

Minutes

**Agricultural & Natural Resources Advisory Committee
Thursday, January 20, 2011, at 9:00 am
Charlotte County Administrative Center
18500 Murdock Circle, Room #B-106
Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1094**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mike Jones, Chairman
Andy Dodd, Vice Chairman
Wes Brumback
Chris Hencher
Dan Ryals
Matthew Sullivan, Jr.

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Arnie Sarlo

MEMBERS ABSENT

Fred Walters, Secretary
Orrin Webb

GUEST

Ron Hamel, Gulf Citrus Growers
Karen Goodheil

STAFF

Matt Trepal, Staff Liaison
Gayle Moore, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

The **January 20, 2011**, meeting of the **Agricultural and Natural Resources Advisory Committee** was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by **Chairman Jones** noting a quorum was present. **Chairman Jones** welcomed Wes Brumback to ANRAC.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Jones entertained a motion to approve the November 18, 2010, minutes of the **Agricultural and Natural Resources Advisory Committee** as written. **Chris Hencher** made the motion to accept the minutes as written and

seconded by **Matt Sullivan**. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None. **Chairman Jones** noted that New Business would include a discussion of the possibility of changing the meeting schedule in hopes of being able to have Commission representation once again.

NEW BUSINESS

- ❖ *IFAS Agriculture Economic Contributions Report*
 - **Chairman Jones** asked if members had any questions or comments on the report; there were none. The Chair noted that even though the data used was somewhat older (2008-9) it does still show a significant presence of agriculture in Charlotte County, in particular in the employment figures.

- ❖ *Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Department of Community Affairs Anticipated Changes*
 - **Chairman Jones** referenced the leadership changes in Tallahassee and asked Staff Liaison **Matt Trepal** for his comments, if any. **Mr. Trepal** noted that County staff had not had any direct information, but were aware of the proposal to combine DCA, FDOT and Dept. of Agriculture; no details about how such a merger would work had yet been made available. It would be considered a substantial change if it did come to pass, but until that time, he said he imagined they would continue to operate as they currently do.

- ❖ *Open Member Forum – Goals and Initiatives for 2011*
 - **Chairman Jones** said they hoped to be bringing more issues out of FDACS, particularly with regard to the water policy; Mr. Bedel and others were working to secure agriculture's future with enhanced water quality standards which are due to be implemented. Mr. Hamel will also be commenting as he watches this issue closely on behalf of the Citrus group.

Chairman Jones noted that as far as any other issues and initiatives for this year, this is feedback time where the agenda can be set, primarily focused on identifying some of the major commodity and/or production issues to keep informed, collect information and take action. **Mr. Dodd** spoke, with regard to the Babcock Steering Committee's final report that was recently completed, and the settlement with the Sierra Club which requires Babcock to fund a study of the wildlife corridors throughout the region, noting that on the resulting maps, a significant portion of eastern Charlotte County is designated. This fits into what the Comprehensive Plan proposed by way of having certain areas where certain activities were limited within a specific distance of the waters. The Steering Committee report is available for

viewing on the internet. Another related item was the creation by Fish and Wildlife of a Cooperative Conservation Blueprint which looks at critical habitats state-wide and published a Critical Land & Waters Identification Project (CLIP) map on which a lot of the same areas are identified as on the Babcock Steering Committee's Corridor Plan map. Two regions in the state have been selected for pilot programs where the purpose is creating non-regulatory incentives to save the 'last, best lands'. Non-regulatory in this context means, it's not a taking, it needs to be paid for in some way that would entice the landowner to participate. That committee starts meeting in March, with southwest Florida as one of the areas selected for the pilot program. **Mr. Dodd** indicated that he would continue to go to those meetings; he asked **Mr. Trepal** to consider attending the meetings as well, noting they would be held at the RPC offices.

Further discussion ensued about the program's prioritization aspect reflected in the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative. **Mr. Dodd** noted that his goal was to get the City of Punta Gorda to pay the people that put the water in the creek for good conservation practices; he felt that if landowners were putting clean pure water into the system there should be a payment made by utility customers to incentivize the landowner to continue doing that. **Mr. Dodd** said that he hoped to arrange a meeting between Charlotte County people and the Cooperative Conservation Blueprint folks before the March ANRAC meeting, and perhaps there would be an addition to the March agenda to provide an update.

Chairman Jones commented in response that these activities were among the foundation elements of the Rural Lands Stewardship concept, to create an economy based on these basic needs. Setting the conservation lands aside, while difficult for Ag landowners to do, can be done with proper incentives.

Chairman Jones also noted, as mentioned in previous meetings, on-going activity regarding alternative fuels; there has been interest expressed in setting up operations here in Charlotte County, and Lee County already has a project going forward. Some of these projects are based on use of oils and greases which are not actually ag-dependent, but others use organic feed-stocks which are the type of operations which would be of more interest to the group. There is a question currently as to the continued availability of subsidies, and there is not currently enough volume to influence the market and get major distributors behind it. He said that as he got more specific information on these developments, he would bring it to the Committee.

With regard to the Committee's future meeting schedule, **Chairman Jones** offered the following for consideration: If the Committee could move its meetings back to the second Thursday of the month, would that be agreeable to the members? The consensus was that it would be acceptable. The room assignment was deemed to be open to change if necessary. The Chair put the matter to a vote in order to have

official action on the matter, which would then need a legal interpretation as to whether a change in day required Board action to accomplish it. He called the question, whether to change the meeting day to the second Thursday of every other month, and upon the motion being made and seconded, it passed with a unanimous vote. Further discussion ensued on the prospect of having a Commissioner assigned to the group as a result of the change in meeting schedule.

OLD BUSINESS

- ❖ *Smart Charlotte 2050* – **Matt Trepal** provided an update on the current state of the challenge to the Comp Plan, noting that the County is trying to speed up the process, given that the proposed hearing date would not have been until June or July. He noted that the challenge now no longer includes anything but the Comp Plan itself. He noted that the EAR submittal had been found sufficient by DCA, and would now go into the review process; the process of preparing the EAR-based plan amendments has also begun, and staff anticipates these amendments will be made to the 2050 plan. The submittal process should be complete by November or December of this year. Further discussion ensued on technical aspects of the process.

- ❖ *EPA/DEP Numeric Standards and Statewide Stormwater Rule Update* – **Chairman Jones** noted that the State is entering the 15-month implementation period after which their Statewide Stormwater Treatment Rule plan should be available. At this point, the message for agriculture is that as long as you are signed up on Best Management Practices (BMP) programs you are essentially sheltered. He then turned the floor over to Mr. Hamel, who has been following the matter closely; **Mr. Hamel** said that he had attended the Indian River Citrus Show yesterday, where Rich Bedel, the new director of the DACS office of Water Policy presented an update on this subject. Mr. Bedel's key points were: 1) as currently drafted, there is no way any part of agriculture can meet the standards without some form of on-farm intensive facilities; 2) the same applies to municipalities, utilities, etc. There have been a number of lawsuits filed in what will likely be an on-going battle. Mr. Bedel also said that agricultural BMPs are what ag needs to implement; continuing to keep good records, etc., and that Adam Putnam who is now our Commissioner, is on-board and all members of the Florida Congressional delegation are on-board in fighting this as well. **Mr. Hamel** also mentioned another issue raised by Mr. Bedel, which was the issue of water transfers, where water is being discharged from a structure, noting that EPA was looking into this with the intent of forcing any kind of discharge into any water-bodies to require a permit. This is also shaping up to be a fight.

Mr. Brumback offered comments regarding an article in a recent Wall Street Journal concerning the EPA revoking a water permit for a mining operation in West Virginia, which was only the second time in history such a thing had been done. This action which he said was taken without Congressional

approval or any legal mandate, has caused great concern. Further discussion ensued on this report and the activities of EPA in general. **Chairman Jones** indicated this would be worth following and researching with regard to specific ag issues.

CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

- ❖ None additional.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- ❖ **Ms. Karen Goodheil** gave a presentation supporting the idea of a Food Policy Council for Charlotte County. **Chairman Jones** responded with thanks for the presentation but also reiterated that the overall subject does not really come under the purview of ANRAC; he encouraged Ms. Goodheil to look into the programs under IFAS which are targeted to the specific ideas she has presented.

STAFF COMMENTS

- ❖ *None further.*

MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

Chairman Jones stated he felt this had been dealt with in the brainstorming under New Business. There is also a need to determine the status of Arnie Sarlo, and getting the Commodities seat filled.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, **March 17, 2011**, at 9:00 am, in Room B-106, unless clearance is received to move the meetings to the second Thursday, in which case it would be March 10th. The membership will be notified once the legal opinion is received.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59 am.

**Approved by the Committee on:
May 12, 2011**