

DRAFT
Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2025

4:00 pm

Extension Auditorium

22712 W Newberry Road, Newberry, FL 32669

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person: Dr. Rodney Clouser (Chair), Micky McMillan (Vice Chair), Jacobi Bedenfield, Lyman Conover, Janet Hearn, John Nix, Missy Norman, Dr. Cindy Sanders, Amy Van Scoik

Virtual: Tyrone Johnson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Brent Weisman

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management

Ivy Bell, Senior Planner, Growth Management

PUBLIC PRESENT:

None

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm. There were 8 members present in person and one present virtually, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum under County Advisory Board Guidelines. He said that there were no members of the public present but that, if any arrived, public comment would be taken at the appropriate points on the agenda.

Ms. Norman joined the meeting at 4:06 pm.

Chair Clouser said that Mr. Johnson had made a request to the County Equal Opportunity Office for a disability accommodation, which was approved, so he is attending virtually today. He said that the Committee had previously stopped offering a virtual option in 2023 but requests for a disability accommodation could be made to the County EO office. He said that Mr. Johnson as Alternate member 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. Norman.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

3. New Business

3.1 County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Update – Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management

Mr. McMurry gave a presentation on the County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Update including an overview of the County's comprehensive plan and elements, future land use map and urban cluster, planning and zoning process, state requirements for comprehensive plan and evaluation, and the County's local process including issues scoping, plan amendments, and timeline. He said that a major component is public outreach and input, that any recommendations or comments are welcome today, and that staff can also follow up in the coming months.

There were questions and discussion from Committee members regarding public notice of zoning, land use, and development plan proposals, and the process and timeline for their approval. There were additional questions and discussion regarding the comprehensive plan and the frequency of evaluation and updates, the County's urban growth boundary, continuation of support for local agriculture and small farms, current rural and agricultural policies, intergovernmental coordination, and maintaining the contribution of agriculture to the local economy. Mr. McMurry shared on the screen and discussed agriculture-related adopted comprehensive plan policies and the future land use map.

Ms. Norman asked for staff assistance in highlighting areas of the comprehensive plan related to agriculture; Mr. McMurry said staff could excerpt those sections and follow up with the Committee. Chair Clouser asked that the County's new Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator visit RCAC soon regarding relevant policy review and updates; Mr. McMurry said he would reach out to them about that.

4. Old Business

4.1 Confirm RCAC 2025 meeting dates

Chair Clouser said the Committee needs to plan its meeting breaks for this year. He asked Ms. McMillan to temporarily take over as Chair and she agreed.

Chair Clouser moved that the Committee not meet in June, September, and December this year unless there is an urgent need to address; seconded by Dr. Sanders. There was discussion of how the Committee has previously scheduled breaks, and the scheduling of expected topics for the remainder of the year including approval of the annual work plan.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

5. Approval of minutes for 03-18-2025 meeting

Motion was made by Ms. Norman to approve the minutes for the 03-18-2025 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 about their status, they should ask staff. He said that there are two applications for the currently vacant Member At Large position scheduled to go to the County Commission on May 13th and briefly summarized the applicants' information.

7. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser gave a summary of his presentation of the annual RCAC workplan and update to the County Commission and the subsequent discussion, and said it went well.

8. Staff Updates

Mr. McMurry said that he talked with Sheriff Deputy Cary Gallop about addressing the specific questions of the RCAC at the upcoming May meeting. There were questions and discussion from Committee members regarding the possibilities of a trail for horses and ATVs between Alachua and Newberry and of a horse crossing on CR 234 near Rochelle, and crash data on SR 26 near Melrose; Mr. McMurry said he would follow up with appropriate staff for more information.

Mr. McMurry said that there is a County Commission special meeting scheduled for June 3rd to include discussion of intergovernmental coordination and chickens for personal use in residential zoning districts. He said staff are currently scheduled to take draft language regarding regulation of agritourism offsite impacts to the April 22nd County Commission meeting for authorization to advertise a public hearing; he said he could share the draft language at an upcoming RCAC meeting for comments.

Mr. McMurry gave updates on the County's Food Hub initiative and the Food System Workforce Project. Ms. Van Scoik and Mr. Bedenfield said they were interested in being involved in the Food Hub initiative. Chair Clouser asked if anyone was opposed to RCAC recommending these two members to staff for potential participation; there was no opposition. Mr. McMurry said he would follow up with staff on the recommendation and whether there are current opportunities for participation. He said he would send information to Committee members in response to questions from Mr. Johnson regarding CR 235 and crash data, replacement of a flashing beacon light, and process for citizens whose vehicles have been damaged from potholes.

Ivy Bell gave a summary and update on the Forward Focus: Eastern Alachua County initiative and upcoming meeting in Melrose on May 3rd.

9. Committee Members Comments

There were no Committee members comments.

10. Public Comments

There were no public present.

11. Next Meeting

Next Meeting – May 20th @ Alachua County Health Dept.

12. Adjournment

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

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

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