

8/12/2026, 6:00pm

St. Johns County Agricultural Center

3125 Agricultural Center Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32092

AAC Member Attendance:

- ☒ Christine Wilson (via County iPhone due to technical issues)
- ☒ Bryan Jones
- ☒ Jackee Dobbish
- ☒ Bill Hamilton
- ☐ Carleton Johns
- ☐ Chuck Owen
- ☒ Scott Parker

County Staff and Commission:

Clay Murphy, Commissioner Chair

Prissy Fletcher, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (OIA)

Christine Valliere, OIA and Eco. Dev.

Aliyah Meyer, Eco. Dev.

Matthieu DeBruin, Growth Management

Michael Roberson, Growth Management

Meeting Minutes

Committee Member Introductions and Initial Remarks

- Bryan calls the meeting to order at 6:01pm.
- Members and guests introduce themselves, including Jackee Dobbish, Scott Parker, Bryan Jones, Clay Murphy, Christine Valliere, Prissy Fletcher, Aliyah Meyer, Amanda

Taylor, Maria Ashton, Erin Masters, Kelly McTaggart, Sol Looker, Tim Wilson, Mike Roberson, Mathieu DeBruin, Amy Law, Greg Dunn, Jeet Ramjattan, Sallie O'Hara.

- Bryan inquires if everyone received the email about the minutes, and Jackee confirms receipt.
- Bryan suggests a quick review of the minutes before moving on to reports.
 - *Committee neglected to make a motion. Will approve in September**

Discussion on Transparency and Communication

- Bryan emphasizes the need for transparency and mentions a previous discussion about a letter related to the fire-training facility and frustration over not being informed about signage related to a project that was already in progress.
- Bill questions the timeline and communication regarding a county 20-acre rescue fire rescue facility.
- Amy explains that they found out late about the project and mentions that the County Facilities Director informed them at the same time. States that she will forward the committee the email correspondence.

Economic Development and Young Professionals Program

- Aliyah introduces a partnership with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce to start a Young Professionals Program for people aged 21 to 40.
- The program aims to provide opportunities for community engagement, philanthropy, and professional development. Aliyah suggests involving the agricultural community to talk about opportunities in agriculture and engage young people.
- Jackee expresses interest in participating, and Aliyah mentions the success of the first program with 60 attendees.
- Aliyah and Prissy agree to follow up and confirm availability of the farmers for the next event.

Challenges in Agricultural Workforce and Education

- Bill discusses the challenges of retaining young professionals in the agricultural workforce due to high living costs in St. Johns County. Students are working multiple jobs, including at his nursery. The community is welcoming but limited in jobs.

- Aliyah suggests involving the business community in providing investment opportunities for young professionals.
- Bryan emphasizes the need to start engaging young people in agricultural opportunities earlier, even in high school.
- Commissioner mentions the lack of authority in the school system to influence vocational programs.
- Prissy reported that Sebastian Middle School is our STEM program and they have shown interest in creating agriscience curriculum. Additionally, FCTC will have a diesel mechanics program at the new Hastings campus that will complement the needs of the farming community.

Agricultural Enclaves and State Legislation

- Mike Roberson from Growth Management provides an update on the state bill SB 686, which allows agricultural enclaves to receive single-family entitlements.
- The bill has criteria that properties must meet to qualify, and the county has 90 days to review and approve or deny applications.
- Mike lists several properties that have applied for agricultural enclave status, including Chris Shee's property, a 600-acre property in Ponte Vedra, and a 400-acre property near County Road 210.
- Bill questions the impact on concurrency and infrastructure, and Bryan explains that developers will have to provide their share of public utilities and infrastructure.
- Jackee emphasized being overwhelmed with traffic at 13A and Cr-214. Concerns of people coming into the agricultural community and running farm equipment off the road. She has already contacted Public Works about traffic signage and lights.
- Commissioner Murphy stated this policy (SB686) was written for St. Johns County with the state having different views and electoral votes. In his 1.5 years, the BOCC has denied 92% of every housing development. We're now in four separate lawsuits because of it. We are experiencing growth fatigue from many years of titles approved that haven't been built yet, then 60% increase since 2020 on single-family starts. The state has a different philosophy than us.
- Commissioner was asked if other Counties are dealing with the same issues. He responded with: Orange, Manatee, and Martin. Committee raised concerns with Hudson Development, Davis Families. Wells are drying on farms as new residents complaining about traffic. Mentioned the disappearance of the Crescent Beach

spring. Discussion on addressing legislators who voted in favor of Agricultural Enclaves bill.

Deep Creek Flood Risk Mitigation Project

- Mathieu from Growth Management provides an update on the Deep Creek flood risk mitigation project funded by a Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant.
- The project involves investigating three scenarios: desnagging, desnagging and dredging, and desnagging, dredging, and widening.
- Cost estimates for the projects range from \$1.9 million for desnagging to \$197 million for desnagging, dredging, and widening. The next steps include submitting the final adaptation plan to the state and exploring funding opportunities through the Army Corps of Engineers.

IFAS Contract and Relationship Status

- Prissy provides an update on the IFAS contract, mentioning that the current contract expires on September 30 and that negotiations are ongoing.
- Bryan expresses frustration with the relationship between St. Johns County and UF, feeling that the county has been abused by UF. He suggests that the board should meet with UF to discuss the contract and the relationship, emphasizing the need for better support from UF.
- Bryan questioned Prissy regarding the amount St. Johns County contributes to the salaries of the Ag Center employees. Prissy confirmed that SJC pays 40 – 80% of the Agent's salaries, and 100% of the support staff, which is not typical. Normally, 100% county-funded staff are employees of the County. Fairness in comparison to other Counties is being addressed in the new contract.
- Jackee suggests holding a meeting with all UF representatives to understand the needs of farmers better. Bryan disagreed because it was not a good use of time for people who do not care, and shame on the agricultural community for tolerating it.
- Christine echoed "yes, exactly" from Zoom.

BMP Program and Small Farm Support

- Bryan brings up challenges with Florida Farm Bureau and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Addresses the BMP program and the challenges of supporting small farms.

- Sol explains that the program aims to provide regulatory support and incentives for large-scale farms, but there are limitations in resources and outreach to small farms.
- Bryan emphasizes the need for better communication and support for small farms, suggesting that the county should present information about available programs.
- Sol acknowledges the challenges and expresses a commitment to being a collaborative regulatory partner, emphasizing the importance of science and common sense in guiding phosphorus management decisions.
- Sol discusses the varying challenges faced by extension agents across different counties, emphasizing the significant learning curve and high expectations as a former Extension Agent.
- Sol mentions that it takes about five to six years for an extension agent to effectively serve their constituents. Also notes that many agents find the job too difficult and end up being pulled apart by conflicting demands.

Lack of Communication and Engagement, Need for Relationship Repair

- Bryan asks about the last time Tim had a meeting with local growers to understand their needs.
- Tim mentions meeting with the horse council to discuss soil testing and new food management, but not with local growers.
- Bryan expresses frustration over the lack of interaction and engagement from the extension farm (Hastings), feeling that the community is exhausted from constant battles.
- Bryan suggests that extension agents should visit local farms to better understand the needs and schedules of farmers.
- Jeet defends their efforts to engage with farmers, mentioning ongoing email correspondence and attempts to start a new committee.
- Bryan highlights the broken relationship between the Extension farm and local farmers. Jeet was hired during a complicated time but the same two or three farmers are getting most of the attention.
- Jeet noting that only a few people show up for his meetings.
- Bryan emphasizes the need to mend the relationship, acknowledging that it will take effort and time.

- Bryan criticizes the lack of CEUs being offered locally, suggesting that offering them in-person could increase participation. Farmers do not prefer online learning.
- Jeet mentions the challenges of coordinating with busy professors and the need for more consistent engagement.

Trust Issues and Long-Term Efforts

- Bryan discusses the importance of building trust and relationships over time, noting that it takes effort and direction from higher-ups. He expresses frustration with the lack of trust and the long-term battle against UF, emphasizing their passion for farming.
- Aliyah asks about Bryan's farming experience, to which Bryan responds with 42 years of experience.

Financial Accountability and Reporting

- Prissy provided an update on the Extension Demonstration (aka, Hastings Grant) contract reports from UF/IFAS's Dr. Lakesh Sharma. The contract requires two status meetings, in addition to a final report. Copies of the status report were distributed, along with the note that only one status update had been provided for this fiscal year which is quickly approaching.
- Prissy invited Dr. Sharma to come to SJC and present the findings of the Hastings trials to the growers, as this was formerly common practice by a previous Hastings Extension Director, Gary England. It was a well-received program, that allowed the grant-winners to share their findings with the community that paid for their demonstrations. Dr. Sharma declined due to insufficient time and lack of comfortability with presenting other researchers' data.
- Bryan criticizes Dr. Sharma for not having time to present the results, suggesting that if he doesn't care, neither should they. He questions about the use of \$94,000 annually and where the money goes if projects are not fully utilized, expressing frustration over the lack of accountability.
- Bryan begs Tim to fight for the farmers. Stop saying that's not my job. Shame on UF and shame on the county for tolerating it. Christine states "Yes, yes, Bryan" from Zoom.
- Scott reflects on trials conducted on his farm with UF/IFAS, such as the phosphorus studies. Questions why some projects are being studied at all, when they already know the answer being addressed. Why Russet potatoes?

- Prissy informs the committee of the upcoming workshop on conservation easements in Hastings on August 24th and encourages everyone to attend.

Committee Member Reports and Guest Comments

- Commissioner Murphy comments on changes from land acquisition to conservation easements and additional funding sources, such as the ballot initiative.
- Jackee inquires why we no longer have a County fair. Commissioner directs Prissy to follow up with an appointment with them to discuss.
- Maria stated that Tim has provided pasture management information to the Horse Council.
- Sol asks to clarify on the cost-share process.
- Sallie states her appreciation for the farming community and support for this committee on behalf of Hastings Main Street.
- Scott makes a motion to adjourn. Jackee seconds. All in favor, 5-0.
- Meetings ends at 7:59pm.