The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steve Crump at 9 a.m. Mr. Crump thanked everyone for attending.

Pledge of Allegiance: Gerald Fieser

Invocation: Steve Crump


Absent: Brad Burbaugh, Alexander Penalta, Tim Smith and Steve Wilson

Guest: Keith Stewart, Volusia County Property Appraiser AG Department, Director

Minutes: Patricia Caradonna, Staff Assistant (County of Volusia)

The minutes of December 19, 2022, were electronically distributed prior to the meeting. All members present had received the minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Guest Speaker: Keith Stewart, Volusia County Property Appraiser AG Department, Director:

- Keith Stewart presented a PowerPoint presentation (outline given to each member). The following topics were discussed:
  - Objectives and Goals – “Bona fide agricultural purposes” means good faith commercial agricultural use of land.
  - AG is a classification of land as agricultural. It is not an exemption. It only applies to land in use – not building or improvements.
  - Statistics
  - Pastureland
  - Feedlots
  - Horse Breeding/Boarding/Training
  - Row Crops
  - Hay
  - Timberlands
  - Nursery
  - Citrus Land
  - Cut Foliage, Fern and Flowers
  - Apiaries
• Miscellaneous Agricultural – Special Crops

• Important Dates:
  o January 1 – Statutory assessment date – property must be in use on or before this date.
  o March 1 – A completed application must be submitted.
  o July 1 – If application is denied, a certified Notice of Denial will be mailed by this date.

Advisory Committee Member Comments and questions:
• With AG classification – wetland buffer goes away. Setback issues helps mitigate troubles.
• There are 340,000 parcels in Volusia County. Bernie LeFils asked if Keith Stewart knows the number of farms not parcels in Volusia County.
• Volusia County Property Appraiser is using high-quality aerial photography which is not available online. If the gates are locked on the farms, aerial is used. The aerial can’t see under the trees.
• David Griffis mentioned NASCAR has valuable land that is used for hay production.
• Gerald Fieser mentioned the need for conservation elements. A state law is needed for conservation easements.
• Bernie LeFils mentioned the mills are closing down – two of the three local businesses have shut down. K&B is keeping us alive.
• Citrus in Florida is down 20 percent.
• Apiaries – 100 hives are needed for commercial bees. Minimum of 24 hives on five acres of AG; on 20 acres, 64 hives; at least two hives per acre. Water must be provided for bees.
• Miscellaneous AG includes blueberry farms.
• There are approximately 250 denials per year and approximately 50 people contest. Around five petitions go before the board. Real life issues are given a year or two to remedy.

Unfinished Business:
• 2023 Committee Goals/Plan of Work: Kalan requested three or four topics/bullets from the committee. The link for the Agri-Business Inter-Relations Committee is https://www.volusia.org/government/county-council/advisory-boards/agri-business-inter-relations-committee.shtml. Kalan reviewed the purpose with the members for projecting the future of AG and consider grouping the overall classification. The seven different areas in the purpose were reviewed. The following topics are:
  o Promote Volusia Forever – all conservation.
  o Continued relationship with the Property Appraiser.
  o Voice for AG (conservation and preservation).
  o Support and implement Volusia County Farm Tour
• Continue to advise County Council on AG. Bernie asked who prepares the agenda – with items related to AG. Being alerted to what’s on the agenda in advance would allow the Advisory Committee to be the voice for AG.
• How do we entice people to hold onto their land by expanding the allowable/permissible use.
• Gerald mentioned the demand for locally raised beef or locally sourced beef. It is impossible to get this in the State of Florida. Kalan mentioned getting started is very challenging.
• Ingrid asked about the rise in prices for chicken and eggs. The Bird Flu has caused prices to escalate. AG programs are important for school age children.

Review Letter to Planning and Development Division – Chair Steve Crump:
• The letter to the Planning and Development Division was drafted. Chairman Steve Crump shared the letter with the committee. Bernie LeFils made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Ronnie Hull. Motion passed unanimously to send the letter.

Applications for Reappointment to Advisory Committee:
• Applications for Reappointment to the Advisory Committee are due March 15, 2023. Tim Smith, Alexander Penalta, David Griffis and Bill Hester still need to submit.

Master Plan Progress Report:
• Edina Chester and Kalan Taylor attended meeting regarding the discussion for Phase 1 Master Plan. Drainage and lighting were reviewed. There are too many issues with the batteries lasting if solar power was used. Different surfaces for the pavement were discussed. Mulch and bushes were removed and replaced with sod. Drainage issues were causing water to get into the buildings. The metal needs to be repaired due to water damage.
• Volusia County to pay for the painting of the building.
• The Master Plan will improve what’s already existing for AG education.
• Next update on FDACS Grant will be available in June 2023.

New Business:
Discussion of Master Plan Potential Funding Sources:
• Kalan mentioned that County Council approved a staff recommended rate increase for rentals. The rates had not been changed since 2011. The prices will be increased every three years to maintain sustainability.

Letter Supporting ECHO funding request:
• The letter supporting ECHO funding will go before County Council tomorrow, March 7, 2023.
  o $750,000 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act)
  o $1 million FDACS Grant (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services).
Advisory Committee Member Comments:
- Ronnie Hull advised on continued support for the Master Plan which combines AG education.
- Mr. Hester mentioned how important AG education is.
- Kalan will look into requesting the agenda items in advance for Volusia County Council.
- David suggested sponsoring a dinner during a non-council meeting week to get to know the new County Council members.
- Saundra would like to see more youth AG education programs.
- Ronnie Hull mentioned that FDACS funding is very favorable. The new AG commissioner supports the growth of Farm Bureau, Cattleman and four properties together.
- Bernie gave an update on ENRAC (Environmental and Natural Resources Advisory Committee). They are waiting for County Council to advise on the low-impact development grant which is moving slowly.
- Cracker Day is Saturday, April 29, 2023.

Schedule Date for Next Meeting:
- Monday, June 5, 2023, is the next Agri-Business meeting at 9 a.m.

Adjournment:
- There being no further business, the meeting of the Agri-Business Inter-Relationship Committee was adjourned at 10:36 a.m.