



Meeting Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd., Bedford, VA 24523**

February 2, 2022 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers, Ethan Tanner, Pam Willoughby, Pete Fellers, Matt Baumgardner, Ken Newman, Lindsay Tomlinson

Absent: Joy Powers, Don Gardner, Chuck Grove, Sam Gardner, Dorothy McIntyre

Staff Present: Amanda Kaufman, Pam Bailey, Scott Baker, Holley Scheffel

Staff Absent: None

Guests: Supervisor Mickey Johnson, David Willoughby

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers asked for approval for the February 2, 2022 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 2, 2022 agenda as presented.

Adopted unanimously

Chairman Powers shared that county administration has asked the Ag Board to update its by-laws based on new information. Ms. Bailey stated that a few minor updates need to be made as well as a revision and an addition to the Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board by-laws as well. They are:

- (a) Amend the by-laws to permit the creation of ad-hoc committees

- (b) Amend the by-laws to change the appointed representation to allow a provision for those living outside of a particular district so long as they own property in that district.

Adopted unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – January 5, 2022

Chairman Powers asked for approval of the January 5, 2022 meeting minutes. A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting meetings.

Adopted unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Ms. Kaufman stated the board went through a strategic planning retreat, and the final version of the adopted strategic plan is available. One main goal of the board is to protect natural resources and agriculture.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey stated that she will provide the board with the strategic plan that Ms. Kaufman mentioned. She also shared that there is a Business Roundtable set for February 15 which will include a workforce discussion with guest speaker, Randy Dunton. Mr. Dunton is the head of the Legacy Education Center which provides students a holistic approach to education. For example, CVCC students attend classes at the Legacy Education Center in the morning and participate in a work-study program in the afternoon where they learn a skill or trade while also earning money. The goal of the roundtable is to expose Bedford County businesses to Mr. Dunton’s program to facilitate business connections and strengthen the skilled workforce.

The Railstop Committee met on January 26 to determine the next steps. The General Assembly has the studies and the reports, and the environmental study is moving forward at this time. The committee has agreed to continue moving forward to determine next steps and to keep the business community informed of this initiative.

Ms. Bailey also shared that the Board’s annual report has not been updated since 2018. Chairman Powers mentioned that Covid was a factor in this, however, it is in-process now for being updated.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker shared the results of the January 28 cattle sale which indicated that approximately 300 cattle were sold. He felt that the numbers were low for this sale as most sales typically yield about 400 sales. The next sale will be in July. It is possible there may be a spring

sale added, and Mr. Baker will keep the committee updated on any new developments for that opportunity.

Final approval was given for the Tobacco Grant which totaled \$500,000 and will be evenly distributed among the 20 counties located in the Tobacco Commission's Southside Virginia footprint. For counties that do not use all of their allocations, those monies will be redistributed. The grant will include practices such as hay barns and cattle handling. There will be new things available for precision agriculture such as GPS-enabled implements, precision fertilizer equipment, and facility enhancements for produce farmers. The big difference between this grant and the Tobacco Commission Grant is this one will be for first-timers only for a particular practice. The goal is to assist as many new people as possible. Agents are meeting next week to finalize the timeline for the grant. Information is expected to be available by spring. Applications will also be available at that time.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU/YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Mr. Baumgardner shared information from the recent Farm Bureau's meeting. This meeting prompted a question to be asked of the Ag Board. Specifically, the question was whether the Ag Board, or the committee for the fair, was looking to purchase a property. This question was originally initiated by someone who brought it to The Farm Bureau's attention. The Farm Bureau requested clarification on this item from the Ag Board so they could start planning and budgeting if this were true. Neither the Ag Board nor the committee was actively seeking to purchase fairground property, but it did prompt a discussion. Supervisor Johnson suggested that perhaps now is a good time to consider setting money aside for a future site which would require a multi-year plan. There was a brief discussion regarding several citizens who have considered donating land for the fair. The board discussed how much land would be needed for a fairground site, and it was determined that between 40-50 acres would be a minimum. This would include space for parking which takes up more space than the fair itself. Ideally, 100 acres would be best to allow room for expansion to include events beyond the fair.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Ms. Tomlinson mentioned that February is Career and Technical Education (CTE) month. She reported that there is a public speaking contest scheduled for February 3rd. She also shared that there are a few students traveling to Virginia Tech for several forest and livestock competitions. She advised the board there continues to be an increase in students interested in 4H and FFA, many of who are participating in both programs.

2. County Fair Update

Mr. Powers stated that the plan is to move forward with the Moose Lodge as the location.

3. School Ag Programs Update

a. Ms. Tomlinson shared that there is quite a bit of sheep now on the little school farm at the high school and they are also close to completing the greenhouse. The educational department is working with FFA and have a series of activities promoting agriculture in a variety of ways. Agriculture literacy week is scheduled in March which will allow FFA students to read agriculture-related books to younger students. The Women's Leadership Committee is assisting with this event which will be held in-person this year.

b. Marketing & Production

Nothing new to report

1. Farmers' Markets Updates

Ms. Bailey shared correspondence from Erika McFaden, the Bedford Market manager, who stated the off-season markets will take place on the third Saturday of each month (weather permitting). The dates are: February 19, March 19, and April 16. The March market will have exciting news and big changes according to Mrs. McFaden.

The Forest Farmers Market will hold a market on February 12 from 9 a.m. - noon. She is starting to get vendor applications and fees for the 2022 season. On February 11 she is giving a presentation to the Virginia Farmers Market Association on how to create a budget for sustainable markets.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers stated that he has not seen any bills regarding any land preservation, but he is monitoring that.

1. Solar Committee

Chairman Powers stated the committee met and they reviewed several maps and graphs of Bedford County and the different soil types. It was stated that approximately 50% of the county is classified being farmland. A draft recommendation regarding solar is expected to be given to the Planning Commission and the Board of County Supervisors in March.

(9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Baker shared that every year the Peaks of Otter Soil and Water Conservation Board identifies a farm that has gone above and beyond in terms of implementing best measures and practices and conservation on the farm to protect the environment. The Clean Water Environment Award was awarded last month to the Tanner Farm.

Chairman Powers mentioned that he would like to invite Joe Guthrie and Matt Lohr to come and visit Bedford County. Mr. Guthrie is the state Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, and Mr. Lohr is the Commissioner of the Virginia Agriculture and Consumer Services Department.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

7:41 PM