



Alachua County Advisory Board Program

Rural Concerns Advisory Committee

**Rodney L. Clouser, Chair
Larry Hall, Vice Chair**

January 29, 2023

Honorable Anna Prizzia, Chair
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
12 SE 1st Street
Gainesville, FL 32601

Re: Support for Meat Processing and Training Facility

Dear Chair Prizzia,

At its meeting on January 17th, the County's Rural Concerns Advisory Committee (RCAC) received a presentation from Sean McLendon, the County's Economic Development and Food System Manager, on the proposed meat processing and training facility for Alachua County. He has made two presentations on this subject and provided one progress report follow-up with RCAC. Review and monitoring of the County's value-added food service infrastructure, such as this meat processing and training facility, is one of the objectives identified in the Committee's annual workplan. We have appreciated Mr. McLendon's willingness to follow-up and answer questions from the Committee.

Following the January 17th presentation by Mr. McLendon and questions and discussion, the Committee approved by a vote of 9-1 a motion for me to send this letter of support from the RCAC for the development of the proposed meat processing and training facility, and for the legislative delegation to pursue the funding requested by the County to complete the project.

The facility will support the County's agricultural economy by serving small to mid-scale local ranchers, providing direct employment for up to 12 people, and indirectly supporting many more regional jobs; the total economic impact of the facility is expected to be between \$10-\$15 million per year. It will also provide opportunities for vocational training in coordination with UF IFAS, Santa Fe High School Academy of AgriScience, and Eastside High School Institute of Culinary Arts, and will help create a more robust career pathway for the next generation in local food production.

There is a growing demand for local foods and food security, and the facility will provide a local source of USDA-inspected meat needed by the County's retail and wholesale markets, including locally owned and operated grocery stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, and small food outlets. It will give the North Central Florida region an opportunity to be known for another commodity of its high quality, locally sourced food products.

It is understood by RCAC that "fiscal wants/needs" are most often greater than the "fiscal availability of funds." However, Alachua County also benefits from a strong and diversified economy and a well-

trained/educated workforce and that includes agriculture! We thank you for considering the views and input of the Rural Concerns Advisory Committee on this matter.

Based on the benefits to Alachua County identified in the letter, the RCAC encourages and recommends that the County Commission support the development of the proposed meat processing and training facility.

Respectfully,

Rodney L. Clouser

Rodney L. Clouser PhD, Chair
Alachua County Rural Concerns Advisory Committee

cc: Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
Michele L. Lieberman, County Manager
Sylvia Torres, County Attorney
Sean McLendon, County Economic Development and Food System Manager
Jeffrey L. Hays, Acting Director, Growth Management
Ken McMurry, Planner, Growth Management