



## Meeting Summary

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### RLSA Restudy “Kick-off” Meeting

#### Introduction, History and Perspectives

*January 25, 2018, 6:30 PM, North Collier Regional Park, Exhibit Hall*

#### I Introduction and Selected History

Kris Van Lengen, Community Planning Manager, opened with welcoming statements at approximately 6:30 p.m. He advised that the meeting includes a series of presentations meant to provide background information and perspectives on the Rural Land Stewardship Area (RLSA) program and the Five Year Review. Mr. Van Lengen said there might be an opportunity for speakers from the audience after the presentations, however time is limited because the meeting room must be cleared at 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Van Lengen displayed the future meeting schedule and advised that future meetings will allow time for speakers from the audience; he said the next meeting is planned to open with time for public speakers, and each meeting thereafter will have time for speakers.

Mr. Van Lengen explained that the County has four restudies underway. The RLSA encompasses an extensive area and there are many interests in the area. He displayed the link to the County website (<https://www.colliergov.net/GMPrestudies>) and advised that it contains a great deal of information, with around 150 documents. The website is useful, and if anyone finds that information could be added to the website, the County welcomes that information.

Mr. Van Lengen explained that the “1999 Final Order” spawned the RLSA program and the Rural Fringe program. The program is for protection of agricultural activities, and protection from unrestrained growth to protect wetlands, protected species, and wildlife habitat. The program aims to direct growth to appropriate locations through creative land use planning techniques. The program is a way to balance continued agricultural viability, environmental resource protection, and long-term economic prosperity and diversification, including smart growth principles. These are the three legs of the three-legged stool, and the program is about balancing the three elements. In some cases, these elements reinforce each other, and in some cases, they don’t, especially land use allocations. That’s been a point of contention, and it’s important to consider all three and find balance.

Mr. Van Lengen said he was going to talk about a slice of history, but because there is such a lineup of speakers that he’s going to be brief. Instead of going into detail on footprints and 16,800 acres versus 45,000 acres, he said all slides will be available on the website, and a narrative report from

staff will be on the website. He said that it's important to start with consensus on the facts to move toward consensus on solutions. Mr. Van Lengen stated anyone is invited to critique staff's narrative after it is published next week. He said the narrative covers the program history of transmittal, adoption, assessment, base credits and bonus credits and how they were expanded. He said there was a quote in the staff's Executive Summary to the Board of County Commissioners that was repeated at transmittal and adoption stages, and it was misleading about the estimated 16,800 acres (or 9% of the RLSA study area) for clustered development. That statement was taken from the assessment out of context; it referred to base credits and not bonus credits. At that time, the bonus credits were simply not quantified in the way they could be today.

Mr. Van Lengen stated the RLSA program was adopted in 2002, and an excellent Five Year Review report was done but not adopted for a number of reasons. At this point, he said the original habitat areas, flowway areas, and water retention areas are high value environmental areas that are slated for protection. Almost an equal amount of 95,000 acres is open for development.

He explained that base credits yield around 16,000 acres of development. Early entry credits translate to another 3,400 acres of development. He said there was no way at inception to quantify restoration credits, quantification today relies on assumptions, and there is no cap on restoration credits. New ideas from the Five Year Review, such as agriculture protection in the open areas and panther corridors, were very important concepts that involved new credits, but they were not adopted. It was realized that too large a footprint was possible, so the footprint was reduced through different recommended strategies.

Mr. Van Lengen went on to discuss participation in Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs). He said of 90,000 acres, there are 50,000 acres protected under permanent Conservation Easements. The majority of the easements relate to agriculture, and some are at the conservation level. The easements are protective and require maintenance by the owner in perpetuity.

Mr. Van Lengen summarized that new towns of 9,000 acres include the 5,000-acre town of Ave Maria and an application for a new town called Rural Lands West. The SSA credits earned so far already entitle 16,000+ acres of development area, and at least 40% of the SSA areas are yet to be protected. These remaining areas will yield credits as well, and all of this information will be part of data and analysis during the Restudy.

Mr. Van Lengen said the evening's scheduled speakers will provide various environmental, citizen, landowner and agricultural perspectives. He said he hopes this is the beginning of an experience considering views and facts on this complicated topic, and it needs to begin with facts and slowly build to a consensus.

## II Comments by Stakeholder Groups

### 1. Florida Wildlife Federation Nancy Payton, *SW Florida Representative* (Maps were displayed.)

Ms. Payton introduced herself as the Southwest Florida Field Representative with the Florida Wildlife Federation. She explained her background with the Federation since 1994 when their Southwest Florida office was opened to address rural lands. She was the point person for the Federation involved in the Final Order and the planning process through today. The Federation and Audubon Society joined the State of Florida to challenge Collier County’s Growth Management Plan and its failure to protect wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Ms. Payton displayed an old Future Land Use Map that showed the rural area was not “green” at the time of the administrative challenge, which was an issue because of the significant wetlands and wildlife habitat in eastern Collier County. She displayed a map she dubs the “Blood Map” created by the 1000 Friends of Florida and University of Florida GeoPlan. The map shows the rural area as if there was no Rural Land Stewardship Overlay. Baseline density would be one unit per five acres with no protections, no clustering, just platted property and mining with little if any consideration for wildlife needs. She explained that this is why there was a challenge and Final Order for the County to generate a better plan.

She said that when the Final Order was issued, there were two major documents that were relied upon regarding wildlife:

- (1) A report by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, formerly the Game Commission, called “Closing the Gaps.” Eastern Collier County was identified as the most important wildlife area in Florida for wide ranging species (panther and black bear). She cited the report’s reference to the low percentage of conservation lands in this part of the state.
- (2) A report by Frank Mazzotti with University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). He studied the Immokalee Rise and his study identified the need for uplands to have healthy wetlands. The report is dated in the 1990s. Ms. Payton added that uplands are important, and they get overlooked when dealing with conservation.

Ms. Payton displayed the 2002 Buildout map for the Rural Land Stewardship Area, which she said shows the benefits of the RLSA program. She said that benefits include: more green area, connections are protected (including Camp Keais Strand and Area of Critical State Concern, connection to the Big Cypress National Preserve and the Slough, which helps move wildlife, particularly the panther). She went on to describe benefits of the current program including wildlife crossings. She described the crossing and bridge locations connecting private conservation lands (SSAs) thanks to the cooperation of private owners. She said there are roughly 50,000 acres that have been restored, privately maintained, and still on the tax roll.

Ms. Payton gave examples to illustrate why preserve lands are far too expensive for outright purchase. She said Edison Farms in Lee County was just purchased for roughly \$10,000 an acre. The Triple H Ranch in North Belle Meade was recently appraised at \$8,000 an acre. She calculated that 50,000 acres at \$9,000 per acre equals \$450 million, and noted that Florida Forever can't get \$100 million. She explained the RLSA allows for conservation to be done and maintained forever, for the benefit of wildlife, on the tax rolls. She said the goal is to conserve 100,000 acres or more, which would cost well over \$1 billion if it had to be purchased.

Ms. Payton described that 14,000 acres of preserved land buffer the Panther Refuge, and about 4,500 acres buffer the Big Cypress. Privately restored and maintained conservation habitat along Camp Keais Strand is ambitious and more supportive of wildlife than the boundaries determined by Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW), which only covered the deepest flowways and not upland buffers.

Ms. Payton asserted that the RLSA Program is a holistic approach for wildlife species that provides incentives, not burdens, for hosting listed species. The more species on the land, the more credits the land yields, and uplands get equal consideration.

Ms. Payton explained that a few other programs have come out of the RLSA Program. One is the Florida Panther Protection Program, which is a partnership of organizations and owners working cooperatively to enhance wildlife habitat. The \$150 million Paul Marinelli Trust Fund is anticipated for additional enhancements, including hopefully a wildlife institute for additional research in support of the Stewardship Area and the habitat that is forever protected.

Ms. Payton displayed a map based on amendments proposed by the Five Year Review Committee. She said it's restricted to 45,000 of developable land. She reminded that if 43,000 acres are to develop with credits, the balance would be for platted communities or mining. Agricultural credits allow areas to be protected for agriculture. She referenced that Frank Mazzotti's study emphasized the importance of agricultural and natural lands together for wildlife. She pointed out that the 45,000 acres of development includes public uses. Ave Maria University was not included before in the development area, and the Five Year Review Committee recommended including all uses in the development area.

She referenced the incentives for habitat links, coexistence plans, management plans, and dark skies strategies. She said Florida Wildlife Federation supports the RLSA program and looks forward to working together to make it a great program.

**2. 1000 Friends of Florida** **Thomas Hawkins, *Policy and Planning Director***

Mr. Hawkins noted that the Florida Legislature is in Week Three of its session. He shared that he has been with 1000 Friends of Florida for 18 months. He described that in 2014, 1000 Friends of Florida reviewed the RLSA on behalf of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. Their report recommended eight changes to the RLSA as it was originally created in 2002:

- The first recommendation was to re-evaluate the RLSA credit system. Originally there was a conception, as reflected in the Executive Summary to the Board of County Commissioners for approval of the RLSA, that the credit system would allow around 16,000 acres of development. He said it’s now known based on the credits available, around 43,000 acres is for urban type development (2.5 units per acre) and another 43,000 acres is for ranchette type development (one unit per five acres).
- The second recommendation was to restructure the RLSA to do more to protect rural agricultural lands.
- The third recommendation was to consider panther habitat when identifying protected lands.
- The fourth recommendation was to identify appropriate locations for new towns.
- The fifth recommendation was to address infrastructure costs, which Mr. Hawkins said he’ll discuss further.
- The sixth recommendation was to limit infrastructure in the Big Cypress Area of Critical State Concern.
- The seventh recommendation was to incorporate Immokalee in RLSA planning. He said an integrated plan will be better in the long run.
- The eighth recommendation was to limit the extensions of stewardship agreements to one year exemptions.

Mr. Hawkins reiterated a statement from the Executive Summary from the 2002 RLSA transmittal hearing regarding the credit system. *(For the text on the slide, refer to Mr. Hawkin’s PowerPoint presentation that is part of the record of this meeting.)*

Mr. Hawkins said it’s recommended to focus development in the secondary panther habitat and not to encroach on primary habitat.

Mr. Hawkins moved his focus to the cost of infrastructure and displayed images from Alachua County, Florida, produced by Joe Minicozzi of Urban 3, regarding ad valorem tax production geographically. He explained that downtowns are more productive of tax revenue because they are denser, create unique places, and more desirable due to sense of place. He said single family housing is not productive of taxes compared to shopping centers or undeveloped land, especially considering homestead exemptions.

Mr. Hawkins pointed out that development requires services, and the costs of services must be paid somehow. Costs to provide service to development is a function of how development is designed, and how much space is taken up. He referred to downtown areas, where development is very close together, and the ratio of developed space to length of roads is much different from suburban areas where it is more expensive to provide services to development. He gave the example that a small three-acre downtown development has higher productivity and ability to repay infrastructure cost than a suburban development. He said a thirty-acre development in the suburbs costs \$28,000 per unit for services compared to \$15,000 per unit in a downtown area,

and he summarized that the tax productivity is better for downtown style development compared to suburban development.

Mr. Hawkins urged review of walkability and density as development occurs in the RLSA, stating that higher density development is more desirable and incurs less public liability for costs in the long term. He concluded that building better communities and environmental conservation are mutually beneficial goals.

**3. Conservancy of Southwest Florida** **Nicole Johnson, Director, Environmental Policy**

Ms. Johnson described her tenure with The Conservancy since 1997, and that she was involved in the RLSA program since 1999. She said her presentation will focus on why the RLSA is important to all in coastal and eastern Collier County, what’s been learned over the past 16 years, and the Conservancy’s recommendations for moving forward together.

Ms. Johnson referenced the intent of the Final Order to protect agriculture, natural resources and habitats and allowing for Smart Growth development and avoiding sprawl. She said it all came together in the RLSA Overlay map, and the RLSA precludes residential development in flowway areas and habitat areas and allows intensification in certain areas.

Ms. Johnson reiterated the intent per staff’s Executive Summary to the Board of County Commissioners from the 2002 adoption hearing. She quoted:

“It is believed that the adoption and implementation of the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay will not result in an increase to the total number of allowable dwelling units or population in the Eastern Lands area, but rather result in a re-allocation of the density and population allowed under the pre-Final Order conditions from a land-consuming checkerboard pattern into compact, mixed-use development.” - Collier County Board of County Commission Adoption Hearing Executive Summary. Oct. 22, 2002.

Ms. Johnson said the whole intent was to remove the one unit per five acre development pattern and consolidate it into development areas. She said 16,800 acres and no ranchettes was the intent of the program. During the Five Year Review she said it was learned that there is capacity for 230% more new towns in the RLSA. Another 43,700 acres of ranchettes means 87,000 acres of towns and ranchette sprawl has resulted. She said there is a vast difference between 16,800 acres of compact development versus 87,000 acres of sprawl.

Ms. Johnson said The Conservancy’s recommendation is to reevaluate the RLSA based on the original intent. She said the RLSA program is complex with different layers and valuations, and the currency in the RLSA is a stewardship credit. She said in order to balance credits for the system to work, the RLSA requires eight stewardship credits to equate to 1 acre of development. She added that eight credits per acre is the balance for having the right amount of development and not having too much development.

Ms. Johnson said the system ended up with more credits than anticipated. Credits were added for restoration, which needs to be re-evaluated in the 2018 review, because credit is given not only for restoration, but for saying that the land can be restored by a third party. Ms. Johnson said this can be fixed by recalibrating the credits, meaning the 137,000 credits thought to be in the system could be factored by 2.3 times to equal the anticipated amount of development acreage, so that greater than eight credits still equals one acre of development.

Ms. Johnson said that The Conservancy concludes that 87,000 acres of new towns and ranchettes constitutes sprawl. She quoted:

“The large 93,000 acre area eligible for designation of receiving areas, which also allows the conversion of land uses to the underlying low-density uses, is the exact opposite of a plan to direct growth to the most suitable areas.” - Dept. of Community Affairs *Rural Land Stewardship Area Program 2007 Annual Report to the Legislature*

She said The Conservancy recommends, as it did during the Five Year Review, that these areas where intensification is allowed be re-evaluated based on latest science, economic conditions and the original intent of the program.

Regarding best available science, Ms. Johnson explained the RLSA was based on year 2000 science, and now 2018 is best available science. She gave an example of the area critical for the panther that could be more valuable and provide for protection of agriculture. She referenced a map prepared as part of the Five Year Review showing 45,000 acres of development area and highlighted the lines indicating expanded or new roads. The cost in 2010 was calculated by the Conservancy to be \$2.1 billion, some of which will be borne by taxpayers, which she said was learned from the Oil Well Road expansion. She said the costs to be borne by taxpayers, developers and new residents needs to be updated and evaluated.

Ms. Johnson said public participation has been a hallmark in the past for the RLSA program, and the Conservancy appreciates it being a part of the 2018 Restudy. She encouraged people to get involved and stay involved.

She ended by saying it’s rare to have a chance to reevaluate a program like this. It’s an opportunity to look at what went right or wrong in 2002, and what’s been learned since the Five Year Review. She said there is nothing binding us to the Five Year Review recommendations. She reiterated The Conservancy’s recommendations as the “five R’s”: reassess, recalibrate, revise the overlay, recalculate cost of infrastructure to taxpayers, and remember participation by all stakeholders is critical.

4. **Audubon of the Western Everglades**      **Brad Cornell, Southwest Florida Policy Associate**

Mr. Cornell explained the organization’s name was Collier County Audubon when they collaborated with other agencies and the State on the original RLSA related litigation against the

County. He said it’s important to think about the whole community and getting things done in the big picture. He said when things are going the wrong direction, it’s important to raise a hand.

Mr. Cornell was on the Five Year Review Committee, and he recalled that there was a lot of concern the RLSA program might not work, because no such program had been done before in the State of Florida. The Five Year Review was meant to evaluate whether the program’s intent was accomplished. He explained the Five Year Review Committee spent two years, and he showed that they wrote three volumes of material and pointed out that this Restudy is not new. He said the recommendations of the Five Year Review Committee had a great deal of public input and participation, and the Growth Management Plan (GMP) amendments that were recommended are still prudent today. He said the end for this Restudy is to look at the GMP amendments, tweak and update and adopt them, adding that almost all of 1000 Friends of Florida’s questions are answered in the GMP amendments.

Mr. Cornell gave highlights of the Five Year Review Committee’s Technical Review (Phase 1 Report). Almost 55,000 acres of stewardship sending easements had already been put in place, which is a lot of land and high quality habitat, which he said was a success. He said the 5,000 acres of Receiving Areas including Ave Maria was a success too. He said landowners did participate and saw value in this program. He described the current SSA acreage is 50,600 acres because one SSA was removed unfortunately, and new town of Rural Lands West is pending.

Mr. Cornell explained that an issue identified in the Five Year Review was that the leftover land constituting 43,000 acres of open land could become like the Estates or ranchettes. He said that’s sprawl, and another incentive is needed to prevent it.

Mr. Cornell showed a map of Camp Keais Strand, noting how it is almost entirely protected, which is a success.

Mr. Cornell discussed why the 43,300 acres of land is proposed for development. He said there is a need to calibrate credits, but what counts is the map in the end. The owners of almost 195,000 acres of land need to have access to equal benefits, otherwise the program does not work. He said 43,300 acres of equitably distributed development potential relates to 134,000 acres or 92,000 acres of benefit.

Mr. Cornell discussed the 17,000 acres of primary panther habitat and the conservative assumption that all of it would be destroyed, when in fact the permitting requirements for avoidance and minimization result in landowners developing least valuable habitat first. He said the impacts to primary panther habitat could be zero; it is offset by the mitigation credits.

Mr. Cornell displayed the adopted RLSA credit system and pointed out the restoration credits. He said it is not known how many credits restoration will yield and stressed that restoration is desirable.

Mr. Cornell pointed out important outcomes from the Five Year Review:

- Capping development at 45,000 acres.
- Recalibrating and prioritizing restoration by types of restoration, referring to wordstork, wetlands, and panther.
- Regarding the 43,000 acres with potential for one dwelling unit per five acres, he suggests agricultural easements. He stressed this is still not in the RLSA program, and this is what his organization is looking for.
- 45,000 acres for development is a lot, but it is over fifty years.
- The value of farm fields is that they provide two to three times as much panther habitat.

Mr. Cornell elaborated on the Florida Panther Protection Program, and said the Five Year Review was based on this. He said it’s a commitment between four leading conservation groups in 2008 and eight major landowners, and this was done in parallel to the Five Year Review and identified ways to improve rural land stewardship beyond the Five Year Review. Mr. Cornell advised that the \$150 million Marinelli fund is explained on [floridapantherprotection.com](http://floridapantherprotection.com), and that the program was reviewed by six panther experts, and their assessments agreed it’s positive and good for the panther.

**5. Collier Citizens Council  
Growth Management Committee**

**Charlette Roman  
Neville Williams**

Ms. Roman explained she is not representing Marco Island or the Marco Island City Council. She is representing the Collier Citizens Council, which is a coalition of leaders that represent citizens’ views on local and state policy. The Collier Citizens Council Growth Management Committee has been a part of the Restudy process since its beginning almost two years ago. She expressed appreciation for Growth Management staff for their professional efforts.

Ms. Roman said the focus of her presentation is on smart growth. Smart growth includes walkable communities, sustainability, compact new urbanism, green building standards, and eliminating gated communities with no connectivity due to car-centric design. She also shared the following principles of sustainable communities: connected, compact, complete, complex, convivial, conserving, and cost-effective. She said sustainable communities reinforce compact communities, making for livable and desirable places where people want to live.

Ms. Roman displayed images of Seaside, Florida as an example of new urbanism. She explained Seaside is walkable with green space and a town center. She also showed images of Kentlands in Gaithersburg, Maryland as another example of a success story, and said it shows effective environmental and urban design in a larger region, with central parks and green space. She showed images of Fifth Avenue South in Downtown Naples as another example.

Neville Williams explained he is not an expert, just a citizen. He lived in Kentlands, Maryland which was designed by Duany Plater Zyberg (DPZ), the original authors of smart growth. He said they planned in cooperation with the City, the County, landowners, and multiple developers. Mr.



- Participation is voluntary, and the same rights exist today that existed twenty years ago before this program; the overlay is a choice while protecting underlying rights.
- There are limited public dollars. The stewardship program relies on private ownership and management of conservation as another tool in the toolbox.
- Economics of growth drive the ability to conserve land. The credit system monetizes development rights to allow for preservation without costing public dollars.

Mr. Reynolds pointed out the Collier County program is a model for others throughout the state, and the program is award-winning. He explained around 80% of the eastern land is controlled by private owners, who are good stewards by either preserving or using the land for agriculture, and they've been cooperating for twenty years to make sure the program succeeds. He referred to the credit system and pointed out that the more valuable land is for environmental purposes, the more credit it generates. Landowners get more credit for protecting more environmentally sensitive land. By giving more credit for protecting high value environmental land, he said this makes sure the most important land is protected first. He highlighted that 50,000 acres of the most critical habitat has already been protected.

Mr. Reynold advised that any development at a density other than one unit per five acres requires use of the RLSA program. He also stated that all the estimated development acreages are assuming 100% participation by all private property owners in eastern Collier County.

Mr. Reynolds gave an example of scoring stewardship credits which can be sold or used for development. He explained that over 50,000 acres have been protected, and most of this was done in the first five years of the program. He said the target for protected lands in 2025 was 89,300 acres, and the vision for 2050 is 134,000 acres.

Mr. Reynolds suggested that the RLSA program is one of the five most successful transfer of development rights (TDR) programs in the United States. He pointed out the two public conservation programs in Southwest Florida are Conservation Collier and Lee County Conservation 2020, and they are both funded with tax dollars and are both successful. He said the incentivization of private conservation is a good way to contribute to successful outcomes. He said Conservation Collier has \$144 million in economic benefit annually per the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council formula for quantifying conservation in terms of ecosystem service value (or “TEV” value) to monetize public benefit value. He said the Rural Land Stewardship program has incurred zero cost and has \$1 billion of economic benefit for the 53,000 acres preserved. He suggests a balance of programs including public acquisition and incentivized private conservation.

Mr. Reynolds also spoke on behalf of Barron Collier Companies. He explained they have owned 65,000 acres, approximately one-third of the RLSA area, since the 1920s. He said they developed Ave Maria and protected 17,000 acres by creating the first SSA, and conservation and active agriculture was included in the sending area. He said Barron Collier Companies are retaining ranching along with conservation, and they enabled panther crossings at no public cost.

Mr. Reynolds said Ave Maria is the fastest growing master planned new town in Southwest Florida, and infrastructure inside the town was put in place by the private owner at no cost to the County. He said Ave Maria has brought diversity and investment to eastern Collier County, which is part of the RLSA balance for economic diversity and prosperity. He also said the \$200 million university with 1,100 students couldn't have happened without the RLSA program. He added that Arthrex built a 400,000-square foot facility in Ave Maria employing 1,600 people, helping meet the goal of the program to bring economic development to Collier County.

**7. Collier Enterprises** **Christian Spilker, Vice President Land Management**

Mr. Reynolds spoke on behalf of Collier Enterprises, stating that they own approximately 44,000 acres. Their Rural Lands West proposal has been in process for approximately three years, with around 18 months left to go. He said Rural Lands West will be a complete town with a 4,000-acre development footprint, and 1,400 acres are open space. He pointed out the development footprints must have 35% open space. He said the project represents a tax base of \$2.8 billion and will generate \$260 million in impact fees.

Mr. Reynolds said the Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs) constitute regional scale habitat, providing a complete connection from Corkscrew Marsh to the Panther Refuge through Camp Keais Strand. He said this completes the conservation vision for land that is worth \$80-120 million but won't cost tax payers a dime.

**8. Barron Collier Companies** **Tom Jones, VP, Government Affairs**

Mr. Jones said Barron Collier Companies is the largest property owner in eastern Collier County. He referred to other presenters' references to the timeframe of 1999, and he said it's important to consider events before 1999. He said the challenge to the Growth Management Plan was then assumed by participants in the process to be resolved by downzoning all property east of Golden Gate Estates so that land allowed with a density of one unit per five acres would be downzoned to densities of one unit per twenty or forty acres. He said landowners of eastern Collier County had no idea there was a settlement agreement by interest groups with the State of Florida.

Mr. Jones described how Barron Collier Companies is a multigenerational company that has been good stewards for decades, and there has never been a shortage of other people deciding what to do with Barron Collier Companies' property. Rather than pursuing a lawsuit, Barron Collier Companies worked with consultant Al Reynolds to take a step back and set a direction for what landowners could do with their property. He said the Governor and Cabinet and landowners agreed to a three-year moratorium to study how development could proceed while protecting resources and maintaining the agricultural base. After three years, all parties agreed the RLSA program is a good program. He pointed out that Rural Lands West will be the second town; Ave Maria was the first.

Mr. Jones said the outcome of the 2008 Five Year Review was worthwhile, and the map got more “green.” He recommended that the outcomes of the work done in 2008 should be considered, and he supports moving forward with the recommendations of the Five Year Review.

**9. Consolidated Citrus LP                      Mitch Hutchcraft, VP, Real Estate**

Mr. Hutchcraft stated that Consolidated Citrus is a landowner within the RLSA. The parent company of Consolidated Citrus is King Ranch, which has a legacy of agricultural innovation and stewardship and is one of the largest citrus producers in the United States. The company is proud of its operations and land management practices and its history of cooperating with environmental partners to achieve regional goals.

Mr. Hutchcraft said connected open spaces and wildlife areas are critical. He said the RLSA will provide long term environmental benefits, and the benefits are maximized when agriculture is a valued part of the regional landscape. He also said that incentives to protect natural resources and economically viable agriculture are critical to achieving regional goals. King Ranch and Consolidated Citrus are supportive of the RLSA program, and their corporate interest is to remain in agriculture as long as it is economically viable, which could be five to fifty years. As adopted, the current program does not provide incentives or assurance for agricultural use, which leads to these lands to be unprotected and ultimately developable as low density residential.

As part of the Five Year Review, Mr. Hutchcraft supported updating incentives for retaining long-term agriculture. He said this must be done in a way that ensures equity for all landowners regardless of size or number of credits. He stressed that all parties agreed with the need for incentives to retain agriculture, and that incentives to retain agriculture would assure less open land conversion to one dwelling per five acres. He added that incentives to retain agriculture also provides an opportunity for agriculture to transition and buffer between natural areas and developed areas. He also said incentives for retaining agricultural lands ensure credits are in the system for developing later, and this warrants recalibrating the credit system.

Mr. Hutchcraft supports the Five Year Review recommendations to further the intent of the RLSA program, consistent with recommendations of DCA and the Five Year Review Committee. He encouraged putting weight on the Five Year Review Committee’s work and recommendations to recognize the value and importance of agriculture retention credits, and to provide equity for all to participate in the program in a meaningful way.

**10. UF/IFAS-Southwest Florida Research & Education Center                      Dr. Fritz Roka, Food and Resource Economics**

Dr. Roka began his presentation on the Economic Importance of Agriculture to Collier County and Southwest Florida by stating that agricultural activities should be valued. He displayed Agriculture Census data indicating agricultural land has decreased in Collier County over fifteen years, but the number of farms has increased, indicating diversity. He said the value of land is \$1.8 to 2 million per farming activity, which is an increase in value per acre.

Dr. Roka disagreed that there was no value in eastern Collier County before Arthrex. He highlighted the following statistics on the economic conditions for the area:

- \$2.6 billion in direct sales in mining, recreation, agriculture, which produces \$4 billion in economic impact
- For every dollar of taxes in agricultural areas, it costs the government thirty cents in services. This is a surplus of value for agricultural areas.
- The total economic impact correlates to 49,000 jobs generated from agriculture and natural resources.
- In the Southwest Florida five county area, farm value is over \$1.3 billion.

Dr. Roka explained there are high risks in agriculture. Hurricane Irma devastated citrus groves, but there is still optimism. He explained that significant dollars are spent to produce and harvest agricultural crops, and break-even financials are precarious. He said the agriculture industry has done a phenomenal job of coping with various challenges and bouncing back with help from a diversity of products and producers.

Dr. Roka said it’s important to recognize that agriculture is a business, and there needs to be a reasonable rate of return for the business. He said that enhancing the value of agriculture through public policy is going to help keep the industry going. He urged that benefits to the agriculture community can be beneficial to other aspirations of the RLSA program.

Dr. Roka shared thoughts about agriculture being considered adversarial in Southwest Florida; it’s considered detrimental to the environment. In fact, he said there is synergy between agricultural and environmental interests. He said it is good to enhance and extract environmental benefits from agricultural land with a reasonable rate of return for the landowner. He added that there is opportunity for wildlife habitat, however ranchers need compensation for calves that have been food for panthers.

Dr. Roka mentioned best labor practices and that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers has done a lot for the industry. He said that social justice is happening in Immokalee, yet no value is going to growers in exchange for the good labor practices they perform. He said this is an opportunity to market the good practices and return value to the growers.

**11. Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce      Michael Dalby, *President and CEO***

Mr. Dalby said the mission of the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce is to make Collier County the best place to live, play and work in the United States. His focus is on economic prosperity and his plea is to reserve space in the RLSA for primary employers. He explained how employers are important to the community and displayed a list of various companies that are primary employers, which provide high paid high skill jobs and are primary economic drivers.

Mr. Dalby identified there are challenges and opportunities in eastern Collier County. He identified the challenge of population growth, and the continued need for jobs. He said he seeks to find companies that will bring high wage jobs to the region. Another challenge he identified is that the

top five occupations from 2016 to 2024 are lower wage service jobs. He also identified that primary employers need talented employees with proper skill sets, which makes workforce training important. Yet another challenge he identified is commercial real estate availability and limitations on primary employer space, Class A office space, business parks, and technology parks.

Mr. Dalby displayed a map showing primary employer locations scattered around Collier County and pointed out that there are no strong geographic clusters. He said eastern Collier County allows spaces to plan for a business park or tech park. He shared that Lee County has a tech park, and letters have been sent to attract Collier County businesses to the 135-acre clustered tech park for high wage and high skilled job opportunities in conjunction with Florida Gulf Coast University. He said this is something that could be accomplished in Collier County. He described opportunities in the eastern lands for two such parks, including one operated by Collier County. He stressed he is not suggesting recruitment. He envisions growth of small businesses that are in Collier County now.

Mr. Dalby concluded that the plea of the Chamber of Commerce is to include space for primary employers in the RLSA to provide for economic opportunity and living wage jobs.

## **12. League of Women Voters                      Charlotte Nycklemoe, Co-President**

Ms. Nycklemoe spoke without digital aids. She said growth management is priority issue for the League of Women Voters. She said the group has a long commitment to smart growth and protecting environmentally sensitive lands. She also said they support development that supports its own impact and support government action that results in sustainability for this generation and future generations.

Ms. Nycklemoe said all members of the Collier County community are affected by what happens in the RLSA. She expressed concern that not all members of the community are aware of the workshop meeting schedule and urged the County to reach out in many forums and venues to inform citizens about the RLSA and related decisions. She asked that the County move the next four workshops from 4:00 p.m. to later in the evening for working people to attend.

Ms. Nycklemoe agreed that re-evaluating the RLSA program using County staff is vital to success and may provide an unbiased approach. She stated that in 2002 the RLSA program was adopted to protect agricultural land, direct incompatible uses away from wildlife and listed species, and to allow appropriate development while avoiding sprawl. She said the original RLSA established that only 9% or 16,800 acres would be developed, and the rest would remain in agriculture and conservation. She said the Restudy should consider Environmental Advisory Council recommendations generated during the Five Year Review, most importantly the issue of credits that exceeded the original RLSA program, because she said the proliferation of credits or incentives would contradict the integrity of the 2002 program.

She expressed concern of water supply impacts to the Lower Hawthorne aquifer. She referenced a 2016 report by the University of Florida, the Florida Department of Agriculture and 1000 Friends of Florida titled the “Water 2070 Report,” which examined water availability and needs of people, agriculture, and the environment. She said much has changed since the original RLSA was adopted and the Five Year Review was published. She referenced three studies by panther experts that identify areas in the RLSA that are essential for the survival of the panther. She referenced new water studies including the 2016 Water 2070 Report. She said the new information and other changes like climate change, increased traffic, and population growth need to be factored into a new proposal.

Following Ms. Nycklemoe’s conclusion, Kris Van Lengen apologized that no time remained for speakers from the audience because the room must be cleared before 9:00 p.m. He said the next meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. in the same room, four weeks from today. He said anyone who had submitted a speaker slip will get priority to speak at the next meeting, and the time limit for speaking will be extended. In response to an audience question about changing the start time of the next meeting, Mr. Van Lengen said the Oversight Committee will be polled to determine whether to change the start time.

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:45 p.m.