

**URBAN EXPANSION AREA TASK FORCE  
MEETING SUMMARY**

South Dade Regional Library  
10750 SW 211 Street, Cutler Bay, FL 33189  
October 16, 2017

**Task Force Members Present**

Kerri Barsh, Ashley McElheny, Erin Clancy, Eric Guerra, Enid Washington Demps, Alex Diaz\*, Nick Diaz, Dany Garcia, Steve Green, Richard Grosso (left at 2:50), Mike Hatcher\*, Thomas Hawkins, James Humble, Yesenia Fatima Lara, Maria Lievano-Cruz, Bill Losner, Francisco Pines, Robert Johnson\*, John Renne, Laura Reynolds, Barney Rutzke Jr., Paul Schwiep, and Larry Ventura. (\*Present after roll call)

**Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER) Planning Division Staff**

Kimberly Brown, Supervisor of Long-Range Planning; Jerry Bell, Assistant Director for Planning; Noel Stillings, Senior Planner; Mark Dorsey, Principal Planner; Helen Brown, Principal Planner; John Lucas, Principal Planning (Planning Research Section)

**Other Miami-Dade County and Government Staff**

Dennis Kerbel (Assistant County Attorney), Charles LaPradd (Miami-Dade County Agricultural Manager)

**I. Attendance**

Ms. Stillings called roll of the members, 20 Members of The Task Force were present. The meeting commenced at 1:11 pm.

**II. Approval of August 28, 2017 Meeting Summary**

Board Member Humble made a motion to accept the August 28, 2017 meeting summary. Board Member Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. Staff Coordinator's Report**

Kimberly Brown stated that today's meeting is the first substantive meeting of the Task Force and will cover agriculture considerations. Ms. Brown reviewed the items that were provided in the agenda package in response to requests by the Task Force at the prior meeting including a map of zoning outside of the UDB, sea level rise vulnerability maps for the county, and a timeline for the Task Force to complete recommendations before May 2018.

**IV. Scheduled Presentation: CDMP Policies related to Agriculture**

Ms. Brown provided a presentation on CDMP policies relevant to agriculture including:

- encouraging agriculture as a viable economic use of suitable lands is a long-standing principle of the CDMP.
- the permitted uses in the "Agriculture" and "Open Land" land use categories
- the requirements in CDMP Policy LU-8H which require an applicant requesting expansion of the UDB to participate in the Purchase of Development Rights or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs (the Severable Use Rights program is the only current TDR program), and provide buffering to adjacent agriculture land.

- the requirements of CDMP Policy LU-8G Areas which identifies areas that “shall not be considered” for expansion of the UDB including the Redland area south of eureka drive and the areas that “shall be avoided” for expansion of the UDB including land designated agriculture on the LUP map except when located within a designated UEA
- CDMP Policy LU-1R which requires the County to take steps to reserve the amount of land necessary to maintain an economically viable agricultural industry and to adopt a TDR program.
- Ms. Brown showed a map that identifies properties with an agricultural classification but indicated that its accuracy is limited because some properties may only have the classification on a portion of the property.

**V. Scheduled Presentation: Overview of the Agricultural Industry**

Charles LaPradd, Miami-Dade County Agricultural Manager, provided an overview of the industry including:

- The impact of agriculture to the County is about \$600 to \$700 million per year depending on season, weather, etc., which equates to a \$2 billion economic impact to the county.
- The industry has approximately 20,000 direct and indirect jobs and a direct payroll to agriculture employees of approx. \$132 million per year.
- The County ranks as the only subtropical growing region in the continental US, which makes us extremely unique. The County ranks No. 2 in Florida in crop value that is sold, and No. 22 in the US for the value of our products. The County ranks No. 1 in snap beans, avocado, nursery products, and various tropicals, including No. 1 in sweet potatoes (aka boniato, and not the typical Beauregard sweet potato) and 8<sup>th</sup> in the entire nation for sweet potatoes; we fluctuate between No. 1 and No. 2 in sweet corn and squash, including yellow and zucchini. There is an 80% chance that the vegetables on your plate during the winter season are grown here.
- Our major crops are ornamental plants, in the past it was vegetables, which are now second, and fruits (primarily avocados, which are the largest by volume per acre, followed by longans, dragon fruit, and guavas (the pink flesh and the Thai/Asian variety). In response to a question, he replied that tomatoes are mistakenly classified as a vegetable by USDA. Mr. LaPradd indicated that we are 5<sup>th</sup> in the state, and cichlids and Koi are the high dollar value crops produced per square foot, making koi the highest value agriculture product per square foot.
- Mr. LaPradd presented a table of agriculture classified properties from the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser. He said that there are some differences between the US Census and the Property Appraiser data based on how the acreage is calculated, but we have approximately 58,000 acres.
- Our major markets are primarily east of the Mississippi, Canada, the Caribbean (many at the area resort hotels) and some high value goods to Europe. Our growth sectors are moving into Asian crops; we are now No. 1 in the state with the number of Asian growers, mainly Southeast Asia such as Thailand Cambodia and Vietnam. This area remains to be the only area capable of growing Latin fruit and vegetables, and we have a growing market in that as well. The flower and indoor container plants are growing; agritourism is growing and the state has made significant changes in laws regarding agritourism, which have preempted this county in many things, and others throughout the state, but it serves as a secondary source of income for farmers.

- Major issues affecting the agriculture industry include foreign competition, in-state competition, phytosanitary issues, regulations, disasters, water and land ownership patterns. The County produces high value crops but also at a high cost. Our growing season is similar to the lower cost producers in the world, such as Mexico, Dominican Republic, etc. so we have issues with those foreign trade agreements and have wreaked havoc on certain crops such as tomatoes, and other changes have taken place such as growth of Asian and Latin crops. In-state competition has eliminated our potato crops, which we stopped growing in 2005, due to farming occurring in other areas of the state which can grow 100 bags per acre more than here. In addition, we continue to face one new plant pest disease (plant/pest diseases) each month due to our location to the ports—we just recently got out of a quarantine (Oriental Fruit Fly) which covered 14,000 acres and millions of dollars. Regulations also affect the agricultural industry. Natural disasters, such as Irma which cost growers about \$250 Million in damages in 1 day, and we are subject to Mother Nature more than other industries. With respect to water, we have too much rather than too little, and its artificial movement throughout the region in places where it should not be. Land ownership patterns also affect the industry, about 50% is owned by real estate speculators or investors and is leased to farmers year to year or short term leases rather than being owned by farmers.

***Task Force Discussion:*** Board Member Pines asked whether the Krome Avenue expansion has had impacts on water levels on farmland. Mr. LaPradd replied that it can, anytime land is raised to a higher elevation than an adjacent farm it can cause runoff onto the adjacent farm.

Board Member Reynolds asked whether there have been impacts to farmland as a result of saltwater intrusion or sea level rise. Mr. LaPradd indicated that, if water levels are high in the canals, it is difficult to drain areas down south where there are no pumps. He further indicated that some impacts occur during king tide events.

Board Member Renne asked whether the agricultural industry is seeing potential increases in investments or changes with the renegotiation of NAFTA and whether it will have a positive/negative impact. Mr. LaPradd replied there is cautious optimism and that it would have a tremendous impact, but it depends on how it is renegotiated. Scrapping the whole agreement is not going to happen, but tweaks will help. One of the things the local agriculture community has always had an issue with are the “anti-dumping” rules (which prevent other countries from selling products below their own production costs). Currently, it needs to affect 50% of the industry to allow for a suit to be brought. One proposed change would allow for “seasonal suits” so that during our growing season, if the products from another country are sold at a lower than agreed upon floor price, the affected party can file a lawsuit against that producer.

Board Member Green stated that labor is also a major issue and includes high housing costs, transportation and immigration status. LaPradd said there’s a new agriculture jobs bill which may help resolve this issues.

Board Member Barsh inquired about the top factors that would help to maintain a viable agriculture industry. LaPradd said he’s not sure the government can maintain the industry,

*the best thing is for the county to get out of the way. The county can do things that inhibit agriculture, such as approving a development adjacent to agriculture land without proper buffering or setback; or restricting what can be grown such as seasonal agriculture limitations.*

*Board Member Humble said the most profitable crops in Dade County are the crops that cannot be imported such as nursery plants (due to limitations on importing soil), mamey, longan, boniato, etc. This is why the growth in this county has been in nurseries. Board Member Losner further stated that if soil is allowed to be imported into this country, it would be the end of the ornamental industry. Mr. LaPradd clarified that there are currently no proposals to change the laws that prevent the importing of soil and added that the same restrictions prevent the County from sending potted plants to Europe.*

*In response to a question from Board Member Pines, Mr. LaPradd indicated that ownership patterns vary by agricultural sectors. Indoor plants and smaller shade house operations tend to be farmer-owned, but many field nurseries and vegetable growers are on year to year leases, which inhibits major investments in irrigation systems, fencing, and other equipment.*

#### **VI. Scheduled Presentation: Purchase of Development Rights Program**

Charles LaPradd, Miami-Dade County Agricultural Manager, provided a presentation on the Purchase of Development Rights program including:

- In 2004 Miami-Dade County voters approved the Building Better Communities General Obligation Bond Program. As part of the bond program, the residents of Miami-Dade County voted to expend \$30 million for the acquisition of development rights agricultural property through a purchase of development rights program. In 2016, the Board of County Commissioners allocated \$10 Million to beach re-nourishment program, with promise to return the \$10 Million through other sources.
- Miami-Dade County utilizes its PDR program to purchase conservation easements that limit the residential development opportunity on viable agricultural properties from willing sellers.
- Only lands with available density outside the UDB, designated agriculture by the CDMP map and currently farmed are eligible for the program.
- The purchase of these rights will help to ensure that the property will remain undeveloped and available for agricultural uses. Benefits include the ability to maintain the rural character of the agricultural area, a more diversified economic base, aquifer recharge and an improved quality of life.
- Mr. LaPradd reviewed the review process for PDR applications. He indicated that staff reviews the application for soil, size, cost, historic use, adjacent uses, and other factors, then makes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.
- Mr. LaPradd indicated that easements have been acquired on 664 acres and another 142 acres are in the process of closing. All acquisitions have been acquired with matching grant funding from the USDA. Approximately \$7 million of the PDR allocation has been spent to date.

**Task Force Discussion.** Board Member Reynolds asked how the program could be more attractive to landowners. LaPradd said he gets a lot of applications from owners of 5-acre properties, but the program does not allow that unless the parcel is adjacent to another parcel. Board Member Reynolds asked if that requirement should be changed. He said no, unless it is adjacent to a 20-acre parcel, or if there are 5-acre parcels together, but to spend limited funds on a small isolated property is not efficient use of the funds; a 100-acre parcel would be better. He also said the funds are allocated annually and the most he has received from the bond program is about \$3 million a year. One year the USDA offered him \$8 million, but the county could not match those funds, so he had to turn it down. In response to a question from Board Member Grosso, Mr. LaPradd indicated that the USDA match funding is likely to continue, but it depends on how the Farm Bill progresses, which is currently being drafted. Mr. LaPradd further indicated that there are many owners of agricultural land that do not reside in this country and are not eligible to receive federal funds.

Board Member Renne indicated that a lot of farmers are looking at the tradeoff between preserving their land or selling for potential development and inquired about the comparison between the county's purchase price for land on a per acre basis compared to the market price for development purposes. Mr. LaPradd replied that every parcel in the county is appraised, and every sale price is different. Mr. LaPradd indicated that there was low interest in the PDR program during the recession. A property owner's interest in the program typically depends on the person, the property location and their business model. The average age of growers in the County is about 60 years old. Four properties that participated in the PDR program have since been sold and all were good sales.

Board Member Humble stated that mortgages on land can be the beginning of the end for a farmer. Farmers tend to get underwater and lose their farm. It looks like the parcels you purchased rights on holds off the potential loss of the property. However, if the property can't be farmed, it is difficult to get any value from the land. You may be giving up the long-term value of the land by participating in the PDR program. Mr. LaPradd agreed that if the land could not be farmed due to external influences, it would be difficult to use the land for anything else once the property rights are acquired through the PDR program.

Board Member Rutzke asked whether there are any restrictions on the type of agriculture you can have on the land in the PDR program and whether it is permissible to build a nursery shadehouse. Mr. LaPradd replied that the USDA has restrictions and MDC has restrictions. There are no restriction on what you can grow, other than marijuana. You can have structures similar to shadehouses but you cannot exceed 2% total impervious surface.

Board Member Diaz indicated that there are a handful of field grow nurseries on the east side of the UDB but they are vacant for most of the year and inquired as to why there are not used year-round. Mr. LaPradd replied that it is due to the specific farming season depending on the crop. The primary crop on the east side is sweet corn and the market for that crop is at the beginning of the year. The market is not strong at the end of the year because you are competing with Georgia and North Florida. Board Member Diaz asked whether other crops can be grown in that area with the Marl soil. Mr. LaPradd replied that

*there are a lot of crops that be grown on the east side, Marl is a good producing soil. He further indicated that it is not a matter of what you can grow, it's a matter of what you can sell. It may also be limited in the summer due to the high water table and drainage limitations. He further emphasized that there is a lot that can be done with the land on the east side and indicated that it is the area where farming typically occurred. Board Member Humble further stated that most of the farming in the 1950s was on the east side, including potatoes and tomatoes. The rest of the farming, thousands of acres, were also farmed in the "Hole in the Donut" which is now inside Everglades National Park. In response to a question from Board Member Diaz, Mr. LaPradd clarified that NAFTA is not what affected potatoes, it was the fact that it could be grown cheaper elsewhere. We got down to planting one crop which make the market very susceptible to impacts such as floods.*

*Board Member Barsh asked Mr. LaPradd about the reason for the seasonal agriculture restriction in the CDMP. Mr. LaPradd indicated that the County just wanted to make sure that no one lost money since these areas tend to be wet and have a higher than normal water table especially during certain times of the year. Mr. LaPradd indicated that there are many crops that can grow in those areas year round such as Royal Palm. In response to a question from Board Member Barsh, Mr. LaPradd clarified that the seasonal agriculture limitation applies to all types of agriculture, it is not restricted to a specific crop.*

*In response to a question from Board Member Losner, Mr. LaPradd indicated that approximately 12,000 acres of agricultural land has been moved to public ownership for purposes of everglades restoration. Board Member Reynolds asked how many acres of agricultural land has been lost to development. Mr. LaPradd was unsure of the exact amount. Board Member Humble indicated that a consultant was hired many years ago and found that the amount of agricultural land lost to development was only 487 acres.*

*Board Member Renne asked about the amount of local agricultural production that is consumed locally. Mr. LaPradd replied that it depends on the crop. Between November and April, Miami-Dade County produces enough green beans to feed the entire east coast.*

*Board Member Barsh asked for a description of how agricultural products are transported. Mr. LaPradd indicated that 99 percent is transported by truck. In March, there are 5,000 to 6,000 trucks on the road transporting agricultural products. Board Member Barsh asked for clarification on the concern with pests entering through the Port. Mr. LaPradd clarified that the concern is related to pests entering through the Port and affecting our agricultural industry.*

*Board Member Grosso asked for clarification on whether loss of farm land due to price increases as a result of land speculation or land use change has a negative impact on agriculture. Mr. LaPradd clarified that land that is purchased by developer can still be farmed, and they usually do farm it for the favorable property tax status. However, if the investor has an expectation of development in the near future, they tend to do shorter leases with the farmer. It's difficult for farmers to make investments in the property in these circumstances.*

*Board Member Grosso inquired about the amount of land required to maintain an economically viable agricultural industry as required by CDMP Policy LU-1R. Ms. Brown stated that the necessary acreage was last quantified as part of a 2002 study that showed that approximately 52,000 acres was needed to maintain a viable industry and that approximately 58,000 acres remain.*

*Board Member Pines discussed recent newspaper articles that indicated that only 10% of the negative impacts to agriculture can be attributed to development and that the most influential factors included NAFTA, pests, natural disasters, etc. Mr. LaPradd clarified that development next to farms does make it difficult to farm. In response to a question from Mr. Pines, Mr. LaPradd clarified that, to his knowledge, the policies in the CDMP have not been changed due to NAFTA.*

*Board Member Green indicated that new people are not going into farming so it's not being passed down to the next generation. Mr. LaPradd indicated that this is a national problem as well as a local problem. Young people do want to get into farming but it can be very expensive to get into farming with no family connection. Sometimes renting a farm can help a new start-up but the trade-off is that you can't leverage that land for lending purposes.*

*Board Member Barsh inquired about the impact from Hurricane Irma on the agricultural industry. Mr. LaPradd indicated that it was approximately \$250 million and further emphasized the vulnerability of the agricultural industry to weather-related impacts.*

*Board Member Barsh asked whether the agricultural industry has had a problem with a shortage of trucks. Mr. LaPradd stated that there is a shortage in the spring which is a normal industry pinch. He indicated that the larger concern is a current shortage of labor. Workers that would previously migrate here from Texas to work are now finding high wage, low skill jobs in construction due to the natural disasters that have occurred in Texas.*

*In response to a question from Board Member Reynolds, Mr. LaPradd indicated that he does not track the number of farms that are leased rather than owned but he would estimate that around 60% are leased.*

*Discussion ensued regarding areas that have been purchased by public entities for Everglades restoration. Board Member Humble indicated that many areas that were historically farmed for over 60 years are now considered to be wetlands.*

*(Board Member Pines distributed three newspaper articles: "South Florida's Shrinking Agriculture Industry Fights to Stay in the Game", "Crop Shift", and "South Florida's Shrinking Farmland")*

## **VII. Scheduled Presentation: Agricultural Trends and Projections**

Ms. Brown introduced John Lucas, Principal Planner with the Miami-Dade County Planning Research Section. Mr. Lucas provided a presentation on Agricultural Trends and Projections including:

- Mr. Lucas indicated that the information he would be presenting is based on two sources, the first is the Census of Agriculture and the second is the County's database on land use including the property appraiser database. In response to a question from Board Member Hatcher, Mr. Lucas clarified that the County's data source includes property appraiser information and the Research Section's current land use database which is based on site analysis. In response to a question from Board Member Green, Mr. Lucas indicated that the projections he will be presenting are based on basic assumptions using a linear trend. Mr. Lucas indicated that the Agricultural Census is conducted every five years and the most recent data is from 2012. The data comes from forms that are filled out by farmers. Hurricane Irma may impact the numbers for 2017.
- Mr. Lucas presented data that shows that the number of farms grew 56% to 2,954 between 1992 and 2012. The Census defines a "farm" as an establishment that sells more than \$1,000 in agricultural products.
- Mr. Lucas presented data that shows that the total acreage in farming fell 2.8% to 81,303 acres and the average farm size fell 36.4% to 28 acres between 1992 and 2012 which indicates that the average size of farms is decreasing.
- Based on industry trends, the number of farms is projected to grow 17.5% to 3,137 in the next 20 years. The number of farm acres is projected to decrease 4.4% to 74,750 Acres and the average farm size is projected to drop 29.8% to 21.2 acres by 2037.
- Almost all of the growth in the last ten and twenty year periods occurred in farms under 10 acres in size. Over 20 years, the number of farms under ten acres was up 81% to account for 69% of all farms.
- The average value of a farm in Miami-Dade County has grown 2.7% since 1992 in inflation adjusted dollars. However, after a peak reported in the 2007 Census, the average value has fallen 14.9% to \$699,700.
- On a per acre basis, the average value in inflation adjusted dollars grew 48% between 1992 and 2012 to \$25,423 per acre. This was achieved even after falling 17% between 2007 and 2012.
- The market value of total products sold was \$604 million in 2012. This was down 3.2% from 1992, and 17.5% from 2007. The average market value per farm of products sold was \$204,500 in 2012. This was down 38% from 1992, and 30% from 2007 partly reflecting the smaller size of farms.
- Total acreage outside the UDB with at least one residential unit grew 17% between 2007 and 2017. Such acreage represented 10.1% of Ag-land outside the UDB in 2017, up from 8.2% in 2007. 80% of this acreage with at least one residential unit had an agricultural exemption.
- Countywide there were 62,884 acres of agricultural land in 2017 according to the Miami-Dade Property Appraiser's records. Just 5,827 acres (9.3%) of this was inside the UDB, down from 12.8% in 2007. The total agricultural acreage declined by 5,800 acres between 2007 and 2017. Approximately half of the lost acreage was located inside the UDB (2,980, 51.3%) and half was located outside the UDB (2,830, 48.7%).

**Task Force Discussion.** Board Member Hawkins inquired about the cause of the decline in agricultural land in 2007. Mr. LaPradd indicated that he has found errors with the Agricultural Census data and often relies instead on data from the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser. The Census is compiled from surveys taken over a couple of years, it is not a snapshot of one year. In addition, it has the potential to double count land that is farmed by two different farmers during different times of the year. Since the Census is self-reported, a farmer may report total acreage when only a portion is used for farming. In contrast, the Property Appraiser only counts the portion of the land that is actually farmed. Board Member Green indicated that acreage can also get double counted in the Census if you interplant two types of fruit trees. Mr. Lucas stated that farms that are headquartered in Miami-Dade County may report acreage that is in another County which can skew the Census numbers.

Board Member Reynolds asked whether the uptick in 2007 could have resulted from a change in market value. Mr. LaPradd replied that it was more likely due to an agricultural reverification conducted by the Property Appraiser in 2005. At the same time, we had property values increase. Many people applied for agricultural classification during that time because the values were so high.

Board Member Green asked whether marijuana will be included as an agricultural product at some point. Mr. LaPradd replied that it would not be included until legalized by the Federal government.

Mr. LaPradd indicated that declines in market value between 2007 and 2012 could have been caused by a number of external events including the recession (there was a 60 to 80% decline in demand for landscape material), an uncharacteristic freeze in 2010 that went over 40 days, as well as, flooding and quarantines that affected agricultural products.

Board member Reynolds asked if the data was collected through voluntary methods such as a survey. Mr. Lucas stated that the data was based on their land use records, property records, aerial photography and site visits. Board members Schwiep and Nick Diaz questioned the why the loss was occurring. Mr. Lucas responded that the majority of agricultural land loss outside the UDB was due to government acquisition by entities such as the SFWMD, and inside the UDB was due to conversion to other uses such as residential and other factors. Board members Humble and Losner asserted that the government has purchased more agricultural land than indicated. Mr. Lucas clarified that the data was for the specific time period from 2007 to 2017. In response to an inquiry by board member Barsh, Mr. Lucas indicated that the data from the ongoing agricultural Census should become available in late 2018.

Board member Grosso indicated that he had to leave the meeting, and requested for Everglades National Park staff to present at the next meeting regarding the Everglades restoration. Ms. Brown responded that Superintendent Ramos indicated at the last meeting he was comfortable with the SFWMD presenting but that she could reach out to him again on that issue. Board member Garcia added that the entire County was part of the Everglades, and efforts are underway now to restore what was destroyed. Board member Hatcher opined that certain Community Council zoning decisions would explain the conversion of farmland inside the UDB. Ms. Brown added that the CDMP policy looks at the agricultural land use

*designation inside and outside the UDB differently. Ms. Brown explained that the CMDP envisions no new commercial agriculture inside the UDB, except for the “Horse Country” area; and there are CDMP policies for the protection of economically viable agricultural land outside the UDB. Board member Renne stated that if millions of people were to move into the County, there would still not be no commercial land inside the UDB to provide for them. Ms. Brown responded that while there are exceptions to where agriculture is permitted, generally the CDMP depicts urban land uses within the UDB.*

*Board member Renne wanted to confirm what he heard earlier that the local winter crop production was greater than the local food consumption, and Mr. LaPradd confirmed that statement was correct. Mr. Renne voiced his concern about the long-term supply and demand for projecting out long-term population projections and its impact on the agricultural industry. Mr. LaPradd reiterated the importance of local agriculture to the rest of the country, adding that the South Florida area south of Lake Okeechobee and southern California are the only two areas that conduct winter farming. Mr. LaPradd spoke about the future trends for both of those areas face not only local but also international pressure from competition. Mr. LaPradd stated that from a strategic standpoint of food production, if South Florida and southern California do not produce those crops then they will have to come from expensive greenhouse production, or be imported. Board member Losner suggested that people should look at the labels on their produce in the grocery store to see their country of origin, as fruits and vegetables are required to carry that label of origin. Board member Losner opined that seventy-five percent of the fruits and vegetables in the U.S. comes from foreign countries, and that due to citrus greening and the recent hurricanes to expect even more from countries such as Brazil. Board member Green disagreed, stating that the law changed and supermarkets no longer have to show the country of origin on the label.*

*Board member Garcia asked if the UDB were to be expanded would there be an increase of farmland within the UDB. Ms. Brown responded that if a property was currently designated as agricultural and the UDB was expanded to include it, then it would be redesignated to an urban land use. In response to Mr. Garcia’s follow-up query, Ms. Brown clarified that if that property was developed, it could not be changed back to farmland as it would not be consistent with the policies of the CMDP. County Attorney Kerbel added that while they had not seen that example, in theory a person could apply to change its land use, but it would be unlikely given that the concrete would be already in the ground.*

*Board member Losner opined that the agricultural designation outside the UDB of the one house per five acres was “lifestyle living” which attracted certain people to locate there, but once there then complained about agricultural practices such as the aerial spraying and farm tractors on roadways. Board member Hatcher stated that residents moving into the area should be aware of those agricultural conditions as the County passed a requirement for notification for property owners to inform them that they were moving into an agricultural area. Board member Reynolds questioned if there was any consideration to retract the five-acre agricultural land use policy to protect farmland from the “lifestyle living.” Ms. Brown stated that the potential issue of downzoning might be problematic because the state of Florida has strong private property laws. Board member Schwiep questioned if commercial farms are allowed within the UDB. Ms. Brown responded that the CDMP has designated as agriculture the areas outside the UDB and within the UDB only within the Horse Country area. In response*

*to Board member Schwiep and Pines comments, Ms. Brown stated that there were still some existing agricultural uses inside the UDB which are allowed to continue, but the assumption based on the future land use plan map is that eventually it would be converted to an urban use. County Attorney Kerbel pointed out that there were differences between the CDMP and zoning map in that the zoning map contained remnant parcels zoned AU (agriculture) which are allowed to continue, but that if you wanted to change its use to something else it might be deemed inconsistent with the CDMP. Board member Schwiep asked for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, and Ms. Brown responded that all of the presentations would be posted on the County's UEA website.*

*Board members Schwiep and Barsh questioned the loss and location of agricultural lands within the UDB. Mr. Lucas explained that approximately one-third of agricultural lands lost were within the UDB and that it was a net-acre figure. Board member Losner related that he had served on County zoning and planning boards and that the Planning Staff had always encouraged uses such as agricultural land within the UDB to be developed. Board member Humble described how the East Everglades study set aside thousands of acres for future farming and set the one house per forty-acre policy, but that the SURs had no receiving area for years. Board members Losner and Barsh questioned the usage and viability of the SURs. Ms. Brown explained that the SUR discussion would be addressed in detail in the upcoming scheduled environmental input session.*

*Board member Rutzke questioned the recent purchase of a 600-acre parcel outside the UDB by FPL for the purpose of installing solar panels. Mr. LaPradd explained that FPL had acquired property and that the parcel in question was a 400-acre parcel located by Krome Avenue and SW 136 Street currently leased out for farming which will continue until developed with the solar panels. County Attorney Kerbel indicated that there is a pending zoning application for the property that will be considered by CZAB 11 at a public hearing scheduled on October 31, 2017. Board member Reynolds suggested that rather than focusing on one particular parcel, there should be a discussion of potential solar farms and their potential impact to agricultural land and options within the CDMP to encourage solar on rooftops or by some other means. Ms. Brown stated that utility uses are allowed in the agricultural area if there is a demonstrated need or it is in the public interest and no suitable site exists outside the agricultural area for that use. Ms. Brown added that any applications for the use of solar panels in the agricultural area are reviewed on a case by case basis according to that criteria.*

#### **VIII. Public Comment**

Ms. Brown opened the meeting for public comment.

Speaker: Don Pybas. Mr. Pybas identified himself as the former County's Agricultural Extension Agent and explained that the Agricultural Census was a survey and thus subject to erroneous or duplicate information such as two people farming the same parcel. Mr. Pybas highlighted the crucial role of trucking in the agricultural industry due to 95% of locally grown produce being transported by truck. Mr. Pybas stressed the importance of the agricultural industry and added that only two packing houses remain in the County.

Speaker: Cooper McMillan. Mr. McMillan stated that there was 87,000 acres of agricultural land in 1987 and many acres were lost in the Frog Pond area, resulting in loss of extensive

agricultural lands. Mr. McMillan stated that while there was still agricultural land remaining, to remember the vital role of farmers in managing those farmlands. Mr. McMillan spoke of the challenges facing farmers, including theft, vandalism, and more restrictive lending laws. Mr. McMillan opined that the planned expansion of SW 137 Avenue might cause problems for the nearby agricultural activities.

Speaker: Arlene Samalion. Ms. Samalion identified herself as a member of the Redlands community and urged for the preservation of agricultural land. Ms. Samalion pointed out that her property included a County-designated Natural Forest Community (NFC) consisting of rare pinelands which helps with the oxygen and water ecosystems. Ms. Samalion voiced her concern for these valuable NFC lands and her desire that these lands not be impacted by any future east-west transportation corridor.

Speaker: Martin Motes. Mr. Motes identified himself as the owner of an orchid nursery. While it is correct that the average farm size is 28 acres, the mean size is less than five acres and over half are less than 7.5 acres. Future of south Florida agricultural industry lies in nurseries, horticulture, and specialty crops. There are agricultural techniques out of Indonesia that could be applied inside of the UDB. The value of developed land comes out of the taxpayer pocket in the form of infrastructure improvements. The developers should pay for the costs of development rather than the taxpayers. The salvation of agriculture in south Florida was the enactment of the 1 dwelling unit per 5 acre density limitation.

Speaker: Sidney Robinson. Mr. Robinson identified the need for real estate agents to fully disclose to prospective buyers the ongoing farm activities in the area including noise and odors. Mr. Robinson identified himself as a tropical fruit grower with his consumer base ranging from Key West to West Palm Beach. Mr. Robinson noted the need for transitional zoning adjacent to the agricultural area. Mr. Robinson posed two questions, namely: how much land zoned residential and agriculture inside the UDB has not been developed; and how much land inside the UDB that is available for redevelopment lies within the blighted urban areas? Mr. Robinson concluded his remarks stressing the importance of agriculture and not moving the UDB.

Speaker: Pat Malone. Ms. Malone gave an overview of some of her concerns regarding the Redlands and farming. She mentioned the loss of 158 acres of agricultural land near Krome Avenue and Kendall Drive. She indicated that there should be more opportunities for agriculture inside the UDB as there are food deserts inside the urban area and there are properties that are not being used or are undeveloped, and can be developed by someone who wants to provide local food. Farmers in South Dade don't just have the responsibility to provide fruits and vegetables for this area but have the responsibility to other parts of the country during the winter. We have a moral and economic responsibility to support the farmers and make sure we don't lose farmland.

Speaker: Margaret Pikarsky. Ms. Margaret Pikarsky identified herself as a small organic grower with a 5-acre parcel where she lives and grows. She noted that 95% of the food grown here is exported to be consumed by other parts of the country. The fact that we can produce fruits and vegetables during the winter time provides biosecurity. When we rezone agricultural land to a higher use, what are we saying, that we don't value the growing of food. We are losing agricultural land. The agricultural lands inside the UDB are being lost at a higher rate.

Expansion of the UDB into the UEAs will create a permanent loss of agricultural land. Land taken out of agricultural use does not go back to agricultural use. It is our responsibility to understand the important economic engine that agriculture provides for our area.

#### **IX. Task Force Discussion**

Board Member Losner discussed the value of farmland and how it affects agricultural lending. Farmland value in Miami-Dade County is \$37,000 or more per acre. In other areas of country the value is \$1,200 - \$2,500 per acre. It has been tough here for farmers. Banks locally would loan money based on the value of the land, but then came the Dodd Frank Act, unless they had another source of income other than the land, the banks had to stop loaning based on the value of the land. The point is that farmland is very expensive, farmers have a tough time buying land.

Board Member Lievano-Cruz noted that most of the speakers live or farm outside of the UEAs. She asked whether there is active farming in the UEA east of Krome Avenue from 8 Street - 88 Street. Mr. LaPradd responded that there is active farming including vegetables that change with the season, there are some u-picks and palms. Leases get traded frequently so the crops can also change frequently.

Board Member Green indicated that the mean agricultural acreage of approximately 28 acres which was presented Mr. Lucas is not the most useful measurement. The more useful measurement is the median size of a farm in Miami-Dade County which is between 5 and 10 acres. That is what we should consider to be the average farm size.

Board Member Reynolds discussed that many speakers expressed concerns with the expansion areas being so close to the agricultural land and to Krome Avenue; and on how that impacts existing farms and trucking for farms and the importance of transitional zoning. Ms. Brown indicated that along the majority of UDB adjacent to agriculture, the areas is designated for estate density which provide a transition to agriculture. There are portions, however, where the agricultural area abuts areas inside of the UDB that are designated as Urban Centers and permit higher densities and intensities. Mr. LaPradd further indicated that densities in this area are approximately 30 dwelling units per acre.

Board Member McElheny inquired if members are forced to consider additional areas for the UEA or can we change existing UEA's. Ms. Brown informed that the purpose is to provide recommendations on changes to the current boundaries of the UEA, creation of new UEA and changes to the criteria that should be considered for applications requesting expansion of the UDB.

Board Member Losner inquired about industrial uses outside the UDB. Mr. LaPradd indicated that there is some industrial outside of the UDB including a concrete plant and warehouses. Board Member Reynolds asked whether this is the reason for the UEA Study Area. Ms. Brown indicated that it is more related to the area's proximity to the Urban Center and premium transit service along the busway.

Board Member Schwiep asked how the current UEA were developed. Ms. Brown indicated the UEA's have been on the maps since 1983 with only minor changes. Important efforts have

occurred since that time including CERP, military compatibility efforts, and climate change modeling that have led to policy constraints in the current UEA.

Board Member Renne indicated that it would be helpful to know how much agricultural production is occurring in the UEAs and the UEA study area; and the amount of agricultural land that would be lost if these lands were changed and developed in those areas. Mr. LaPradd indicated that all of the areas are suitable for agricultural production. He further indicated that Dr. Evans, Chief Economist, University of Florida, could run numbers on what is being farmed now, including the average land being farmed, types of crops and production numbers. In response to a question from Board Member Barsh, Mr. LaPradd clarified that the UEA near SW 8th Street is not currently being farmed, but farming is occurring on vast majority of all the other UEAs and adjacent to the Study Area.

Board Member Reynolds indicated that she is interested in a write-up on each of the areas, addressing agricultural use, sea level rise, the elevation, proximity to conservation and rock mining lands, in order to determine if these areas are appropriate for development.

**X. Set Dates for Future Task Force Meetings**

*(Ms. Kim Brown distributed email communication from Board Member Richard Gomez.)*

Ms. Brown informed the members that there are constraints under the Sunshine Law on site bus tour of the area, however a digital site tour using Google Earth can be provided to the members at a future meeting. Board Member Losner requested that copies of aerials of the UEA's be provided at the next meeting. Ms. Brown indicated those can be provided.

Ms. Brown indicated that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 30, 2017, at 1:00 at the South Dade Regional Library, for the Environmental Considerations Session and the speakers have been confirmed. Since the environmental agenda is quite long, the environmental issues will be divided into two input sessions and the second session will be grouped with the session addressing rockmining. At the October 30 meeting, the South Florida Water Management District will be addressing CERP and East Coast Buffer, Miami-Dade County Division of Environmental Resource Management will be addressing wellfield protection and threatened and endangered species. Presentations on Sea Level Rise and the Severable Use Rights program will be moved to the next session which has a tentative date of Friday, November 17, 2017.

Members discussed meetings dates and not changing the dates once they have been set as members have put dates on their schedule. Ms. Brown indicated that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is under travel restrictions due to Hurricane Irma so she is not able to confirm a date with them yet, so some flexibility is needed for the future dates. Ms. Brown also indicated that she has not yet been able to confirm whether Mr. MacVicar will be available to present at the next meeting.

Board Member Reynolds suggested that Everglades National Park and/or the Army Corp of Engineers also present on the Everglades at the next meeting. Ms. Brown clarified that under the 'Scheduled Presentations' section of the meeting the presenters will be limited to governmental agencies. The Task Force members voted at the last meeting to include the

'Other Presentations' section on the Agenda for the Task Force members to provide additional time for other speakers that are not governmental agencies to address the Task Force.

Board Member Green stressed the importance of having a path to get to recommendations. He suggested that a questionnaire to each member may help to focus the input. Board Member Reynolds identified the importance of providing details on the four UEAs. Ms. Brown indicated that after all input sessions conclude, staff will be formulating recommendations based on what was discussed and on the questionnaire comments prior to formulating recommendations.

**XI. Adjourn**

Having no further business, the Board adjourned the meeting at 4:18 p.m.