

Marion, Ohio [NewsForce](#) Investigates with [MarionWatch](#) (NFI MW:)

Our team has encountered several noteworthy cases recently. Some are highly disturbing and very concerning.

Despite an extensive series of articles while in partnership several years ago, many were unfortunately lost due to various issues. Nevertheless, we managed to preserve some articles, including one on the Marion City Auditor, and associated political chaos in multiple races. Recently, certain details have gone missing, prompting further investigation. While we delve into these matters, it is essential to re-release this significant piece from 2019. It discusses political maneuvering and complexities within the local political scene, which we have been monitoring since shortly after 2014. We took part in every political race and observed throughout the years. We have gathered a lot of data and met a lot of trusted friends locally and nationwide.

Both MarionWatch and NewsForce have extensively covered these topics. Observed behaviors include poor conduct and attacks within the council and other areas. During the Auditor race we discussed in the article, and other elections, numerous underhanded political tactics were documented by NewsForce and others. We remain committed to reporting on these critical issues for our Marion audience and look forward to sharing our findings.

As we finish up with some last minute edits on the latest updates on this office, please review the Auditor and Political Landscape Article below to understand the circumstances in 2019. The situation appears to have deteriorated significantly since then. We are currently receiving and assembling disturbing information regarding current events, which will be addressed in our forthcoming reports.

We also wanted to pay tribute to our beloved Coach Cooperider by re-releasing the article. Coach stepped out and became the face of our partnership several years ago. Tracey had been talking to MarionWatch for quite a while and decided he had seen enough of the games and other issues and went public. He was amazing, missed by many!

The salvaged article check sheet from 2019 has pictures and other data embedded into it. It also shows a lot of data about the addiction crisis and other areas of interest.

- [Salvaged check sheet and article.](#)

- [All communications with any officials.](#)

Article 2019:

Almost one year to the day that ABC 6 On Your Side and multiple other news agencies reported the resignation of the Marion County Clerk of Courts Julie Kagel, MONN has received information regarding multiple issues in another office in Marion County. This latest revelation adds to the mounting issues we have seen in recent years within Marion Government and or Marion Agencies, which are also discussed in the MONN Investigative Article.

[READ: Marion County Clerk of Courts resigns amidst numerous complaints \(VIA ABC 6 On Your Side\)](#)

Marion City Auditors Office which is currently ran by [Democrat Kelly Carr](#), has had widespread issues in the office dating back to at least 2009. According to the [Ohio State Auditors Website](#), brought to our attention by an inside source, these issues include various citations issued by the Ohio State Auditor for not filing timely reports, financial statement discrepancies, misappropriation of funds, unbalanced ledgers, multiple serious citations regarding CFR § 200.516, and other problems according to the inside sources who have spoken to us on conditions of anonymity. Information regarding CFR § 200.516 can be seen on [Cornell Law School's Website](#).

NOTE: ALL information from sources have been independently verified by MONN, and or our affiliates

Carr, who according to her social media account on Facebook, has been endorsed by Mayor Scott Schertzer. Scott Schertzer, a Democrat, who is also seeking re-election has been Mayor of the City of Marion, Ohio from 2008 to present, and was also a Council Member for the City of Marion, Ohio, from 1999-2008. Carr and Schertzer are both well-known high ranking members of the local Marion Democratic Party. Carr is seeking re-election in the November 5th, 2019 election against Republican Candidate Robert Landon. Landon, is currently elected to Marion City Council, and won his office against longtime incumbent Ralph Cumston in 2017. Cumston was elected to the office for 11 terms. Landon has been endorsed by multiple entities and individuals in Marion County including Marion Prosecutor Ray Grogan, former Senator Kevin Bacon, and former Marion Mayor Jack Kellogg. Upon MONN #MarionWatch receiving the inside source

documentation of the alleged auditor issues, we reached out to incumbents Marion City Auditor Carr, Mayor Schertzer, as well as Marion City Auditor Candidate Robert Landon, Marion Mayoral Candidate Sue McGowan, and Mayoral Candidate Kevin Norris on their official Marion Government Email Addresses (where applicable,) Facebook Campaign Pages, as well as their personal Facebook Profile Pages asking for statements regarding these findings noting that the story would be published on or about October 25th, 2019. Our original emails and other communications were made on October 17th, 2019.

Candidate for City Auditor Landon, along with Mayoral Candidates McGowan and Norris were quick to respond. MONN DID NOT receive statements from the incumbents as of the time this article was published.

Candidate for Marion City Auditor Robert Landon Issued the Following Statement:

"It's concerning to see the audit reports we have had for longer than a decade. In the private sector, I could be easily fired for that type of performance. It's time Marion elects new leadership that is experienced, authentic, and transparent. It's important for our community to know how their tax dollars are being spent. Our families work hard each day, and I will work hard for them each day as their next Marion City Auditor."

Candidate for Marion Mayor Kevin Norris Issued the Following Statement: "I appreciate you reaching out to me for a comment. However, at this time I would rather not comment as the record speaks for itself."

Candidate for Mayor Sue McGowan Issued the Following Statement: "I have said for a long time we have a \$56 million dollar budget, and what are we getting for the taxpayer dollar? Nothing this explains where the money is going with our elder (incumbent) leadership."

All three candidates expressed serious concern regarding these State Auditor Reports regarding Marion City Auditor's Office, calling them shocking. According to the State Auditor Documents, the findings of these audits are sent to various Marion City Officials which include Marion City Council, and would include the Marion Mayor Scott Schertzer, as well as the Marion City Auditor Office. Of those who responded to our inquiry, arguably the most important view comes from Candidate for Marion City Auditor Robert Landon whose Campaign Webpage States: "The Office of Marion City Auditor is a very important position to hold in Marion's City Government. The City Auditor is responsible for collection of income taxes, management of City

monies, providing the function of being the watchdog for the city, and more. The City Auditor is directly accountable to the residents he or she serves. The Office is independently elected by voters. Our community deserves to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent and know they can easily obtain that information through multiple avenues. I will bring my experienced leadership of business management and finance to the City Auditor's Office. I will work hard to provide greater access to information, accurate audits, streamlined processes, and dedication to uphold the watchdog status of the City Auditor's Office. I humbly ask for your support this November. Robert is a lifetime resident of Marion who is passionate about serving his community. He and his wife, Amanda, have three children. His strong family values have kept him here in his hometown. Robert is a graduate of Marion Harding and Tri-Rivers Career Center and specialized in Public Safety. He is an experienced leader having held various positions in finance, management, and marketing. In addition, he currently serves in the Ohio Military Reserve and as Director of Security at Apostolic Gospel Church, as well as volunteering with United Way of Marion County and the Marion Community Collaborative." Landon has been running on a platform of increased transparency and accountability to the taxpayers of Marion City, and notes a strong financial background, including management, with a proven record of finance industry excellence. Landon ran on a similar platform when he ran for City Council and has been a very vocal official in his Marion City Council Role. The following documents were sent to Carr, Schertzer, Landon, Norris, and McGowan, and were independently verified by MONN against the Ohio State Auditor Reports to ensure authenticity:

Looking Closer: Some notable findings are a [State Audit in 2016 \(for fiscal year 2015\)](#) in which an employee was prosecuted for stealing tens of thousands of dollars in funds, which the City Auditors Office was responsible for overseeing. The Audit Suggests that the discrepancy was found by the State Auditor. Thefts were committed by former City Auditor Employee Brenda Nwosu, and took place spanning several years beginning in 2011 and ending in 2014 with the prosecution of the official in 2014 - 2015 [Marion County Common Pleas Court Case 2014 CR0437](#). Despite this theft there were violations in financial control policies in several later reports, which according to the State Auditor may result in the: "Loss, misappropriation, theft, or diversion of assets and non-compliance with Federal Award Requirements and Council Policy." The aforementioned State Auditor Citations against the Marion City Auditor can be seen [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) the document regarding the theft can be seen [HERE](#), and are pictured below, along with the original reports from [2018](#) (page 10) and [2017](#) (page 10) and theft audit in 2016 for [fiscal year 2015](#) (page 10)

2018 Citations [1](#) , [2](#)

2017 Citations [1](#) , [2](#) , [3](#) ,

### 2015 Theft Finding

Other notable issues in multiple State Auditor Findings include citations by the State which were not fixed from previous audits, carrying over into the next years audit citations, as well as citations regarding timely filing of reports, with some reports being filed several months (or more) late. Some of these reports were filed more than 3 months late with some reports not being filed until the following year(s.) These findings are in direct contradiction to Marion City Auditors claims of flawless reporting performance. Late reporting, and citations being carried into the next year date back to at least 2009 and are present in most all other State Audits of the Marion City Auditor.

[The 2009 citations](#) indicate not only citations being carried into the next years audit citation list, but also mention that the Marion City's appropriations of [funds do not balance with funds available](#).

[In the 2010 State Audit](#), the Ohio State Auditor issued at least 9 citations ( [1](#) , [2](#) , ) in which violations were carried over to the next years audit citations and also issue citations for 2009 reports not being filed until April 2011. Also in the 2010 Audit, there were citations carried over from a previous audit issued regarding the employees under the responsibility of the Marion City Auditor not attending required training, various citations for breaching guidelines regarding investment funds maturity, and investment funds being held at financial institutions not domiciled in the State of Ohio - which would put funds in jeopardy in the event of the out of state bank taking financial losses, income taxes not being allocated to the appropriate funds as required, appropriations exceeding funds available, accounts not being properly monitored, City of Marion not following established policies regarding fund disbursement, transit department payroll being out of compliance - not following established procedures in accordance with U.S. Federal Government Guidelines, budgeting amounts in Marion's accounting system not in agreement with amounts set forth by Marion City Council, and other various citations, most being noted as "significant deficiencies" in violation of various laws or policies by the Ohio State Auditor.

[A 2013 Ohio State Audit](#) revealed 6 citations ( [1](#) , [2](#) , [3](#) , [4](#) , [5](#) ) carrying over to the following years audits with the citations including repeat citations for investment funds for the City of Marion, expenditures exceeding funds appropriated, citations regarding improper handling of grant accounts moneys, not properly expending grant money received, non-compliance of guidelines

regarding the City of Marion not making contributions of non-federal funds noting that an advancement made by the City of Marion to the airport in the amount of approximately \$67,000 had not been repaid causing issues in ledger balances, and various new citations. Due to the findings in the 2013, the Marion City Auditor was removed from the low-risk auditor list and placed on high risk.

[A 2015 Audit](#) (the report that first mentioned the theft) revealed that the Marion County Auditor was still considered a high risk audit, citations were issued for inadequate staffing for fire and emergency response, material weaknesses, issues with formula grants for rural areas, theft by an employee over several years, multiple late reports, and the State Auditor, speaking towards consequences of reports not being filed timely, noted that: "Failure to submit the report within the requested time schedule can result in the delay or withholding of Federal Funds." This warning by the Ohio State Auditor suggests that federal funds could be delayed or revoked due to reports not being filed in a timely manner.

State Audits of the Marion City Auditor's Office repeatedly mention inadequate staffing and or resources for emergency response departments and or agencies and examples can be found in at least the [2010](#), [2013](#), [2015](#) reports.

[A 2017 Audit](#) revealed multiple citations by the Ohio State Auditor including citations for material weaknesses in internal control reported for major federal programs, noted one in seven (14%) expenditures tested not following the proper method of small purchase procedures, improper internal controls in place to ensure compliance with Federal requirements - which include required procurement policies and procedures, not updating procurement policies in accordance with the Uniform Guidance requirements, citations for federal grant fund disbursement. In regard to the federal grant fund disbursement citations the Ohio State Auditor notes: "Failure to implement effective internal control procedures regarding cash management and to promptly disburse federal funds could result in over drawing the grant and being in noncompliance with the federal cash management requirements."

A 2018 Audit again issued citations for material weaknesses in internal control for major federal programs, findings under CFR § 200.516, noted "major problems" with Formula Grants for Rural Areas. Ohio State Auditor mentions citations for physical inventory of capital assets not being performed for the past TWO fiscal years, Marion City Capital Asset Listings not indicating the percentage of Federal participation in the project costs for the Federal Award under which property was acquired. Ohio State Audit again mentions these citations as having severe impact, and states that: "Failure to maintain appropriate capital asset records and have

adequate internal controls over capital assets may result in the loss, misappropriation, theft, or diversion of assets and noncompliance with federal award requirements and Council policy.”

**Other Unrelated Issues Discovered While Investigating:** While investigating the Marion City Auditor Reports sent by an inside source on conditions of anonymity, MONN was also made aware of a heated exchange between supporters of Candidate for 1st Ward Kai Meade, and his opponent Michael Saad, in which screenshots of what is being called by multiple sources “Internal Marion Utilities Computer Systems” was used in an effort to discredit Saad. The exchange on a Public Facebook Post involved finances or alleged bills owed by Saad, and suggested had not been paid. Saad responded and explained the situation having been caused by a previous tenant, posting photographs of receipts of payments made on the account. There were also mentions by multiple sources regarding a heated exchange on a Facebook Group Page dedicated to the Fairpark Community in Marion, in which there were multiple accusations against Saad with screenshots.

[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

MONN reached out to both Saad and Meade regarding these exchanges.

**Democrat Party Literature Endorsing Independent Candidate:** Another issue that MONN was made aware of by citizens while we were investigating the Auditor issues is a mailer that is being circulated in which Marion Democratic Party seems to be endorsing Independent Candidate(s.) This is after a move made by the local Democratic Party, against the advice of the Marion County Prosecutor in which a well known local democrat Mike Thomas filed a complaint, and attempted to have a Mayoral Candidate removed from the ballot for allegedly being affiliated with a specific political party. This, as the narrative goes, is said to be a violation of state law or policy because it proves that the independent candidate is a democrat. Marion Prosecutor Ray Grogan went on record cautioning the Board of Elections Vote without a hearing, sidestepping McGowans due process rights by saying, "In order for a protest to succeed, the protestor must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the petition was not filed with the party affiliation, or in this case lack of party affiliation, was not filed in good faith. You have to look at all the facts and circumstances surrounding that in an effort to determine whether or not it was made in good faith." The complaint was filed August 15th, 2019, and the deadline for such complaints was July 30th, 2019.

Earlier in 2019, Mayoral Candidate Susan McGowan announced that she would be running for office as an independent, and quickly began to receive pushback from the Democratic Party and local mainstream media. In one local article, Susan was accused of violations of laws or policies because she voted for a democrat in her ward, and was accused of being an undercover democrat of sorts, despite this claim being disproven. [According to Ohio Secretary of State records](#), McGowan voted in the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 elections/ primaries and did not declare an affiliation with any party, voting for a democratic candidate in 2014. Measures to remove McGowan from the ballot ultimately failed as her voting record shows no specific party affiliation, and the petition was filed late. McGowan told MONN that she “Votes for whoever is best for the job,” and stated that Marion “has too many career politicians collecting a paycheck and not doing much.” When we asked her to elaborate she stated, “taxpayer money is being wasted and managed poorly, and it seems like nobody wants to do anything unless it is close to an election, it’s sad.” McGowan pointed to her assertion that emergency responders are underfunded and or under staffed in multiple Marion City Reports. McGowan also expressed concern that the local mainstream media is endorsing incumbent candidate for mayor Scott Schertzer, and has featured several articles with Schertzer and Mayoral Candidate Kevin Norris, but have been reluctant to interview her. As of today the local mainstream media has yet to do an interview with McGowan or discuss anything about her platform, the only articles that MONN can find are regarding the attempt to have her removed from the ballot.

#### Past Issues Amplify in Marion Government and Agencies:

Marion County Clerk of Courts: These latest revelations into problems in Marion Government Leadership comes just one year after Marion County Clerk of Courts Julie Kagel stepped down after a severe deficiency in delinquent taxes estimated at \$8 million, severe backlog in processing felony records which may have allowed convicted felons to purchase firearms from a licensed firearms dealer - which Mayor Scott Schertzer and the Sheriff of Marion County Tim Bailey agreed that this issue was one of the most concerning problems, as well as other problems in the Clerk of Courts Office. Regarding the backlog and or mismanagement of cases and other issues, Mayor Schertzer was quoted by [6 On Your Side in 2018](#) as stating, “For at least the entirety of the 11 years that I’ve been in office I’ve been hearing about these issues.”

While Schertzer did call for a complete audit of the Clerk of Courts when the story broke, we have yet to find any documented evidence suggesting that Mayor Schertzer called for any investigations in the previous 10 years he had been in office, despite admitting that he knew about them. MONN has also not been able to find any documented evidence that any other



officials tried to contact State of Ohio Officials or other officials locally prior to the story breaking to help bring the Marion Clerk of Courts Office back under control.

Marion County Board of Elections: Marion County Board of Elections has been in the news multiple times over the past several years. These reports [include ballot counting errors](#) reported in 2018 by 6 On Your Side in which test runs of the ballot system indicated multiple errors in ballot counts. In the 6 On Your Side Article the question was raised regarding who entered the data and asked if someone in particular was at fault. The deputy director of Marion County's Board of Elections was said to have gone on record saying they did not have any definitive answers but had referred the matter to the Secretary of State John Husted's office.

Also in 2018, the Marion County Board of Elections Director John Meyer was accused of playing favorites in several media articles including [one by 10TV](#). The article stated Meyer had copied Republican Party Officials on dozens of Board of Elections Office related emails, a move that some suggested gave Republican Candidates an unfair edge. There is also mention of Meyer having devised a DropBox Cloud Storage location for "back-end communication." This move prompted Marion Officials to send inquiries to the Marion Prosecutor to ensure no laws were broken.

From the 10TV article regarding the Dropbox Storage: "In an August 5 email to the Republican Party Chair, Meyer writes of setting up a Dropbox file sharing channel for "back-end" communications. Glenn McEntyre: "What are you talking about by 'back-end communications?'" John Meyer: "Stuff about (Republican) Central Committee, not stuff related to the office. I know it sounds ominous, but it's not an ominous thing." Glenn McEntyre: "It's from your office email." John Meyer: "I know. and I did it on a Sunday afternoon at home. Yeah, probably shouldn't have used office email. I was in it, it was there, I was reading these other emails, and I sent it. It was a one-time thing." Carr is asking the Marion County Prosecutor to investigate whether any law has been broken. "If you're working and doing political stuff on taxpayer dollars, that is a misuse of funds," she said. Meyer says his actions are all above-board, and he has nothing to hide. Glenn McEntyre: "So what do you say to anybody who has questions or concerns?" John Meyer: "Please come in, sit down, have a cup of coffee, it's always here. Let's talk about it. Let me show you how I run the office."

In a [2017 article by The Columbus Dispatch](#), Marion County Republican Chairman John R Matthews II came under fire beginning in 2016 after an anonymous tip was given to authorities

stating that Matthews spent his days “sleeping and fundraising” for Gov. John Kasich’s presidential campaign while working as director of claims support for the state Industrial Commission, a job that paid him \$106,650 in 2015. The investigation determined that between Oct. 9, 2015, and Jan. 21, 2016, Matthews made or received 541 phone calls and sent 1,220 text messages that were related to Republican politics during work hours. The calls and messages went to Republican candidates and officials in Marion County and the 26th House District. Some of the correspondence also involved the Republican National Committee and political strategists. Ultimately Matthews pleaded guilty to, and found guilty of theft in office, a fourth-degree felony. He was given one year of probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$4,062 by Franklin County Common Pleas Court Judge Guy Reece.

Judge Ballenger, City Council, Mayor Budgeting Issues:

[The story of the spar between Judge Ballenger, City Council, Mayor Scott Schertzer, and other Marion Officials](#) is very well known in the Marion Community and has had extensive coverage by local media outlets. This involves a dispute between the Judge and various other Government Officials with can be read about on the [Ohio Supreme Court Website](#). The dispute was a long-drawn-out argument in which there were assertions made that possible laws and or ordinances were broken or would be in jeopardy of being broken due to the actions, or lack of actions by the mayor and or other Marion Officials. An excerpt from the official [Supreme Court Document states that:](#) "On January 2, 2019, Relator was copied on correspondence from the Mayor to City Council, which stated that the mayor had imposed a Line-Item Veto deducting \$100,000.00 from the amount appropriated by City Council for compensation and benefits of the Chief Probation Office (Exhibit 3). 14. On or about January 2, Judge Ballinger met with the Marion City Law Director and Marion County Prosecutor in an effort to resolve the conflict amicably. 15. When the Respondents did not agree to override the veto or pass a new ordinance, Relator hired counsel, who sent a letter to the mayor explaining the Relator’s position and the Court’s authority to order reasonable and necessary expenses (January 14, 2019, letter, attached as Exhibit 4). 16. The mayor did not respond to the January 14, 2019, letter, and to date, the Respondents have refused to reinstate the amounts ordered by the Relator. 17. On February 19, 2019, Judge Ballinger and Chief Probation Officer Tom Stotts attended a meeting of the Finance Committee of City Council and presented an overview of the reasons for the Court budget outlined in the Funding Order (see Affidavit of Tom Stotts and attachments). The Law Director refused to allow questions of Relator or Mr. Stotts from City Council members during the meeting. 18. Since that time, Court representatives have attended additional meetings of City Council to further explain the need for the funding originally agreed to by Council and 1 The amount in Relator’s order was a reduction from the amount discussed at the October 29 meeting; however, the agreed reduction was unrelated to any issue before

the Court. 4 subsequently vetoed by the mayor (see transcripts of meetings attached to Stotts Affidavit). 19. To date, City Council has failed or refused to pass an ordinance reinstating the funding ordered by the Court, due in part to the stated concern that the mayor would veto the ordinance. 20. The funding currently being used to pay the salary and benefits of the Chief Probation Officer and the benefits of five other probation officers is estimated to be depleted by late May or early June 2019. The reduction of funding imposed by Respondents will negatively impact the efficient continued operation of Probation Services to the areas served by the Court. 21. Respondents' refusal to appropriate the reasonable and necessary funds for the operation of the Court constitutes a violation of a duty specifically enjoined by law upon them."