



**Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd., Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, March 2, 2022
7:00 PM**

Present: Jeff Powers (District 1), Joy Powers (District 2), Don Gardner (District 3), Chuck Grove (District 4), Ethan Tanner (District 5), Pam Willoughby (District 6), Pete Fellers (District 7), Matt Baumgardner (At-Large), Sam Gardner (At-Large), Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large), Ken Newman (At-Large)

Absent: Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large)

Staff Present: Pam Bailey, Scott Baker, Holley Scheffel

Staff Absent: Amanda Kaufman and Robert Hiss

Guests: Supervisor Mickey Johnson, Erika McFadden, Ann Jones, Holly Willoughby

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers asked for approval of the agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Baumgardner and a second by Mr. Newman to approve the March 2, 2022, agenda as presented.

Adopted unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. February 2, 2022

Chairman Powers asked for approval of the February 2, 2022, meeting minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Baumgardner and a second by Mr. Newman to approve the meeting minutes.

Adopted unanimously

(4) APPROVAL OF BY-LAW AMENDMENTS

Mr. Powers noted that something was brought to his attention regarding the first requested change to the by-laws. Specifically, he indicated that in the Ag industry someone might represent the agriculture community who does not own land or reside in that district but participates in the industry within that district. He provided several examples to provide clarification. Ms. Bailey indicated that was the purpose of the At-Large seats. Ms. Powers then shared a previous conversation she had had with Chairman John Sharp, who indicated that was the original intention when the Ag board was created. Bedford County Supervisor Mickey Johnson added that Mr. Sharp made it clear that if a member lived or worked in that district, they should be able to represent it. He agreed that there was a loophole in the way the current amendment was written. This created a discussion among board members. As a result, they worked together to reword the amendment so that it was reflective of the original intention. Ms. Bailey read the final draft of the amendment which was agreed to unanimously by the board.

Ms. Bailey explained the requested change regarding Ad-hoc committees. Chairman Powers asked if this amendment would impact the three existing standing committees already established. Mr. Baker mentioned that he was also on the board when the by-laws were originally created, and he stated that there were only Ad-hoc committees at that time. He recommended that the by-laws should now include standing committees. Chairman Powers stated that fifteen years ago, at the second board meeting ever, he set up standing committees. Another question was brought up about the process of establishing committees. Ms. Bailey shared the process with the board which requires a 2/3 vote by the board to approve any appointments by the Chairman.

Ms. Bailey stated that if the bylaws are approved by the board tonight, they will go before the Board of Supervisors in March.

Chairman Powers suggested that Mr. Baker review the document to make sure the changes are accurate. There is no rush in pushing this through and it can be finalized at the next meeting.

Chairman Powers restated the elected members for the following positions: Jeff Powers (Chairman), Don Gardner (Vice-Chairman), Pam Willoughby (Secretary), Matt Baumgardner, Sam Newman, and Dorothy McIntyre (Marketing & Production), Joy Powers, Lindsay Tomlinson, and Chuck Grove (Education Committee), Pete Fellers, Ethan Tanner, and Sam Gardner, (Land Preservation and Conservation)

A motion was made by Mr. Newman with a second by Mr. Baumgardner to approve the 2022 Ag board committees.

Adopted Unanimously

(5) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

No report from Mr. Hiss or Ms. Kaufman was available. However, Ms. Bailey pointed out the newly adopted Strategic Plan “at a glance” from the Board of Supervisors (BOS). This was made available for informational purposes. She stated that next Thursday a staff retreat will be held where the priorities of the strategic plan will be made into actionable items. If the board has any ideas, please share them before next Thursday when staff meets. There was a discussion that Ag education and workforce development should be more prevalent across the board. Ms.

Powers also noted that Social Services was omitted from the Strategic Plan. Chairman Powers wanted it to go on record that this was brought up at the meeting so that it could be addressed.

(6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey said that only two farmers have expressed interest in applying for the AFID grant. Once she receives the final applications, she will submit them to the BOS for approval. The BOS has previously said that they will support presented projects. The window to submit those applications to VDACS is from April 1st to May 15th.

CVCC announced that they are offering a CDL course which opens on March 28th. Funding is available for this course.

In February, Randy Dunton came to speak about Legacy Education Center. He also participated in a Career Conversation for the Bedford ONE program. We are hoping to do some in-person tours in the fall; we need to get kids back into the industry tours. We did meet with Trevor Hoss, the new CTE Supervisor for BCPS. He is looking for speakers from different industries to come and speak to students. Lastly, we are working with Liberty University regarding connecting interns with current jobs that are available.

(7) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker provided an analysis of the last value-added feeder calf sale from January; the sale yielded 282 calves. The average calf brought \$108 more than if it had been sold at weaning 60 days prior. The market receives requests each year for an additional sale in the spring. One is planned for April 22; cattle will be received on Thursday, April 21. The cattle market is strong now, even over the regular market. Regarding the Tobacco Commission grant, Campbell County is the fiscal agent, and they will be marketing the grant and sending the press release.

The first step for interested parties includes attending an informational meeting on March 28. This will be held in person in Blackstone, Virginia. It will also be broadcast via Zoom. Mr. Baker may also hold another in-person meeting on April 7 at the extension office. Interested parties are required to attend one of the sessions before they are eligible to receive an application packet. Applications will be accepted starting on May 16 and will be available on a first-come-first-served basis. Applicants cannot apply for the same category more than once. The funding is \$500,000 spread evenly across 20 counties. After 6 months, any unused monies will be reallocated.

Mr. Baker also stated a point of interest regarding upcoming water testing. Every other year the extension office provides a well-water testing clinic. This is done in concert with Virginia Tech's Household Water Quality Lab. The cost for water testing through Virginia Tech is \$60.00. It is not Tech's intention to compete with the private sector which is why there is a limited number of tests available. Water testing will be available in the late spring.

(8) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Mr. Bumgardner stated the Young Farmers meeting is scheduled for tomorrow night at the stockyard where they will be selling cookbooks. The large Farm Bureau board had their meeting last night where they are looking to promote ideas to put forth to the legislature. Each year the Farm Bureau has a group of individuals who can purchase baler twine or net wrap twine at a discount. To access the discounted price, contact the Farm Bureau office.

(9) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events – Ms. Powers stated that 4-H has been actively participating in livestock judging. Last week they participated in the Block and Bridle contest at Virginia Tech. They had their biggest contest in history with over 1,100 students in attendance. On Friday, there were four students who competed in the Stockman’s competition from the 4-H Club and four from the Liberty FFA chapter. On Saturday, there were two teams that competed in the livestock judging contest. In addition, the senior team placed 5th in the state and the second team had multiple winners as well. The next opportunity will be in Harrisonburg at the end of this month and then they will begin preparing for the state contest.

1. County Fair update - Ms. Powers stated that the county fair board has not met; however, they are planning on meeting soon. They will plan a conversation with Midway Company about a fall fair.

2. School Ag Programs update - Ms. Jones noted that all four of the school Ag programs have been busy. February is also FFA month and activities were held all around the county in support of this event. Food for America was originally planned and scheduled at Staunton River, but it was pushed to April due to weather. This activity will bring 4th graders to the high school. There will be 26 different stations representing Bedford County agriculture and different segments of the Ag program offered at the high school.

Spring is a busy time for FFA competitions; the area rally is coming up and Bedford competes in the Southridge region. Students are preparing for a variety of events to prepare for that competition scheduled for the end of March.

The high school was able to go to the middle school and help promote the Ag program there. Lastly, Mrs. Tomlinson suggested that the Ag board invite the recent creed speaking champion (Clay Jackson) to the next meeting on April 6.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer’s Market updates

Mrs. McIntyre indicated that she has a market and a vendor meeting scheduled for next week. She shared that last month there were 36 vendors and the market stayed strong through the winter.

Ms. McFadden stated that there are two spring markets left and those will be held on March 19 and April 16. She informed the board that the farmer’s market is moving to Saturdays to be more accessible to the community, but the market location will remain the same. The summer season will begin May 7 and run through October 8. Due to additional funding, more advertising will be available and there will be two \$500 mini-grants available to vendors who find themselves in need of additional equipment. Ms. Bailey mentioned that she had requested additional money in her budget to assist with marketing. She suggested that they save their receipts to submit and depending on what she gets in her budget (budget has not been approved yet), she may be able to reimburse for some expenses.

Vittone Farms is no longer participating in the markets and the land is currently up for sale. It is uncertain if he will participate in any capacity with his hydroponic farm.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Chairman Powers informed the board that the BOS voted not to allow commercial solar projects in the county. The decision was based on concerns about destroying Ag land which

directly conflicts with the county's Strategic Plan. Chairman Powers prepared a letter on behalf of the Ag Board addressed to the BOS with the Ag Board's recommendation regarding solar farms. House Bill 206 was referenced as a point of interest (see attached letter from Bedford County Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board) for further explanation. Supervisor Mickey Johnson thanked the board for all their research and input on solar farms. Chairman Powers noted that Supervisor Sharp wanted a copy of the Resolution to put in the minutes so if anyone referred to the decision, there would be a permanent record of the Ag Board's recommendation.

(10) . INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Gardner brought up two issues; one was land use. He stated that the Commissioner of Revenue sends out annual notices to landowners who are requesting the land use designation. Landowners complete this application and explain how they will be using their property to meet this category. He explained a unique situation that directly impacted him, and he wanted to remind people to be extra diligent about their paperwork and the process.

The second item was the Virginia Veterinary Conference that was recently held in Roanoke. A two-hour work session with Dr. Jessica Walters and Dr. Charles Broaddus was held to discuss concerns with the current laboratory system in Virginia. Mr. Gardner stated that Lynchburg has been virtually inoperable to farmers or veterinarians referring a dead animal for necropsy. The crux of the problem has been the low pay offered by the Dept. of Human Services for veterinary service positions. The salaries offered have been compared to that of first-year college graduates with little experience or leadership skills. As a result, there have been no applicants.

The Bedford Ag. Business Council, the Farm Bureau, and the Bedford County Board of Supervisors brought this to the attention of the Dept. of Human Services and \$300,000 has now been added to the budget to help increase salaries to a competitive level. Since it will take time to get a qualified person in that position, there have been some alternative ideas at the center of the discussion. Until the positions are filled, Dr. Broaddus recommended that Mr. Gardner talk to Commissioner Joe Guthrie to discuss necropsy services in the Lynchburg area again. Mr. Gardner has invited Commissioner Guthrie to the April 6 Ag meeting as a guest.

He also shared that there is a student repayment loan program that benefits new Veterinarian graduates. This program is only available in specifically certified areas. New veterinarians must dedicate at least 40% of their time to food/animal practice. To qualify, new graduates must agree to stay with the practice for three years. Each year they work, they will receive a 25k reduction from their student loan.

Chairman Powers reminded the board that the time for the next meeting will change to 7:30 PM. Light refreshments are requested.

Mr. Baker distributed copies of the letter that Chairman Powers had referenced earlier.

A motion was made by Mr. Baumgardner and a second by Mr. Newman to approve the Resolution for the Board of Supervisors.

Adopted unanimously

Mr. Grove stated that he attended the National Cattle Beef Association (NCBA) meeting in Houston. One thing we all need to be aware of is Waters of the United States (WOTUS). The Biden administration is bringing this back up so they can control streams and waterways, even on private

property. He urged people to keep up with WOTUS and get in touch with your Senator or Congressman to voice your opinion. Another topic that was discussed at the meeting was Ukraine being a large exporter of corn. In the United States, more corn is being directed into ethanol. It is expected that corn prices will escalate tremendously.

He also shared that the tax law was going to try to eliminate or reduce Ag exemptions for inheritance. Those have not changed from the Trump administration.

Mr. Baker mentioned an educational event that the Ag/Econ staff at VT will host. Specifically, they will offer a virtual Ag policy forum where four to five speakers will touch on commodity outlook, the tobacco, peanut, and hemp market and situation, the JBS legal settlement, changing consumer demand for seafood, and farm and policy updates. The meeting will be held virtually next Thursday night at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Powers shared Ms. Tomlinson's note regarding the Veterinarian school will have a big open house. Also, the Ag. Tech program that will also have an open house. This is a two-year program. Dates were not available at the time of this meeting.

Ms. McIntyre asked if there would be an FFA program at Forest. Chairman Powers said we would need to start over since Dr. Francis was a big proponent of the program.

ADJOURNMENT - Time end 8:29 PM