

# UF/IFAS EXTENSION SEMINOLE COUNTY BCC AG ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 2021 Meeting

Monday, May 3, 2021

3:00 PM – 5:00 PM



**Attendees:** Morgan Pinkerton, Rex Clonts, Jr., David Evans, Barbara Hughes, Jim Hunter, Dennis Langlois, John Lommerse, Imogene Yarborough

**3:00 – 3:05 PM Welcome**

- Brief introductions by each member.

**3:05 – 3:45 PM Updates from Extension**

- **Updates from ongoing programs**

*-Virtual/In-person programming:* Extension will be able to start hosting more in-person programming starting July. We will likely continue both virtual and in-person programming for the foreseeable future. Some stakeholders have reported that they prefer the virtual format, but others still would like in-person classes. Virtual programming can save people time, in terms of travel time to attend classes so therefore some prefer the virtual classroom setting. The committee is excited to see in-person programming increase.

*-Virtual Farm Tour:* The virtual farm tour is currently ongoing. SGTV and Extension developed 6 videos highlighting local farms in the area. Each video is less than 5 minutes. There is also a video scavenger hunt ongoing until May 17 to encourage people to watch the educational farm videos. Several news stations and sources have picked up the virtual farm tour story and begun sharing with their followers. Members were asked to share this information through their channels. Rex commented that he has worked with many film crews and SGTV did the best job, by far, of anyone he has worked with in the past. Barbara suggested that we reach out to Seminole County libraries and other offices that have a waiting room TV and ask them to add the farm tour videos to their shows. Morgan will contact these offices and offer the videos to promote local agriculture within the Seminole County offices.

*-Pesticide related programming and CEUs:* Extension is offering monthly, synchronous, virtual pesticide CEU classes. These have been well attended and will continue to occur monthly for the foreseeable future even as in-person programming starts to occur. Many of these classes have been green industry focused. The agriculturally focused programs have had lower

attendance than landscape focused programs. There was mention of classes being cancelled in other counties due to low registration rates for CEU classes. Morgan mentioned her policy that if the class is on the calendar, it will occur even if attendance is low. The committee supports holding the classes regardless of low registration rates.

- *Growing Your Healthy Florida Lifestyle Series*: This webinar series was designed to teach people about healthy living from farm to table with the idea of increasing agricultural awareness and literacy in Seminole County. It was well attended by 116 people throughout the class series. We intend to host this series annually, with in-person programming next year. Extension is applying for some funding to develop a youth version of this program. We are hosting a summer camp youth version of the class this summer. The committee supported this effort to teach more youth about agricultural topics and related careers.
- *Pest/pathogen diagnostics*: Extension is able to offer farm visits for pest and pathogen diagnostics. We can also take drop off samples in the office. The committee will share this information with other producers too. Morgan tries to do most diagnostics in house at the extension office. If we are unable to diagnose in house, we will get the sample to a specialist. We are working to get more equipment to expand our diagnostic abilities at the office. Morgan and several other extension agents attended a training on honey bee pest and pathogen diagnostics. We are looking to get a higher powered microscope to be able to expand our diagnostic services to beekeepers in the county. Dennis mentioned this service is in high demand for beekeepers, including our local commercial beekeepers.

- **Upcoming or potential programs**

*Summer camps*: We are hosting in-person youth summer camps in the office. The camps will include agricultural components.

*Grower to grower meet ups*: In theory, the committee thinks this is a good idea, but realistically, most growers are too busy to attend. Morgan may collaborate on a Central Florida grower to grower event in the future. The idea of a county level event has been tabled to a later date. Rather than a grower to grower meet up, the committee suggested events for people looking to start a farm. Richard Tyson was heavily involved in a previous program called Small Farms Conference that was

designed to teach new farmers how to manage their operation. Morgan will contact Richard to learn more.

*Record keeping education:* The topic of regulatory inspections was brought up by David during this discussion. He mentioned the extensive record keeping required for farmers. Computer programs can aid in record keeping but they do still require regular upkeep and work. Many farmers struggle with recording keeping so some education information that aids farmers on record keeping would be beneficial.

*Other items discussed:* Some alternative agritourism ideas for farmers were discussed. Air BnB offers an “experience” option that farmers can utilize to offer and charge for tours of the farm. This might be an interesting option to earn additional income from the farms. Dennis shared his experiences utilizing this and hosting tours to visitors from all over the state. Additionally, David mentioned a program where people will travel around the US and work on farms in exchange for a place to dock their RV. Both of these ideas would be interesting to share with growers looking to expand their agritourism ventures.

**3:45 – 4:00 PM COVID-19**

- Morgan requested updates related to agricultural operations and COVID-19. The updates from committee members has been summarized: Last year, the producers saw a spike in interest in locally grown produce, but this year, there is lowered interest as people are starting to travel again. In the nursery industry, there has been an increased interest in at home gardening, specifically vegetable and fruit gardening. This increased interest appears to be sustained in 2021, but they are not sure how long this heightened interest will continue. For nurseries, there has been increased purchasing from retailers. Contracts involving Disney or related tourism venues have decreased due to a slow in these operations since 2020. Beef prices have gone up in the store, but the ranchers have not seen increased revenues as the additional revenue typically was received by the middlemen and not the ranchers.

**4:00 – 4:20 PM Current News in Agriculture**

- *SB 712 updates:* Last year SB 712 stipulated that FDACS would do on farm inspections for farmers and ranchers enrolled in FDACS Ag BMPs. There is a lot of confusion surrounding what the growers should expect of these inspections. A few local producers have undergone inspection. Rex shared his experience that they looked at his records, specifically of N and P fertilization. He mentioned that it was pretty straight forward.

Extension is working to learn more about the inspection process to help producers prepare for inspections. Extension is hoping to develop a checklist so that growers can make sure they know what to expect for the inspection in advanced. As more information is available, extension will continue to share.

**4:20 – 4:40 PM Advisory Meetings Educational Component**

**4:40 – 5:00 PM Any other business**

- *SB88 updates:* The right to farm bill was recently signed by the governor. This bill now offers some of the strongest protection of farmers of any others in the country.
- The committee prefers than the meetings are kept separate from educational classes.
- Seminole County Farm Bureau
  - Youth Speech Contest:* The information about the upcoming youth speech contest was shared. This year's topic asks students (ages 14-18) to talk about ways to educate people about agriculture. The information will be shared by committee members.
  - Annual meeting:* The Seminole County Farm Bureau annual meeting will be held in person Sept 28. We will have outdoor booths with lots of different agricultural organizations and related groups. They are hoping that this even will bring in members of the public to learn more about local agricultural. Extension will have a booth at the event.
  - Mites on pepper:* Dr. Lance Osborne is looking for anyone that produces peppers that might potentially have mites on their farm. He is in need of mites to replenish a research colony. Morgan will put anyone interested in contact with him.
  - Next meeting: Moved to Nov 9, 2021 12-2PM. This will be a lunch meeting.**