

**Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Date: February 20, 2024
Time 4:00 pm
Community Support Services, Classroom A
218 SE 24th St., Gainesville, FL 32641

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Janet Hearn, Micky McMillan, George Mells, John Nix, Juan Salva

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jordan Callaham, Dr. Cindy Sanders, Amy Van Scoik

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management
Regina Williams, Planning Assistant, Growth Management
Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, Growth Management
Andi Christman, Land Conservation Program Manager, Environmental Protection

PUBLIC PRESENT:

None

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm. There were 6 members physically present, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum physically present under County Advisory Board Guidelines. He said that, per the County Advisory Board Guidelines, Mr. Salva as Alternate member and physically present can vote today.

2. Approval of the Agenda

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

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

3. Welcome New Member

Chair Clouser welcomed new member Micky McMillan. She introduced herself including a summary of her background and experience with agricultural activities.

4. New Business

4.1 Alachua County's Land Conservation Program: Protection of Water Resources, Wildlife Habitat, and Developing Agricultural Land Protection Strategy – Andi Christman, Environmental Program Manager, Environmental Protection Dept.

Ms. Christman said she is the manager of the Alachua County Land Conservation program also known as the Alachua County Forever program. She gave an overview of the sales tax funding for that program and a presentation on general land conservation strategies the County is implementing with the funds; an agricultural land protection strategy; and the management of Alachua County Forever properties, including business plans for timber harvesting, cattle grazing and hunting leases.

There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding management and use of agricultural land protected through purchase, the valuation and payment methods, working with heirs properties, and the availability of draft agricultural protection strategy maps. Ms. Christman said that as the draft agricultural land protection strategy goals are developed there will be public workshops before they go to the County Commission and she would share that information with the RCAC. There was additional discussion regarding the economic viability of the local agricultural industry, and the influence of geography, geology, and land use and transportation planning on agricultural protection and development.

4.2 Discussion of RCAC 2024 Meeting Scheduled

Chair Clouser asked if there were any objections to postponing the item to the next meeting, and there were none.

5. Approval of minutes for 01-16-2024 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to approve the minutes for the 01-16-2024 meeting; seconded by Mr. Nix.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

6. Attendance Report

Mr. McMurry said the current Attendance Report showed all members in compliance with the attendance policy at this time. He said the Attendance Report is always sent out with the meeting materials and that if members have any questions, they should ask staff. He said there are now 9 current positions filled on the Committee and 3 vacancies, which are posted on the County website and social media.

7. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser said he is scheduled to present the RCAC Workplan to the County Commission at their regular meeting the following Tuesday. He said he is still interested in the potential for periodic joint meetings for County advisory committees that have overlapping areas of focus. He said the Alachua County Youth Fair and Livestock Show was coming up February 29 – March 5 and encouraged Committee members to attend.

8. Committee Members Comments

Mr. Mells asked about the follow up on his previous questions regarding the inability to retrieve and recycle items at the County’s Archer Rural Collection Center and residents from outside Alachua County using County waste collection facilities. Mr. McMurry gave information from Gus Olmos, Director of Solid Waste and Resources Recovery, that scavenging is not allowed at any of the solid waste facilities, due primarily to safety issues; and all County Rural Collection Centers have a small reuse building where residents can donate and pick up items for free with the exception of Archer, however, upgrades are under consideration for that facility. He said he would follow up on the question of outside residents.

Mr. Nix asked if the Committee could have a discussion on the Transportation Capital Improvements Program. Chair Clouser said the Committee has recently had questions about that program, especially regarding implementation and the potential for changes, and asked if the Committee could get an update on it soon; Mr. McMurry said he would ask Public Works staff about it. Ms. McMillan asked about weight restrictions to protect County roads. Mr. Nix asked for a presentation about Alachua County’s Climate Vulnerability Analysis; Chair Clouser said that could be a potential meeting topic.

9. Public Comments

There were no public present.

10. Next Meeting

March 19, 2024, at the Alachua County Extension Office, Newberry

11. Adjournment

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. McMillan.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

Chair Clouser called the meeting to a close at 5:50 pm.

APPROVED 3-19-2024