

**Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

July 16, 2024

4:00 pm

Extension Auditorium

22712 W Newberry Road, Newberry, FL 32669

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Jordan Callaham (Vice Chair), Leah Compton, Janet Hearn, Micky McMillan, George Mells, John Nix, Dr. Cindy Sanders, Brent Weisman

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Missy Norman, Amy Van Scoik

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management

Regina Williams, Planning Assistant, Growth Management

Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, Growth Management

PUBLIC PRESENT:

none

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. There were 8 members physically present, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum physically present under County Advisory Board Guidelines.

Mr. Nix joined the meeting at 4:35 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. Mells.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Welcome New Members

Chair Clouser welcomed new members Brent Weisman and Leah Compton. Mr. Weisman introduced himself, including his background and experience with natural and cultural resource management. Ms. Compton introduced herself, including her background and experience with behavioral health, service on healthcare boards, and rural issues.

4. Old Business

4.1 Update and discussion of Alachua County Agricultural Land Protection Strategy

Chair Clouser gave an introduction on background and activity related to the Alachua County Agricultural Land Protection Strategy, including recent RCAC meeting discussions and a County Commission workshop on June 4th. He said the item is currently scheduled to go back to the Commission on August 27th after the next RCAC meeting on August 20th. He said the RCAC could focus on specific issues and concerns and could provide informal input or a formal chair letter to the Commission. Mr. McMurry gave a brief summary of the agenda item backup material on the June 4th County Commission Special Meeting discussion on the Agricultural Land Protection Strategy.

Chair Clouser opened the floor for discussion. There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding the proposed Agricultural Land Protection Strategy, including clarification of its long-term goals relative to the County's overall land conservation program, the basis for the goals in local agricultural data, how the ranking criteria and funds will accomplish these goals, and the relationship with State agricultural protection programs such as the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. There were also questions and discussion by Committee members regarding the public participation process, the incorporation of local farmers' and producers' perspectives and needs, long-term agricultural viability on purchased easements, and economic issues that could limit landowners' participation.

Mr. Weisman made a motion that Chair Clouser send a letter to the County Commission summarizing in a positive tone the Committee's concerns, in advance of Ms. Christman's next visit to the RCAC meeting on Aug 20th; seconded by Mr. Nix. There was discussion regarding specifying that more work needs to be done on the ranking criteria and consideration of the relationship with State agricultural protection programs such as the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program. Chair Clouser asked that staff also distribute any signed letter to Ms. Christman and to the RCAC members. Dr. Sanders called the question for a vote.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously (9-0).

5. Approval of minutes for 05-21-2024 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to approve the minutes for the 05-21-2024 meeting; seconded by Dr. Sanders.

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 is one member not in attendance that will need to attend the next meeting to remain in compliance with the Board attendance policy. He said Ms. Callaham's term will be ending in September and that it will be advertised online soon.

7. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser gave an update on the broadband Local Technology Planning Team (LTPT). He said it is meeting each month and he is trying to get more information on its role in broadband funding as related to the goals of local service provision. Dr. Sanders said the LTPT started as a comprehensive 5-county team, local funding was awarded to providers, and now it has resumed meeting but the objectives may have changed.

There were questions and discussion by Committee members regarding the current status of local rural service, recent progress in service provision, the cost-of-service connection per customer, and local funding.

8. Committee Members Comments

Chair Clouser asked if there were any issues members would like to bring up. Mr. Nix said roads near Hawthorne and Micanopy are getting worse and traffic is increasing.

Chair Clouser said that members could also email staff with any agenda suggestions.

9. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

10. Next Meeting

August 20th at the Health Dept.

11. Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Nix to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms. Compton.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Clouser called the meeting to a close at 5:46 pm.

APPROVED 8-20-2024