

Minutes

Agricultural & Natural Resources Advisory Committee
Thursday, March 27, 2014, at 9:00 am
Charlotte County Administrative Center
18500 Murdock Circle, Room #B-207
Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1094

MEMBERS PRESENT

Andy Dodd, Chairman
Orrin Webb, Secretary
Lindsay Harrington
Matthew Sullivan, Jr.
Dan Ryals
Wes Brumback, Vice Chairman

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Chris Hencher
Steve Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT

GUEST

Ty Harris, Director, Community Development Department
Robert H. Berntsson, Esq.
Officer Justin Treworgy

STAFF

Matt Trepal, Staff Liaison

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

The **March 27, 2014**, meeting of the ***Agricultural and Natural Resources Advisory Committee*** (rescheduled from March 13th) was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by ***Chairman Dodd*** who noted that there was a quorum present.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Dodd called for action on the minutes of January 9, 2014 which were approved on a motion by ***Mr. Webb***, second by ***Mr. Sullivan***, and unanimously carried.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Duffy had advised the Chairman she would be absent today.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation on Ag Signs, led by ***Justin Treworgy*** CCSO Ag Det.

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Officer Treworgy addressed the group, speaking as the Agricultural Detective for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office (CCSO), about activities in the County to address the constant problem of cattle which would get loose and how to determine whose animals they are. He described the approach that had been in place (utilizing a list and calling all the landowners) but it was a method that quickly became outdated as properties changed hands.

He then described the program that has been developed during his time with CCSO, working in partnership with the Cattlemen's Association. He also showed the group an example of the signage which was developed with the Association; he described how the signs would be used, and how the contact numbers would appear on the signs for CCSO to contact the owner about animals on the loose.

Officer Treworgy next spoke about the number (which is not an actual phone number) which will appear on the sign and which is "assigned for life" (noting that the sign goes with the operation if the operation happens to move), and giving a general description of how the attempt to contact the owner would go. He noted that impoundment is the ultimate response to runaway animals whose owner cannot be contacted either directly or via the back-up contact numbers.

He next covered concepts on where to locate the sign, at the gate facing the main road and at a midway point along the fence lines if there is a long stretch between gates; if more signs are required, owners should contact the Association. As to the cost of the signs, at present they are \$15 each. The officer would like to give them away, but of course there is a limit. For now, both CCSO and Animal Control each have 100, meaning 200 to give away. The Association will attend a meeting held by CCSO where numbers will be assigned, and people will leave with their signs.

Officer Treworgy stated they would like to be left with 50 on hand; the rest, they are happy to give to Association members as they own most of the land cattle are run on; because of the great deal of land involved, these signs will be in evidence to the public. He contrasted this program to the Lee County alliance with Crimestoppers which requires the use of Crimestoppers' signs which are much larger and have too much personal information on them. **Officer Treworgy** pointed out CCSO wants to keep such information secure, so there's just this one "info neutral" number that appears on the sign.

Chairman Dodd commented on how this issue is approached in other counties, noting that the signs are free in DeSoto, Polk has a fundraiser; Lee charges money and works with Crimestoppers; The Officer responded, reminding that the type of signs were chosen by the end users; he also noted that these are not no-trespassing signs which have a different standard. **Chairman Dodd** asked Mr. Sullivan whether he thought the citrus industry folks would want to participate, and was told "yes, most likely". Further discussion ensued with comments about the total amount it would take to get it done; if, for instance, 1,000 signs were needed, that would be about \$5,000 but it would take care of just about every landowner in Charlotte.

OLD BUSINESS

Earthmoving Ordinance Update

Questions about progress on the earthmoving ordinance were directed to Community Development Director Ty Harris who commented on the status of Joanne Vernon who has recently become the County Engineer. **Mr. Harris** said he assumed there would be a final product by the next time this group sees it. It is acknowledged a top priority on the list of items the Commissioners have requested to be prioritized. **Chairman Dodd** asked that the group be notified when the final draft

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is ready. **Mr. Harris** noted that it would be important for ANRAC members to come to these Board hearings as representatives of the folks to be most impacted by the changes.

Unified Land Development Code, Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Harris went on to comment on today's roundtable which he noted was the only roundtable anticipated to be held on revisions to the Comp Plan. To be discussed are changes to the Future Land Use, Natural Resources, the Supplement and a couple of definitions. The idea is to undo what was enforced by the State in the guise of DCA, with the goal of returning these matters to local control. He noted that there were concerns about the future under a possible Crist Governorship and possible return of Mr. Pelham; people feel the changes need to get done before that might happen. Under that timeframe, there is time for only one roundtable; based on the normal review required, he anticipated the changes would be complete for adoption by this September. Concurrently, ULDC is being changed again as to format, and should run parallel with and one month behind the Comp Plan schedule. Further discussion ensued on the basis for changes being made, and the possible impacts on the county of changes in Tallahassee, especially with regard to the DULAs (Dense Urban Land Areas).

(Mr. Brumback joined the meeting.)

Mr. Harris continued, noting that there is currently legislation pending which would apply DULA status to midsized counties, and then they would not have to do DRIs and we would then be sandwiched between two new DULA's (Lee and Sarasota counties) putting us at a competitive disadvantage.

Chairman Dodd commented on the anticipated contents of this afternoon's meeting on the Comp Plan, including the removal of all ordinance-type language in the Comp Plan, leaving that for the ULDC. He noted that there were a few things he had hoped to see which are not there: special surface water protection overlay / watershed overlay. He provided a handout to the group for discussion on these topics, noting that it is a comparison between old and new comp plan language and that of other counties. He also provided some historical context, indicating that these changes dated back to a period when residents were challenging a petroleum pipeline that was planned to come through the county; the language was crafted specifically for that situation, but now is broadly referring to all transmission of hazardous products. Further discussion ensued, touching on the issues of the increase in the size of the regulated area, the "boxing ourselves in" concept; whether or not this was aimed at possible fracking in the area; comments about acreage used for biofuel, and the like.

The next issue raised concerned the definitions; specifically, the half-mile setbacks on creeks which is defined as environmentally sensitive lands. But not everything within that area is in fact environmentally sensitive.

At the end of the discussion, **Chairman Dodd** asked for direction to represent ANRAC at the Comp Plan Roundtable to be held in the afternoon; **Mr. Brumback** moved the requested direction and **Mr. Webb** seconded, and the matter passed with unanimous assent from the group. Further discussion ensued after the vote, both on this subject and the process in general. **Mr. Harris** indicated that he welcomed input from these members; **Mr. Brumback** indicated he could attend, and also spoke about the benefits of having environmental groups come to visit operations such as his where they are often amazed and impressed to see the way such places are run.

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CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ralph Mitchell had provided the group a handout entitled "Your guide to the new Farm Bill Conservation Programs".

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

STAFF COMMENTS

None

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Sullivan advised the group that his property had been sold, that he won't be in citrus production any more, and therefore he needs to tender his resignation and will not be present at the May meeting. He provided the group with some information about the buyer of his property. Further discussion ensued on the need to fill the existing vacancies and whether Mr. Hencher will be able to rejoin the group. There was also a brief discussion of the next meeting and the change of meeting venue to the Building Construction Services building.

Mr. Harrington mentioned a problem residents in East County had been dealing with and acknowledged that person is now in jail, thanks to the efforts of Officer Treworgy and citizens working together. He also questioned suitability studies done in East County and commented about wetlands designations that prevent development as takings; **Chairman Dodd** noted that those are state and federal regulations. **Mr. Harris** noted that the County will not be replicating state or fed regulations in local code, and this is at the direction of the Commission. He also noted that the County will not delay a permit based on the state not having issued their permit; you still need to get any required state permit, but the County won't hold you up if they are slow. Further discussion ensued on the permitting process, and Mr. Harris commented about the lack of coordination amongst the various agencies.

Mr. Berntsson commented on the idea of not holding up permits, and how that interacts with Scrub Jay regulations, asking whether those permits should be issued regardless. **Mr. Harris** responded that the County should issue the building permits with a notation that the applicant should be getting any other required permits. In such a situation, if the property owner did not fully complete the process, the risk is all to the property owner. Mr. Berntsson commented that while he was not endorsing that risk, he acknowledged that people do take such risks, betting on there being no downside. Some further discussion ensued.

FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

None.

GUEST COMMENTS

Officer Treworgy thanked the group for the invitation to attend.

NEXT MEETING

May 8, 2014 at 9:00 a.m. in the Building Construction Services large conference room.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

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**To be approved by the Committee on:
May 8, 2014**