

**ALACHUA COUNTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RURAL CONCERNS MINUTES –
October 15, 2019
Alachua County Extension Office**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Candace Aho, Jean Chance, Rodney Clouser, Christopher De Cubellis, Larry Hall, Janet Hearn, Randy Johnson, Cindy Sanders, Carolyn M. Smith

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Winston Rushing
Ward Scott (Chair)

STAFF PRESENT:

Ken Zeichner, Principal Planner, Growth Management
Ken McMurry, Planner, Growth Management
Regina Williams, Planning Assistant, Growth Management

OTHERS PRESENT:

Stacie Greco, Water Resource Program Manager, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department
Shane Williams, PhD., P.E., Stormwater Engineer, Alachua County Environmental Protection Department
Todd Harris, Alachua County Health Department

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Leela Robinson, Deep Spring Farms

In the absence of the Chair, Ken Zeichner, liaison for the committee, began the meeting at 4:00 PM. He updated the committee on the Chair's absence, and suggested the Committee approve the Agenda, which included election of Vice Chair.

I. Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Hall made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Sanders.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

II. New Members Introduction:

Mr. Zeichner welcomed new members Jean Chance and Christopher De Cubellis and asked all those present to introduce themselves.

III. Election of Vice-Chair:

Mr. Zeichner discussed the election of Vice-Chair, noting the relevant sections of the Resolution establishing the Committee and also the Bylaws, the currently vacant Vice-Chair position, and importance and duties of the Vice-Chair in the Chair's absence. He requested that the Committee consider nominations for Vice-Chair.

Ms. Sanders made a motion to elect Mr. Clouser for Vice-Chair through September 30, 2020, seconded by Ms. Hearn.

There were no other nominations. Mr. Zeichner then called for a vote.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes from August 20, 2019, seconded by Mr. Hall.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

V. Attendance Report:

No issues noted. Vice-Chair asked that members please pay close attention to your attendance

VI. Chair's Comments:

There were no Chair's comments.

VII. Old Business:

Rural Concerns Advisory Committee Annual Workplan: FY2019-2020 and Accomplishments Report: FY: 2018-2019

Mr. Zeichner noted the FY: 2019/2020 Workplan/Accomplishments Report: FY 2018-2019 had been circulated to the Committee with staff updates to the accomplishments section, and the major focus would now be to address the goals and objectives for FY2019-2020. Vice-Chair Clouser led the Committee through updating the goals and objectives.

Ms. Sanders made a motion to approve the Annual Workplan: FY2019-2020 and Accomplishments Report: FY: 2018-2019 including the Committee's changes, seconded by Ms. McKeown-Smith.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zeichner noted this document will be sent to the County Commission and can also have a presentation to the Commission by the Committee Chair or Vice-Chair. Staff will look at the upcoming schedule for possibly November 12th or 26th or possibly in December.

Vice-Chair Clouser asked about the WEBOR (rights of nature) issue that Mr. Rushing had asked about at the August Committee meeting. Mr. Zeichner said there is an independent citizens group leading an effort to gather signatures on a petition to put an item on the ballot for a charter amendment relating to this. If they meet the requirements for signatures, then the County Commission's role according to the County Attorney's office is a ministerial role and they are required to adopt a resolution to put it on the ballot. He said with more clarity about timing that staff can explore whether there is someone from the citizens group who could come to an upcoming meeting.

He said the County Environmental Protection Advisory Committee (EPAC) had recommended some related aspirational policy language regarding rights of nature to the County Commission for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. The County Commission had some discussion of that and directed staff to clarify some of the terminology and tie it better to the Comprehensive Plan and then bring it back to the County Commission for discussion. Staff may bring that aspirational policy statement to the County Commission at its first meeting in December for authorization to advertise as part of upcoming hearings on the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Zeichner said when that item is authorized for advertisement for County Commission public hearing, the Rural Concerns Advisory Committee could put it on their meeting agenda for input on the policy proposal.

Vice-Chair Clouser asked if someone from the Charter Review Commission could speak to RCAC about that process. Mr. Zeichner said that was a separate procedure than the citizens' initiative for putting things on the charter. He said he would consult with the County Attorney's Office regarding the best approach for that.

Vice-Chair Clouser asked if there is a mechanism for keeping other advisory committees informed of each other's topics of interest. Mr. Zeichner said there is the County Advisory Board website with agendas, and staff can look into providing a link to the Committee.

VIII. New Business:

Options for Potential County Septic Tank Ordinance -

Stacie Greco and Shane Williams, from the Alachua County Environmental Protection Department, presented a PowerPoint presentation on Options for Potential Countywide Septic Tank Ordinance Options. Ms. Greco presented background on Alachua County impaired water bodies and current efforts to reduce nutrient pollution, including an urban fertilizer ban, water quality ordinance for stormwater, and upgrading and monitoring septic systems at Poe Springs. The County Commission asked staff to prepare a Countywide Septic Tank Ordinance to address pollution from septic systems and staff is preparing policy options for considerations by the County Commission. Staff has done stakeholder engagement with Alachua County cities, County Advisory Committees, and the Joint Water Policy Committee. Ms. Greco said staff is planning to give this presentation to the County Commission either Nov 12th or Dec 10th, to outline potential options and policy considerations for the County Commission to consider, and that RCAC could also consider if they want to provide a letter for input to the Commission.

Mr. Williams discussed the Florida Legislative background on septic tanks, which prohibits conventional septic systems on lots less than 1 acre in any Priority Focus Areas for any Outstanding Florida Springs, and potentially affects certain areas in Alachua County. However, it is not yet in effect due to a challenge of not sufficiently protecting the Santa Fe Priority Focus Area (PFA) and Springs Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs). He discussed BMAPs in Alachua County; distribution of septic tanks in Alachua County and their estimated total nitrogen pollution per year; permits and sales in Alachua County; options to reduce nitrogen from septic systems; potential ordinance scenarios for when and where in Alachua County new nitrogen reducing performance standards would apply; possible pre-emption to point of sale requirements; environmental impact of conventional systems; types and potential benefits of nitrogen reducing septic systems; cost ordinance implementation considerations; and policy considerations. Mr. Williams said staff will next present these options and policy considerations, and not an ordinance draft, to the County Commission.

There was discussion including questions and comments brought up by various Committee members and others present, including concerns about costs of septic systems and financial impacts to homeowners; enforcement; lot sizes requiring new systems; maintenance, repair, and education issues; voluntary vs regulatory approaches; state of current systems in Alachua County; relationship of State and potential new County requirements for septic systems.

IX. Public Comments:

Lela Robinson said she was motivated to attend by the Alachua County Citizens Academy and may be interested in applying to the Committee in the future. She shared some organic edible roselle plants with the Committee.

X. Committee Member Comments:

Mr. McMurry said that the vacant position of Active in Agriculture and/or Silviculture, due to Ms. Sweat's resignation, will be posted on the County Advisory Boards webpage. Committee members can let anyone interested know, and in the past Committee members who are alternates have applied to regular positions.

Ms. Aho asked for the Committee to consider at their next meeting sending a Chair letter to the County Commission regarding new septic regulations, on behalf of the powerless who don't have a lot of money and live out in the country. Ms. Greco noted the item may go to the County Commission on November 12th, and there was discussion about timing of formal Committee comments. Ms. Greco said staff would let the County Commission know about the comments concerning cost that were brought up in the Committee discussion. Ms. Hearn said that people who would be in a State BMAP area would be under a regulation regarding septic systems if that legislation was upheld, regardless of a County ordinance, which would then cover remaining areas. Mr. Williams said it was not certain yet that the BMAP requirement would stay intact, but if so it would potentially put that area of the County under a State standard.

Mr. Zeichner said Nov 12th is the date expected for adoption of the Evaluation and Appraisal based amendments to the Comp Plan that were transmitted to the State on June 25th. Staff anticipates follow up discussion on Dec 10th with Board of County Commissioners on Clustered Rural Residential Subdivision issues that were not resolved and not part of the Transmittal for State review. He said the Committee could consider having an update on those issues at its next meeting.

XI. Next Meeting – November 19, 2019

XII. Adjourn:

Mr. Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Chance.

ACTION: Motion passed unanimously

Vice-Chair Clouser adjourned the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Approved November 19, 2019