

Minutes
Sarasota Agriculture Policy Council
September 21, 2005
Twin Lakes Park

A meeting of the Sarasota County Agriculture Policy Council (SAPC) was held on September 21, 2005 at Sarasota County Extension Office, 6700 Clark Road, Sarasota. The meeting was called to order at 9:18 am.

In attendance

Mike Barker (Natural Resources), Brian Beatty (Planning Services), Lisa Eisen (NRCS), Sharon Fitzpatrick (Organic Herbs Grower), Carolyn Gregov (Extension), Robert Kluson (Extension), John Lambie (Florida House Institute), John Matthews (Sarasota Farmers Market), Betsy Roberts (Sierra Club), and Steve Suau (Florida House Institute)

Approval of Minutes

Betsy Roberts moved to accept the minutes from the August 23, 2005 meeting as written. The motion was seconded by Mike Barker and passed unanimously.

Old Business

Review of Sept. 14th BCC Presentation and Next Steps

The SAPC received copies of the documents given to the County Commissioners at the presentation by Robert Kluson at the Sept. 14th Public Hearing Input for the E.A.R. of the Comprehensive Plan. These documents were the final Ag Policy Recommendations and Proposed Text Modifications. These documents were developed in cooperation with county planners and written using the policy text and numbers of the current revisions of the chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, there was a matrix document that shows the relationship between the original Ag Policy Recommendations by SAPC and the final documents described above, as well as organizing the policies according to the 3 major goals of sustainable agriculture, community food system, and farmland protection.

There was a discussion with Brian Beatty on the following topics concerning the next steps to be taken after the Sept. 14th presentation:

- 1) Brian proposed that a single policy be used to represent all of the different Ag Policy Recommendations from SAPC. This policy would be Policy 1.3.3 of the Future Land Use chapter that reads “The county will implement a sustainable agriculture program to promote sustainable agriculture practices on private and publicly owned lands”. He also suggested that most of the different Ag Policy Recommendations could then be contained in a follow-up Resolution that would add specific language as to the implementation of Policy 1.3.3. He handed out a written description of this proposed Policy 1.3.3 and a list of the different Ag Policy Recommendations that would and would not be included in the Resolution.**

2) Brian outlined the remaining schedule in the E.A.R. process of the Comprehensive Plan Update as involving the following steps:

a) The next Public Hearing Input is on Tuesday, Sept 27th. It will be followed by more deliberations by the BCC until October 12th.

b) The revised Comprehensive Plan will be transmitted in October to state offices in Tallahassee for review and returned to the county by the end of December.

c) Adoption Hearings will be held in January, 2006, for further public input before final approval by the BCC.

d) Final transmittal to Tallahassee will be in February, 2006.

3) The proposed policy from Brian was not accepted by the SAPC. The discussions that resulted in this decision included the following points:

a) The lack of a chapter in the Comprehensive Plan that is focused on agriculture makes the use of a single policy problematic. The different Ag Policy Recommendations were developed by SAPC in order to comprehensively address the issues of sustaining agriculture in Sarasota County. The use of only the Future Land Use chapter does not achieve this goal. And, although it would be preferred, there is not enough time left in the E.A.R. process to propose the writing of a separate Agriculture Chapter.

b) The proposed policy does not acknowledge the role of sustainable agriculture to reduce the ecological footprint of Sarasota County which has been adopted as a major community indicator.

c) The proposed policy originated from Planning Services staff and not the BCC. In fact, as of this date, the BCC has yet to act on any of the Ag Policy Recommendations that they received at the Sept. 14th presentation. Therefore, it was concluded that no changes should be done before deliberations by the BCC.

d) The preferred use of a Resolution is to have it implement specific Ag Policies in the Comprehensive Plan and not to have it substitute for the necessary Ag Policies. The Resolution that has already been drafted by the SAPC is an example of this strategy.

e) Public workshops were suggested as being useful to demonstrate to the BCC of expanded community input and support for the Ag Policy Recommendations. Brian acknowledged that previously such a need was not identified when organizing the public workshops for the separate chapters that have been held so far. At the same time, it is feasible for the Planning Services to schedule such workshops before the Adoption Hearings.

f) The text of the Ag Policy Recommendations will need to be reviewed by the County Attorney as part of the E.A.R. process.

3) As the next steps by SAPC, the following actions were decided:

a) **Testimony and support by the SAPC for all of the Ag Policy Recommendations will take place at the Sept 27th Public Hearing Input by the BCC at the South County Administration Building. All SAPC members and their represented constituencies will be encouraged to attend. Everyone will be asked to wear green to show solidarity.**

b) Testimony by SAPC members will include and emphasize the 3 points of (1) transmittal of all the Ag Policy Recommendations into the Comprehensive Plan for review by the state offices; (2) instruction to Planning Services to cooperate with the SAPC and coordinate public workshops on the Ag Policy Recommendations that will take place before the Adoption Hearings; and (3) direction to the County Attorney to conduct a legal review of the Ag Policy Recommendations.

BCC Resolution for Sustainable Agriculture

The Council was informed that the Resolution is now being processed at ESBC in preparation to be sent to the County's Attorney Office for review.

New Business

National Small Farm Conference

This discussion was deferred to a later date.

Reports

Members

1) John Matthews reported this week's official announcement of a Wednesday Farmers Market near Burns Court in Sarasota.

Next Meeting and Agenda

The next meeting was not scheduled in order to wait until the outcome of the Sept 27th Public Hearing.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.