

# **Rural Concerns Advisory Committee**

## **Annual Workplan and Accomplishments Report: FY2023-2024**

**Chair:** Dr. Rodney Clouser

**Board Liaison:** Ken McMurry, Planner, Growth Management

**Staff Support:** Ben Chumley, Regina Williams, and other departments as requested for presentations

### **Brief History of Committee**

The Committee was established by Resolution 03-34 on April 8, 2003 to provide guidance and advice to the Board regarding rural concerns and issues within Alachua County. The Committee has been extended by the BoCC five times, the most recent of which occurred on June 25, 2019, where Resolution 19-66 granted the Committee a six-year extension to December 31, 2025.

### **Mission Statement**

The responsibilities of the Advisory Committee shall be to:

- A. Establish the importance of our rural, unincorporated agricultural and historic settlements;
- B. Assist in the development and evaluation of policies and programs affecting the rural areas of the County;
- C. Represent the rural areas in the County's various community planning processes and hearings; and
- D. Assist in the recognition and determination of the needs of the County's rural residents and advising the Board accordingly.

### **Prior Year Accomplishments**

#### **Held 10 meetings/workshops through September 19, 2023**

- **Received presentations and provided input on:**
  - 10/18/22 Discussion on Alachua County Pavement Management System – Ramon Gavarrete, Director, Public Works Dept.
  - 11/15/22 Presentation on current rural law enforcement issues – Deputy Perry Koon, Rural Services Unit, Alachua County Sheriff's Office
    - Update on text amendment to the Alachua County Unified Land Development Code, adding Sec. 404.72 "Farm Stay" – staff
    - Update on ordinance requiring Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) to provide funding for road and capital maintenance for future residential developments – staff
    - Committee discussion of interest and direction on potential economic impact study of agriculture in Alachua County

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- 1/17/23 Updates related to County agricultural economic development efforts including meat processing facility and Small-Producer Agriculture Capital Support Grant Program – Sean McLendon, Economic and Food Systems Manager, Office of Sustainability, Equity, and Economic Development Strategies
- 2/21/23 Regulation and permitting of tourism, events, and overnight stays in rural unincorporated Alachua County – Holly Banner, Zoning Administrator, Alachua County Growth Management Department  
  
Updates related to 2022 Alachua County Agritourism Conference and agritourism planning – Jessica Hurov, Tourism Development Manager, Alachua County Visitors and Convention Bureau
- 3/21/23 Alachua County Broadband Update – James Woodard, Broadband Project Manager, Alachua County Office of Management and Budget
- 4/18/23 Discussion of economic feasibility of operation of the proposed Meat Processing and Training Facility
- 5/16/23 Follow up discussion of economic feasibility of operation of the proposed Meat Processing and Training Facility  
  
Update on budgeting and collection of 0.5% public infrastructure surtax approved by Alachua County voters November 8, 2022 – staff
- 6/20/23 Updates on the draft Request for Proposals contract and process for the proposed Meat Processing and Training Facility, and Small-Producer Agriculture Capital Support Grant Program – Sean McLendon, Economic and Food Systems Manager, Office of Sustainability, Equity, and Economic Development Strategies
- 8/15/22 Pavement Management Program, Transportation CIP, and use of infrastructure surtax funds – Brian Kauffman, Assistant Director, Public Works Dept.
- 9/19/23 Review and discussion of proposed amendments to the Alachua County Unified Land Development Code – Angeline Jacobs, Planner, Growth Management Dept.
- **Discussed and took action on Committee Items:**
  - 10/18/22 Nominations and elections of officers
  - 4/18/23 Discussion of RCAC upcoming meeting schedule and potential alternate locations
  - 5/16/23 Follow up discussion of RCAC upcoming meeting schedule and potential alternate locations
  - 9/19/23 Review and approval of Annual Workplan and Accomplishments Report: FY2023-2024
- **Made recommendation to BoCC:**
  - 1/17/23 Letter in support of 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.

## **Goals & Objectives for Upcoming Year**

**The Rural Concerns Advisory Committee goals and objectives will be focused around three “pillars” of issues/concerns:**

- I. Rural Health and Service Delivery,**
- II. Rural Economic Development, and**
- III. Rural Policy Concerns**

The focus of the goals and objectives for 2023-24 is to educate the advisory committee on potential topics of concern in rural areas of Alachua County in order to be prepared for emerging issues of importance if input is needed and to offer suggestions when appropriate.

### **I. Rural Health and Other County Service Delivery**

- A. Review and solicit presentations on health services and delivery of those services and grant opportunities in Alachua County rural communities/cities/towns (Alachua County Health Dept and UF Mobile Outreach Clinic)
- B. Explore broadband opportunities/partnerships and limitations in rural Alachua County, related to expansion of telemedicine to rural and underserved communities and opportunities for alternative financing including grants and guaranteed loans.
- C. Continued discussion of litter issues/concerns in Alachua County and right-of-way maintenance
- D. Review of County solid waste program collection and providers
- E. Review of issues concerning Alachua County Animal Services

### **II. Rural Economic Development**

- A. Increase public awareness of the scope, size and importance of agriculture and ag related industry in Alachua County – land, labor, taxes, prevention of economic leakages and exports of County-related agricultural products, including procure or recommend completion of economic impact study
- B. Advise BoCC on importance of additional funding on scope, size and importance of the County rural roads and bridge system for agriculture-related prosperity
- C. Review and monitor local food systems, including the new interlocal agreement with the City of Gainesville
- D. Review and monitor value-added food service infrastructure, including potential new meat processing facility in the County
- E. Continue conversation about small business grants and/or support in rural areas including those bringing services listed in ‘Rural Health & Service Delivery’ topic, and including the County’s Small-Producer Agriculture Capital Support (SMAACA) Grant program

### **III. Rural Policy Concerns**

- A. Continue education efforts for the BoCC and citizens of Alachua County on agricultural issues and other issues affecting the rural area including support of local markets, local farmers and local food production including limited resource producers
- B. Provide input where appropriate on the following, including but not limited to:
  - Feral hog management
  - Invasive species control programs conducted by the County
  - Effective means of enforcing rules and rights relating to private roads and easements in the rural area
- C. Continue to promote and coordinate education of Best Management Practices for agriculture producers, governmental organizations and citizens of Alachua County, including State guidelines
- D. Stay abreast of law enforcement and EMS services relating and critical to the rural area
- E. Request update from Alachua County Property Appraiser's office on Florida State Use Value Assessment Law and application in Alachua County
- F. Investigate farmland preservation programs/areas in surrounding counties
- G. Discuss a potential information gathering methodology to integrate rural concerns as included in the Committee Mission Statement, to "Assist in the recognition and determination of the needs of the County's rural residents and advising the Board accordingly."
- H. Make recommendations to BOCC on any Agricultural Issues and other issues affecting the rural area and emerging issues in the rural area and at the rural-urban fringe including review of options and funding sources for improving rural to urban transportation systems
- I. Monitor the Comprehensive Plan as well as implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and Unified Land Development Code on rural lands and relating to agriculture and local food production
- J. Continue discussion of energy conservation and generation methods that may impact the agriculture community and/or quality of life in the rural area
- K. Provide input where appropriate on septic systems (update on new septic system regulations in rural area)

#### **Other Potential Concerns include:**

- Continue to review and comment on management of Alachua County Forever properties, including development and implementation of business plans for timber harvesting, cattle grazing and hunting leases
- Provide input where appropriate on the following, including but not limited to:
  - County water supply issues
  - Stormwater issues
  - Fire services issues
  - Integration of emergency response systems for the rural area