

**Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

May 21, 2024

4:00 pm

Community Support Services, Conference Room A

218 SE 24th St., Gainesville, FL 32641

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Jordan Callaham (Vice Chair), Janet Hearn, Micky McMillan, George Mells, John Nix, Missy Norman, Dr. Cindy Sanders

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

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:

Annie Moscato

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. There were 7 members physically present, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum physically present under County Advisory Board Guidelines. Chair Clouser welcomed the member of the public.

Mr. Nix joined the meeting at 4:04 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 Mr. Nix.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

3. Welcome New Member

Chair Clouser welcomed new member Missy Norman. She introduced herself including a summary of her background and experience with silvicultural activities, followed by each member briefly introducing themselves.

4. Old Business

4.1 Update on Alachua County Agricultural Land Protection Strategy – Andi Christman, Environmental Program Manager, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department

Ms. Christman gave an overview of the existing Alachua County Forever program and its land conservation strategies. She said the Agricultural Land Protection Strategy is being modeled after the Alachua County Forever program but will provide a better opportunity for direct agricultural land protection; will use Wild Spaces Public Places sales tax funds; and does not address all needs for agricultural industry and land protection in the County but is focused on incorporating agricultural lands into the land conservation program.

She discussed the planned implementation timeline; draft mission statement, property ranking matrix, and land suitability GIS model; stakeholder outreach; citizen advisory board; easement funding partners; types of staff recommendations to be presented to the County Commission; and opportunities for input from RCAC and other individuals.

There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding use of the sales tax funding, valuation of easements, flexibility in changing crops, role of silviculture, and the land ranking system. There were also questions and discussion by Committee members regarding other agricultural protection strategies addressing economic issues, role of the program in maintaining viability of agriculture, landowner motivations to participate, and other Florida counties with similar programs. Ms. Moscato said landowners often choose to preserve a family agricultural legacy despite the loss of financial compensation. Ms. Christman said anyone is welcome to send her additional comments.

5. Approval of minutes for 04-16-2024 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to approve the minutes for the 04-16-2024 meeting; seconded by Ms. McMillan.

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 about their status, they should ask staff. He said there are 3 current vacancies, and a new application was received for the At Large vacancy.

7. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser asked Dr. Sanders for an update on the broadband local technology planning team. She said the local team for our 5-county area is meeting again monthly starting in May. She said several counties including Alachua County have received broadband funding since the team last met.

Chair Clouser asked if he could work with staff on the upcoming meeting agenda and there were no objections. He said that members could also email staff with any agenda suggestions.

8. Committee Members Comments

There were no Committee member comments.

9. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

10. Next Meeting

July 16th at the Extension Office.

11. Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Nix to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Dr. Sanders.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Clouser called the meeting to a close at 5:52 pm.

Chair Clouser called the meeting to a close at 5:40 pm.

Approved July 16, 2024