Agri-Business Inter-Relationship Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Hester at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Hester thanked everyone for attending.

Pledge of Allegiance: David Griffis

Invocation: Bill Hester

Present: Bill Hester, Brad Burbaugh, Gerald Fieser, Saundra Gray, David Griffis, Ronnie Hull, Alexander Penalta and Daniel Robins

Absent: Sandy Bryan and Steve Wilson

Visitors: Steve Crump, Kalan Taylor

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

Introductions were initiated by Chairman Hester. Introductions were made by all members present. The minutes of November 19, 2019 were electronically distributed prior to the meeting. All members present had received the minutes and no changes were requested. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Census of Agriculture Results:

- Brad Burbaugh distributed and reviewed the 2017 Census of Agriculture Profile flier.
  - Volusia County is one of eleven counties in Florida with an increase in farms from 2012 to 2017 (+16%).
  - The average size farm in Volusia County is 73 acres.
  - The next census is in 2022 (information will be collected in 2021).

Volusia County Farm Tour:

- Brad opened up the discussion regarding The 39th Annual Farm Tour. Would a virtual farm tour work? Will farmers let us on their farms in the current environment?
  - Steve Crump is concerned about the number of people on his farm during the Farm Tour. Steve suggested an open house Farm Tour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. thus spacing the number of non-vulnerable participants visiting the farm throughout the day. In the past, visitors had a 2-hour window to visit each farm.
  - Saundra Gray believes the virtual farm tour is a terrific idea because it will give individuals who may be unable to attend (i.e., vulnerable population) to learn about our agricultural community.
  - David Griffis and Steve Crump suggested a hybrid (i.e., in-person and virtual/video option) farm tour for 2020.
Farm Bureau co-sponsors the Farm Tour. David suggested they could use the video in their packet to the state.

Fair Report:
- Ronnie Hull gave an update.
  - The Volusia County Fair board is preparing for all scenarios with multiple plans in place. They are in the wait and see mode. Does not look promising for vendors. No concerts or senior day. Directional one-way arrows on isles is an option.
  - Possibility of livestock show and sale that is not open to the public. Buyers would be allowed in the arena. Animals in another building. Additional hand sanitizer stations have been purchased.
  - The ultimate goal is to display what they have done. Animal shows in the state have increased by 25 to 50 percent. The rabbit and bird shows were successful.
  - Since COVID-19, 1,400 fairs in the United States are canceled. Midway is struggling, and they have been closed since March.

Fairgrounds Hurricane Readiness:
- Chairman Hester opened discussion:
  - Ronnie Hull mentioned the Volusia County Fairgrounds serves as an emergency shelter for the transient population during the recent hurricane this year. During the 2019 hurricane season, it was used as a shelter for 180 transients.
  - Committee members discussed their concerns for the Hester and Daugharty buildings being used as shelters during hurricanes and disasters.
  - Agri-Business Inter-Relationship committee questions the structural integrity of the buildings built in 1973. Do the buildings and rollup doors meet current building codes? Is it safe for people during a hurricane? Should there be a generator?
  - David Griffis made a motion to draft a letter to the County Council chair requesting the county to determine if these buildings are suitable for use during hurricanes. Gerald Feiser seconded the motion. Alexander Penalta suggested adding a footnote regarding Hurricane Dorian that wiped out the Bahamas. The motion was unanimously approved.

Other Topics of Discussion:
- Daniel Robins was elected to serve as District 3 County Council member. His term starts in January 2021.
- Gerald Fieser mentioned water and sewer are available to new construction in DeLeon Springs. Due to COVID-19, 2 ½ to 5 acre tracks of property are now popular to home buyers. Storm water management is not an issue on the larger tracks.
- The State is conducting COVID-19 testing six days a week at the fairgrounds. The farmer’s market is still open on Wednesdays.
There being no further business, the meeting of the Agri-Business Inter-Relationship Committee was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.