

DRAFT
Rural Concerns Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

August 19, 2025

4:00 pm

Community Support Services, Conference Room A

218 SE 24th St., Gainesville, FL 32641

1. Call to Order

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

Virtual: Tyrone Johnson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Missy Norman

Kelsey Waters

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken McMurry, Senior Planner, Growth Management

Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, Growth Management

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jessica Hurov, Director, Tourism & Economic Development

Bailey McClellan, Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator, Tourism & Economic Development

Jean Willoughby, Senior Planner, Environmental Protection Department

Virtual: Avi Mallinger, Project Manager, New Venture Advisors

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Rebecca Fox

Sarah Luther

David Tuthill

Chair Clouser called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm. There were 9 members present in person and 1 present virtually, which was confirmed to satisfy the requirement for at least a quorum under County Advisory Board Guidelines. He said that members of the public present would have a chance to participate at appropriate points on the agenda.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Chair Clouser asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Motion was made by John Nix to approve the agenda; seconded by Micky McMillan.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

3. Old Business

3.1 Update on project scope and status of Fresh Food Pathways Food Hub initiative – Avi Mallinger, Project Manager, New Venture Advisors

Mr. Mallinger gave an overview of New Venture Advisors and presented the project's objective and goal; timeline and scope; market analysis, including literature review, research, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and site visit; preliminary takeaways; and next steps.

There were questions and discussion from Committee members regarding local public schools annual spending on food; addressing root causes of food inequities; relationship to the Good Food Purchasing Program and associated producer issues; overall project feasibility and potential outcomes; project financial model and expectations; and types of interview participants and locations. Jean Willoughby had questions regarding potential for analysis of USDA project funding sources and usage location data from federal nutrition assistance programs (i.e., SNAP and WIC).

There were questions and discussion from members of the public regarding the eventual availability of NVA's analysis reports to the community, and ways to receive updates on the project.

Ken McMurry said he would follow up with sending the presentation slides to the RCAC members.

4. Approval of minutes for 07-15-2025 meeting

Motion was made by Jacobi Bedenfield to approve the minutes for the 07-15-2025 meeting; seconded by Lyman Conover.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

5. Attendance Report

Ken 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.

6. Chair Comments

Chair Clouser said that the Committee will not meet in September. He asked staff to send out the current RCAC annual workplan to the Committee members to review and email any comments back to staff before the October meeting, and staff to compile any comments received and bring them to the October meeting for review and discussion, which should help make the workplan update approval process more efficient.

7. Staff Updates

Ken McMurry said that there are two current RCAC terms ending on September 30th: the UF IFAS position and an Actively Involved in Agricultural and/or Silviculture position, for which there is currently one application. He said applications would continue to be accepted for several more weeks.

He said the Rural Concerns Advisory Committee establishing resolution has a current sunset date of December 31, 2025, and that staff are planning to take a recommendation to the County Commission for a 5-year extension. He said that the last extension in 2019 included an RCAC chair letter recommendation to the Commission and that the Committee could choose to do so again, though it

isn't required. Chair Clouser asked whether there was a desire by the Committee to send a letter recommending extension and there was consensus among Committee members that it was desirable.

Motion was made by Micky McMillan to authorize the chair to send a letter to the County Commission recommending extension of the RCAC sunset date; seconded by Jacobi Bedenfield.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

Ken McMurry gave updates on currently proposed changes to the County Commission Guidelines for Advisory Boards, follow up to a question at last month's RCAC meeting on funding for the County's new Agricultural Land Conservation program, the status of ULDC draft amendments discussed by RCAC at their July meeting, and a County volunteer appreciation breakfast on October 1st at the Extension Auditorium. He said that for the October RCAC meeting, in addition to the approval of the annual workplan there would be the annual election of officers.

He said that Comprehensive Plan policies related to agricultural issues, as previously requested by Missy Norman, are in today's agenda packet for review, that comments and discussion are welcome whenever the Committee chooses to do so, and that staff could provide more information to guide the Committee through the policies as needed. Ben Chumley said that staff would take any comments through the end of the year.

8. Committee Members Comments

Chair Clouser asked if there were Committee member comments on the potential Melrose music park. There were questions and discussion from Committee members regarding other allowable uses for the property, allowable residential use and density of the property, and potential for agricultural easements.

Amy Van Scoik thanked the Committee and she would not be continuing as a member after her term ends in September. She said her farm will have an upcoming festival in October. Chair Clouser thanked her for her contributions and perspective on the Committee.

Brent Weisman asked about Chair Clouser's term that ends in September and Chair Clouser said he was considering reapplying for another term.

9. Public Comments

Bailey McClellan said there is an upcoming County agritourism workshop on August 21st at the Cuscowilla Center in Micanopy.

10. Next Meeting

Next Meeting – October 21st @ Extension Office.

11. Adjournment

Motion was made by John Nix to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Lyman Conover.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

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

Approved 10-21-2025