail you a photograph of the sign on your lot(s) as proof of installation or we can e-mail a photograph, whichever you prefer. You can obtain this service by checking the appropriate box on the enclosed membership application or by any other means of ordering services as described in the Member Services article on page 6 of this newsletter.

*Below is an example of an absentee landowner who fell victim to dumping.*

## **FOR SALE BY OWNER SIGNS**

Are you having trouble selling your lot(s) through a realtor or on the internet? If so, you may want to consider having your Landowners Association install a *For Sale By Owner* sign on your vacant lot(s). We will put your phone number and/or email address on the sign. Any prospective buyers would call or email you directly. If you have an interested buyer, please feel free to contact our office and we can recommend a title company to assist you in the closing on the sale of your property. Due to the anticipated volume, we can do this for only \$75.00 per lot. If you have more than one lot together, we could install the sign between them for the same price. If the lots are not together there would be an additional charge of \$75.00 per lot. We will mail you a photograph of the sign on your lot(s) as proof of installation or email a photograph, whichever you prefer. Please allow 2 to 4 weeks to receive your photographs.

As more and more people utilize the internet as their primary source of information, placing your ad in a high profile website like **[www.AbsenteeLandowners.com](http://www.AbsenteeLandowners.com)**

significantly increases your exposure. We have received calls and e-mails from all over the country and even abroad, requesting information on lots. Several real estate brokers utilize this service to advertise land in Marion County. As the real estate market slows down, it is even more important for sellers to have the greatest possible exposure. This website will do this.

As more lots are listed on our site, it is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the single largest source of lots for sale in Marion County. As a result, prospective buyers as well as brokers, will go to our site first to find a lot because it provides much greater choice, both geographically and in price. Another reason our site is so attractive to sellers is that they can advertise for sale by owner which is not the case with the Multiple Listing Service which is only available to Realtors. This site is not intended to compete with brokers and we welcome brokers listings. When a lot is listed with a broker we show the broker's name, address and phone number instead of the owner's. This site is a good source for brokers looking for lots for prospective buyers as well. AbsenteeLandowners.com may well be the most effective and least costly way to advertise *and sell* your property.

The best thing about this service is the price. You can advertise your lot for one year on the World Wide Web for \$20.00 per lot. This is a special for members only. For non-members, we will place your ad on our site for one year at the very affordable price of \$50.00. You may have received solicitations from one or more of the land sharks preying on unsuspecting absentee landowners offering to sell or advertise your lot in Marion County. One such outfit charges hundreds of dollars to advertise your property on the internet. Don't be fooled by their wild claims of success. It's not so. You can place your ad on the internet through your Landowners Association and receive the same internet exposure or even better.

If you want to advertise your lot for sale on the Internet, just fill out the information sheet on the membership application and check the appropriate box. Non-members may advertise without becoming a member for \$50.00 per lot by checking the appropriate box and filling out the lot information sheet.

## RECENT LOT AND HOME SALES

Our members have a variety of services available through our office and related contacts. One of the most requested services to date is the **Recent Lot and Homes Sales** information. We provide up-to-date sales information available to our MEMBERS at no additional charge. There is a \$30 fee for this report for non-members. This information is necessary for all land owners, particularly absentee owners, to make informed decisions concerning their lot value. This is not an appraisal but it will show you what lots and homes sold for in your area recently.

Uninformed lot owners without access to the **Recent Lot and Home Sales** information unwittingly sometimes sell their land far below the going market price. These lot owners often become victims of opportunists. **In today's rapidly changing real estate market, it is more important than ever to know what nearby properties are selling for. Prices are changing monthly.** Once the recent sales information is available to the majority of lot owners, it then becomes difficult to find sellers to sell at ridiculously low prices. Once a bottom line price (the lowest price at which one can buy a lot in a given area) is established, then knowledgeable lot owners will achieve the highest prices in the market. Should real estate activity suddenly increase or decrease in an area, land values can change very fast. Before you sell your land, check with your Landowners Association. By getting top dollar for your lot when you sell, helps everyone. When owners sell cheaply it brings the market down. Reliable accurate information is the best tool we have to protect our investment.

One of our members was duped into accepting an offer for thousands of dollars below the current fair market value. However, after having up to date sales information from the Landowners Association, the member promptly canceled the sales contract.

## MEMBER COMMENTS

We are always interested in our members' concerns and opinions on the services we provide. The following are a few excerpts from some of our members' recent correspondence:

*Thank so much for protecting interest of absentee landowners. It is wonderful.*

Sincerely,  
D. Field

Patrick—super job! These are some of the most informative newsletters that I receive. They are to the point and don't contain a lot of unnecessary "fluff" which is so prevalent in other newsletters from other organizations. Thank you again for posting these— I for one really appreciate it.

Regards ,  
S. Bosse  
Madison AL

Dear Sir/Madam,  
Thanks to Mr. Donnelly for his great courage and interest in fighting for us absentee landowners. My continued appreciation to this office. Thank you all for your valiant effort.  
Yours Sincerely,

B. Harris  
Hollis NY.

Thanks in advance you are all doing a great job. On behalf of all Marion County absentee landowners. I do wish to thank you for all of your tedious effort and the hard work you do to make our lives so comfortable just to know that you people are there working so very hard for us.

I am one very grateful member.

J. Simpson  
Pembroke Pines FL.

Dear Mr. Donnelly,

You and your staff are doing a swell job- keep it up!

G. Poythress  
Saugerties NY.

## MEMBERSHIP TIME

A one year membership is only \$45.00. You can renew for two years for \$80.00 which gives you a \$10.00 discount. Marion County Absentee Landowners Association, Inc. was formed as a single legal entity

Lake Placid, NY

capable of defining objectives and implementing change. We are supported solely by our members. We represent only the interests of the **ABSENTEE** lot owner.

**Unfortunately, this is the last newsletter we can afford to send to those who do not renew their membership.** Our budget simply will not allow it. Our effectiveness depends on your support. The upcoming membership year runs from November 2009 to November 2010. Please make your check payable to Marion County Absentee Landowners Association, Inc. or MCALA in U.S. Funds. We will send your periodic newsletters informing you of matters affecting you as a lot owner. For no extra charge, you can choose to be an "e-member" and receive your newsletters via email and have the added benefit of receiving interim updates of current events as they are happening. You will also receive **FREE liability insurance** to protect you from claims arising from your ownership of vacant land, along with all the other valuable member services. We offer the advantage of charging anything on your Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover if you desire. If you choose this method, please be sure to sign your application and include your charge card expiration date. The membership fee and any other services we offer can also be charged to your credit card by telephone, if you choose to do so, or by calling 1-800-376-9045 or you can fax or email the request.

Property owners need a central source of competent information and representation in order to resolve common problems. The alternative is to face the complexities of government alone.

With your support, we will continue to act as your "watchdog", constantly monitoring developments that may affect your property, your investment and your rights.

Sincerely,

Patrick A. Donnelly, President

MARION COUNTY LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC. OR THIS NEWSLETTER DOES NOT ATTEMPT IN ANY WAY TO GIVE OR RENDER LEGAL ADVICE.  
REASONABLE CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO INSURE THE ACCURACY OF STATEMENTS CONTAINED WITHIN, BUT NO GUARANTEE IS MADE.