

DRAFT
Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2025

4:00 pm

Extension Auditorium

22712 W Newberry Road, Newberry, FL 32669

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Micky McMillan (Vice Chair), Jacobi Bedenfield, Lyman Conover, Janet Hearn, Tyrone Johnson, Missy Norman, Dr. Cindy Sanders, Brent Weisman

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Leah Compton, John Nix, 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:

Julie Burger

David Hodge

Gailen Hodge

Kevin Lesser

Sarah Luther

Raulie Raulerson

Curt Williams

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:03 pm. There were 7 members present, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum under County Advisory Board Guidelines. He said that, per the County Advisory Board Guidelines, Mr. Johnson as Alternate member and physically present can vote today. Chair Clouser welcomed the members of the public, who briefly introduced themselves, and said that public comment would be taken at appropriate points on the agenda.

Ms. Norman joined the meeting at 4:10 pm; Mr. Conover joined the meeting at 4:20 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. Welcome New Members

Chair Clouser welcomed new members Jacobi Bedenfield and Tyrone Johnson. Mr. Bedenfield said he would be serving in the Residing in the Unincorporated Area position and shared his background, education, and experience in agriculture. Mr. Johnson said he would be serving in the Alternate position and shared his experience as a local investor and his current service on the County's Housing Authority Board. Mr. Conover said he would be serving in the Farm Bureau position and shared his background, education, and experience in agriculture.

4. New Business

4.1 Alachua County Agricultural Tax Classification Assessment Process

– Rhyder Smith, Director of Field Operations; Jakob Green, Agriculture Appraiser – Alachua County Property Appraiser's Office

Chair Clouser said that this item was coming before the Committee due to community interest, while recognizing that the Property Appraiser's Office is independent from the County Commission. Mr. Smith gave a presentation on agricultural classification, classification factors in Florida Statutes, policies and guidelines, and current local classification statistics.

There were questions from Committee members regarding interpretation of acceptable practices, best management practices, certification of silviculture operations, timing of new operations, changes in ownership, changes to development uses. There were questions from members of the public regarding best management practices, seasonal timing issues, and cover crops and soil building.

5. Old Business

5.1 Confirm RCAC 2025 Meeting dates and locations

Mr. McMurry presented a draft 2025 meeting dates calendar based on the Committee's 2024 meeting dates and locations. Chair Clouser recommended that the Committee take breaks in December, in either June or July, and potentially in one other month depending on issues and agendas, for a total of 9 or 10 meetings for the year; and meet at the Health Dept. location for the 2nd meeting of each quarter. He asked if there were any objections and there were none.

6. Approval of minutes for 11-19-2024 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Hearn to approve the minutes for the 11-19-2024 meeting; seconded by Ms. McMillan.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

7. 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 that staff would follow up as needed with those members who are absent today.

8. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser said he would be presenting the RCAC annual report to the County Commission and asked if there had been confirmation of a meeting date. Mr. McMurry said that the presentation is scheduled for the March 25th Commission meeting.

9. Staff Updates

Mr. McMurry said that, per discussion with Chair Clouser, this new regular agenda item will include information on current topics in follow up to Committee request or that staff identifies as relevant to the Committee’s mission. He gave information on the new Agricultural Land Protection Strategy board and positions; Chair Clouser encouraged any interested RCAC members to apply.

Mr. McMurry gave information on a job opening for a new County Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator position; Chair Clouser asked members to let anyone who may be qualified know. He gave information on the County Commission 2025 legislative priorities, including projects with rural and agricultural funding requests, and said he would follow up with Committee members with information on the Farm Bureau’s current Farm Bill priorities.

Mr. McMurry said the February 18th RCAC meeting would include Sean McLendon on the County’s Climate Action Plan chapter on Agriculture and Food Security, food hub project, and small producer grant program.

10. Committee Members Comments

Mr. Weisman asked about any updates on the issue of coordination on land use, development, and zoning issues between the County and municipalities. Mr. McMurry said staff are working on the issue and could bring an update as it progresses.

Ms. McMillan asked about the County charter and the relationship of municipality and County regulations such as natural resource protection. Mr. Chumley said there is a County Growth Management area where County land use regulations apply, and there are certain County-wide natural resources protections. He said the County Environmental Protection

Department could provide more information on the requirements and process for natural resource protection. Ms. McMillan asked if any input was needed for the Chair's March 25th Board presentation; Chair Clouser said to pass ideas along to staff or bring them to the February 18th meeting. Ms. McMillan asked about refuse and dumping issues in the County.

Dr. Sanders gave an update on an odor problem last month in the northern part of the County. She said it was caused by poultry litter spread on agricultural land.

11. Public Comments

The public that were present left the meeting following the tax classification item; there were no further public comments.

12. Next Meeting

Next Meeting – February 18th @ Alachua County Health Dept.

13. Adjournment

Motion was made by Ms. Norman to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Dr. Sanders.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Clouser called the meeting to a close at 5:51 pm.