

March 4, 2008

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COLLIER COUNTY  
RURAL LANDS STEWARDSHIP AREA REVIEW COMMITTEE

Ave Maria, Florida, March 4, 2008

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, that the Collier County Rural Lands Stewardship Area Review Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted Business herein, met on this date at 9:00 A.M. in REGULAR SESSION at the Ave Maria University Academic Building 07 Conference Room 5, 5050 Ave Maria Boulevard, Ave Maria, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Ron Hamel  
VICE CHAIRMAN: Neno Spagna  
Brad Cornell  
Zach Floyd Crews  
David Farmer  
Tom Jones  
David Wolfley  
Bill McDaniel  
Timothy Nance  
Fred Thomas  
Tammie Nemecek  
Jim Howard

ALSO PRESENT: Thomas Greenwood, AICP, Principal Planner, Comprehensive Planning  
Michael J. DeRuntz, Principal Planner, Comprehensive Planning,  
Jeffrey Wright, Assistant County Attorney

Approximately 14 members of the public and staff

**I. Call Meeting to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 AM by Chairman Hamel.

**II. Roll Call**

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Wolfley moved to approve the agenda as presented, Second by Mr. Farmer. Voice Vote - Unanimously Approved 12-0.*

**IV. Approval of Minutes: February 5, 2008**

*Mr. McDaniel moved to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2008 committee meeting, Second by Mr. Wolfley. Voice Vote - Unanimously Approved 12-0.*

**V. Old Business**

*Chairman Hamel* stated that before the committee begins with Item A. the Phase 1 – Technical Report, he would like to thank Noah Standridge for his work with the committee.

*Mr. Spagna* made a motion to have a “Certificate of Appreciation” prepared for Mr. Standridge. *Mr. Wolfley* seconds the motion. *Unanimously Approved 12-0.*

*Mr. Standridge* stated that he appreciated working with this committee, and having the opportunity to work on such an important and dynamic element in Collier County. He hopes to have an opportunity to work with members of the committee and those in attendance in the future.

**A. Phase 1 - Technical Review Report**

*Mr. Greenwood* reviewed the dates of the upcoming Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), Collier County Planning Commission (CCPC), Board of County Commissioners (BCC) public hearings at which the Phase 1 - Technical Review Report will be reviewed and the process by which additions, corrections and comments will be addressed with this report. He stated that that all additions, corrections and comments will be forwarded to the committee for their review.

*Mr. Hamel* asked to see by a show of hands what committee members would be able to be in attendance at the EAC meeting. Five members indicated that they would be able to attend the EAC meeting.

**B. RLSA Review Committee – Review Phase 2 Meeting Dates and Tasks**

*Mr. Greenwood* reviewed the dates for the future meetings for the Phase 2 review and analysis of the Goal, Objective, and Policies for the RLSA Overlay. He stated that the meetings are scheduled to be held at Ave Maria University.

*Mr. Cornell* suggested that the committee needs to be specific on any changes, in particular, providing the data and analysis to support these changes.

*Mr. Nance* stated that the committee needs to review DCA’s “Evaluation of RLSA Program”. He believes that the committee needs to be aware of DCA’s comments and concerns.

*Mr. Greenwood* stated that Collier County’s RLSA plan was approved through a settlement agreement with DCA prior to the States Statues RLSA enactment and has previously made a Request for Legal Services for an evaluation of any implications that

report and pending state legislation to amend the Rural Lands Stewardship statute might have on this committee's Phase 2 review and recommendations.

*Mr. Cornell* requested that the committee receive a copy of the DCA's report and any responses that the County may have provided.

*Mr. Greenwood* stated that he will provide the Committee with hard copies of the DCA's report and County letter responses.

## VI. New Business

### A. **Dr. Fritz Roka, Agriculture Economist, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (IFAS)**

*Dr. Roka* provided an overview of agricultural economics. He stated that increases in production costs cause the margin of profit to decrease. He further stated that that challenges to local agricultural production are: disease (citrus green), regulations, water and land allocation, rising land prices, and a gap of knowledge (re-education). He stated that the advantages for agricultural production in this area are: good climate, easy access to the Eastern U.S. Market, technology, Best Management Practices (BMP), new agricultural varieties, and innovative land management practices (RLSA). He emphasized that flexibility will be the key to long term success for the local agricultural economy.

*David Wolfley* questioned if the IFAS had identified any specific replacement crop, possibly bio-fuel.

*Dr. Roka* stated that they have not and that bio-fuel has been studied and it was not found to be equitable and not a "magic bullet" crop.

*Bill McDaniel* asked if Dr. Roka could help the committee with his explanation of what the term "premature conversion" of land would mean to him.

*Dr. Roka* stated that meaning of this term in agricultural economics would reflect the decision to change the land use from permeable land use to a non-permeable land use had not detailed all the cost of development.

*Mr. Farmer* inquired how one would determine the values associated with agricultural and natural habitat land uses.

*Brad Cornell* inquired if agriculture is important to society, is it appropriate to subsidize the keeping of prime agricultural lands.

*Timothy Nance* stated that the goals of the RLSAO is to provide for reasonable use of land and to ascribe values to properties whose owners are voluntarily agreeing not to develop parts or all of their lands with permeable developments. Agricultural land has not been protected and this country is about to become a net importer of fruits and vegetables.

*Mr. Jones* suggested that the committee should consider creating an incentive based credit system for agricultural production. The current program has done a very good job for providing incentives for preserving areas of high ecological value, but not so much for land being used for agricultural production, such as row crops. He stated that the primary produce grown in Collier County over the years continues to be tomatoes, peppers, and citrus.

*Mr. Priddy* stated that if the RLSA plan does create credits for retaining agricultural land uses, the RLSA plan needs to identify a place to use those credits.

**B. Gene McAvoy, Regional Extension Agent, University of Florida IFAC**

*Mr. McAvoy* informed the committee about local vegetable production. He stated that vegetable agricultural production was both dynamic and volatile with agriculture production moving east into Hendry County. Southern Florida has experienced shifts in volume of vegetable production over the passed decades. There has been a trend of consolidation of ownership of agricultural acreages. Other trends observed in southern Florida were: cost of production and labor costs are increasing, production in variety of products, diversity of vegetables (ethnic foods) are increasing, agricultural entertainment is increasing, roadside markets are increasing, bio-fuel is being tried, and environmental solutions to adverse impacts are being addressed.

*Mrs. Hushon* questioned the sizes of the local organic farms, and asked if IFAC has seen shifting uses or lands being left fallow.

*Mr. McAvoy* stated that organic farms range from 150 to 5,000 acres. He also stated that he has seen less lands being left fallow.

*Mr. McDonald* asked if there is a typical percentage of land that is allowed to go fallow.

*Mr. McAvoy* stated the amount of acreage that is left fallow is based on economic conditions not to allow the land to rejuvenate. He also stated that leasing rural lands for recreational uses is very popular.

*Mr. Hamel* asked *Mr. McAvoy* to provide some of the statistical data that he was referencing.

*Mrs. Laurie McDonald, Defenders of Wildlife*, stated that her organization has staff which includes a Natural Resource Economist who has data that they could provide related to wildlife and scenic values.

*Mr. Jones* stated that he would entertain hearing a speaker from the Defenders of Wildlife organization address these activities and their values.

*Mr. Thomas* stated that high-end eco-tourism is a viable use in this area.

*Mr. Jones* stated that he also is concerned about the meaning of “premature conversion”.

*Mrs. Nemecek* stated that the committee should refer to the States’ report for determining agricultural land value.

**C. Policy 2 – Review of RLSA Overlay Policies**

*Mr. Greenwood* provided an overview of the five Groups and the policies of the RLSA from the Growth Management Plan (GMP).

*Mr. Hamel* reviewed the policy review process, and asked if the Group 1 policies should be reviewed. The committee agreed to review Group 1.

*Mr. Jones* stated that based on Policy 2.1 he is satisfied with the term “premature conversion”.

*Mr. Nance* stated that DCA’s RLSA Report questioned Collier’s RLSA plan does not identify which lands were best for agriculture, conservation and development.

*Mr. Jones* stated that it is his opinion that Collier County’s RLSA program should remain as voluntary participation.

*Mr. Thomas* stated that the committee should look at the areas were potential development could occur and the potential infrastructure interconnection that should be considered.

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*Mr. Nance* agreed with the principle that the RLSA program should be maintained as a voluntary participation involvement.

*Mr. Daniel* stated that the committee should evaluate creating credits for preserving agriculture land uses.

**VII. Public Comments**

*Mrs. McDonald* stated that the plan should provide a mechanism for the continuing Group II agricultural activities. She also stated that wetland and uplands should receive additional values that promote continuing wildlife connectivity.

**VIII. Committee Comments - None**

**IX. Staff Comments**

*Mr. Greenwood* stated that a presentation will be provided at the April 1 meeting by two Gulf Coast professors whose report was distributed today to those present. He will coordinate with Mrs. McDonald for scheduling a speaker from the Defenders of Wildlife organization. He reiterated that he would provide a copy of DCA's RLSA Review and response letters. He would also provide a copy of the Florida State University's RLSA Study. He further stated that the Committee should be prepared to review the Group 2 policies [Agriculture] during the April 1 meeting.

**X. Adjournment**

*Mr. Jones moved to adjourn the meeting, second by Mr. Daniel.*

*Voice Vote - Unanimously Approved 12-0. Adjournment 11:52 a.m.*

**Rural Lands Stewardship Area Review Committee**

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**Ron Hamel, Chairman**

These minutes approved by the Board/Committee on \_\_\_\_\_,  
as presented \_\_\_\_\_ or as amended \_\_\_\_\_.