

DRAFT
Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2024

4:00 pm

Extension Conference Room

22712 W Newberry Rd., Newberry, FL

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Jordan Callaham (Vice Chair), Janet Hearn, Micky McMillan, George Mells, John Nix, Juan Salva, Dr. Cindy Sanders, Amy Van Scoik

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management

Regina Williams, Planning Assistant, Growth Management

Shane Williams, Stormwater Engineer, Environmental Protection

PUBLIC PRESENT:

None

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm. There were 7 members physically present at the start of the meeting, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum physically present under County Advisory Board Guidelines. The Chair recognized that there were no members of the public present but that, if any arrived, public comment would be taken at the appropriate points on the agenda. He said that, per the County Advisory Board Guidelines, Mr. Salva as Alternate member and physically present can vote today.

Ms. Van Scoik and Mr. Nix joined the meeting at 4:13 pm.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Chair Clouser asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Motion was made by Dr. Sanders to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. Hearn.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

3. New Business

3.1 Impact of Climate on Alachua County's Agriculture and Rural Lands – Shane Williams, Storm Water Engineer, Environmental Protection

Mr. Williams gave a presentation on the County's climate vulnerability analysis with a focus on the rural and agricultural sectors of the County. He discussed potential local impacts of climate change to crops; water and fertilizer use; groundwater and surface water; drought, rainfall, and flooding; soil erosion; wildfire risk; and in-migration and the wildland-urban interface. He gave an overview of the County's current climate action planning process, and State requirements and programming regarding critical infrastructure vulnerability, adaptation, and implementation.

There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding the importance of using local crops in the analysis, current effects of climate extremes on local crops, current research and use of reduced water and fertilizer, and groundwater and wells data. There were also questions and discussion by Committee members regarding agricultural work heat-related illnesses, protections, training, and the recent Florida state preemption of related local government requirements; agricultural economic issues; the potential for protection of agricultural lands from development; and the potential for infrastructure adaptations.

4. Approval of minutes for 03-19-2024 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to approve the minutes for the 03-19-2024 meeting; seconded by Ms. Callahan.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

5. Attendance Report

Mr. McMurry said the current Attendance Report showed all members in compliance with the attendance policy at this time.

He said there are 3 current vacancies and a new application was received for the Actively Involved in Agriculture and/or Silviculture vacancy. He said that application should be going to the County Commission on May 14th and if appointed there would be a new member by the next RCAC meeting in May.

Mr. Salva said that this would be his last meeting due to upcoming military service. Ms. Van Scoik asked whether the County distributes information on RCAC to the public, for example at farmers markets or the Extension Office. Mr. McMurry said the County currently advertises advisory committee vacancies on the County website and social media. Chair Clouser said the annual Farm Bureau dinner could be another opportunity and he encouraged members to let the community know about the current vacancies on the Committee.

6. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser asked staff for any follow up on the Committee motion at the April meeting that staff should talk with Andi Christman about the possibility of having a joint meeting with Rural Concerns Advisory Committee and the Land Conservation Board. Mr. McMurry said that they talked with Ms. Christman, and she could come back to the Committee in May and August with updates on the development of the County agricultural lands protection strategy and how RCAC can participate and provide input. There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding issues of agricultural sector viability, long-term planning, business modeling, and other economic strategies.

7. Committee Members Comments

Ms. Hearn said that the County Commission is considering placing the single member district voting issue back on the ballot this November. Ms. Callahan asked if RCAC could get an update on high-speed internet in the County and Mr. McMurry said he would ask Jim Woodard if he could come back to the Committee. He said that staff had attached to today's agenda packet a list of weight-restricted County roadways and bridges as requested at the April meeting.

8. Public Comments

There were no public present.

9. Next Meeting

May 21st at Alachua County Health Department

10. Adjournment

Chair adjourned meeting at 5:34 pm.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously