

Minutes

Sarasota Agriculture Policy Council

February 14, 2006

A meeting of the Sarasota County Agriculture Policy Council (SAPC) was held on February 14, 2006 at Sarasota County Extension Office, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota. The meeting was called to order at 9:17 am.

In attendance

Mike Barker (Natural Resources), Janie Besselman (Sarasota County SWCD), Tim Brown (grower), Jennifer Brunty (SWFWMD), Sharon Fitzpatrick (grower/landscaper), Carolyn Gregov (Extension), Jeanell Innerarity (New College student), Robert Kluson (Extension), B.T. Longino (rancher), John Matthews (Sarasota Farmers Market), Marcia Morris (Extension), Betsy Roberts (Sierra Club), and Tamarind Tidwell (New College student).

Approval of Minutes

Betsy Roberts moved to accept the minutes from the December 13, 2005 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Sharon Fitzpatrick and passed unanimously.

Old Business

Public Outreach of Ag Policy Amendments and SAPC

The SAPC received a handout from Scott Ferguson that summarized the PR/media ideas he is developing based on the discussions at the December 13th SAPC meeting. These ideas focused on the messages to the public; the public workshops; the partners to produce videos; and the county fair booth.

There was a discussion with Scott on the following topics concerning the next steps to be taken:

- 1) Scott has contacted the Sarasota County Economic Development Council (EDC) to be a partner in the outreach efforts. He will report back on their response at the next meeting.**

- 2) The upcoming Sarasota County Fair is an opportunity to advertise our planned public workshops and the adopted ag policy amendments. The Extension booth should display this information and should be staffed by SAPC volunteers for maximum PR effectiveness.**

- 3) The county's resources are very limited. For example, Channel 19 is too busy to be able to produce videos for the PR effort. Therefore, new partners need to be found to do them, e.g., METV in Manatee Co., IFAS media specialists, etc. It was suggested that everyone contribute digital photographs of Sarasota County agriculture (e.g., community/school gardens, growers, production fields, Farmers Markets, etc.) to be used as displays in upcoming events and given to Scott for future press releases.**

BCC Resolution for Sustainable Agriculture

Robert Kluson informed the SAPC that the Resolution is now being scheduled for submittal to the BCC. The actual date/time will be reported at the next meeting.

New Business

Steering Committee Report of SAPC Public Workshops

Robert Kluson reported to the SAPC that the planning for the public workshops is going forward. An email is being drafted that will request county administration to assign county staff of the Planning Department to publicize and coordinate 2 events for north and south county. The preferred timeline for these events is April before the planned May to June public input hearing to the BCC of the updated Comprehensive Plan that will be received back from Tallahassee soon. The progress of this request will be reported at the next meeting. The SAPC decided on a quick timeline for the next meeting in order to facilitate the preparations for these public workshops.

Report of 2006 SSAWG Conference

Sharon Fitzpatrick and Robert Kluson described some of the successes and content of this recent conference in Louisville, KY, by the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG). The conference was attended by over 900 people from all over the southern US. Most of the attendees were producers, including 4 from our area. The presentations attended by Sharon and Robert included vermiculture fertilizers, sustainable ag policies, alternative energy, free-range poultry production, etc.

Reports

Members

- 1) B.T. Longino discussed his visit with Ken Harrison, a 4th to 5th generation rancher of east Sarasota County. Ken expressed his concern of the loss of big, commercial agriculture in the county, as well as the surrounding counties. Ken asked what are the solutions for big ag? These questions lead to a SAPC discussion of the possible greater use of conservation easements and funded wildlife corridors, and the development of alternative markets/enterprises to increase profitability, e.g., wetland mitigation banking.
- 2) Marcia Morris described the March 14th Proclamation Ceremony at the BCC Chamber for Marlene Strickland as the Florida Agriculture Woman of the Year. Marlene is a long time volunteer leader and supporter of Sarasota County 4H. Recently Marlene traveled as a spokesperson for Florida ag across the country. Marcia gave out brochures that detailed Marlene's contributions. The SAPC was invited to attend the Proclamation to acknowledge Marlene's contributions. The SAPC decided to accept the invitation to also express our support to the BCC for Sarasota County agriculture and then to hold its next meeting immediately after the ceremony at the county administration building.
- 3) John Matthews reported that March is National Nutrition Month and the Sarasota Farmers Market will have featured presentations on this topic on Saturdays. Scheduled presenters include Sarasota County Extension and Worden Farms.

4) Jeanell Innerarity informed the SAPC about her thesis focusing on community gardens and their role for sustainable local food systems. She is using the Rosemary Court Community Garden as her case study. She also announced the Feb 16th lecture at New College on the latest impacts of global warming.

5) Betsy Roberts explained the upcoming vote for approval of the referendum by the Citizens for Sensible Growth. This referendum focuses on the requirement for a supermajority vote by the BCC to change the Future Land Use Plan and for the increased use of impact fees to developers to pay for future development.

6) Carolyn Gregov announced the Feb 22nd Natural Capitalism Workshop at MCC in Lakewood Ranch. This event will focus on understanding all of the benefits to the sustainable use of our lands. An example is the quantification of the ecosystem functions by the big agriculturalists that have sufficient land to benefit watersheds. The use of such hard data then could be the basis of payments to private landowners that continue sustainable agricultural operations.

Next Meeting and Agenda

The next meeting was scheduled for March 14, 2006 at the Sarasota County Administration Building, 1660 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota, FL from 8:45-11:30 am.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.