



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
April 6, 2016 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Don Gardner, Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, Keith Tuck, Ken Newman, Matt Baumgardner, W.P. Johnson

:Absent: Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby, Lindsay Tomlinson

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Scott Baker

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess, Jessica Hupp, Jerry Craig

:Guests: John Graham, Brent Wills

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the April 6, 2016 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the April 6, 2016 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 2, 2016

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the March 2, 2016 meeting minutes. Mr. Baumgardner stated a change needed to be made under item 7) Young Farmer's report. It should read 250 young farmers from around the state attended and 20 young farmers from Bedford.

A motion and a second were made to approve the March 2, 2016 meeting minutes, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator's Report

Mr. Powers stated he hadn't heard anything from Mr. Boggess. Mrs. Blido stated he is in the thick of interviewing for the Assistant County Administrator position. There is nothing else to report.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that county taxes will stay the same this year and that there will be a public meeting next Monday. Mrs. Blido congratulated Gross' Orchard, who won Best Agribusiness of the Year at the annual Bedford Chamber Awards Dinner. Mr. Gross gave a great speech about how his family got into the business that everyone enjoyed. GP Big Island also won for Best Large Business, which we were excited to see, as they are the largest taxpayer in the county and are celebrating 125 years this year.

Mrs. Blido stated she put out cutting mats staff created for everyone to take home. These mats were ordered to help Farmers Markets promote their schedules. Both markets will be passing them out on the first day of the outdoor market season in Forest and Bedford.

Mrs. Blido asked the board to check out our Ag News and Ag calendar on the website to make sure we're keeping up with upcoming events. Mrs. Blido state the viticulture primer has been added so if they know anyone who wants to expand their grape growing, make sure they see it.

Mrs. Blido reported there is a lot of prospect activity going on right now that can't be announced, but staff is excited to see several businesses growing this year.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported he spoke with Ronnie Gross and Danny Johnson about how the freeze last night affected their crops. Both reported there was definitely damage done to tree fruits, but it won't be that bad in some situations as it can reduce handpicking. We expect another freeze coming Saturday night, so we'll see what happens.

Mr. Baker stated that Ronnie wanted him to remind everyone of the Apple Blossom Festival taking place this Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Mr. Baker stated he had sent an email out about a potential produce auction in Franklin County. He recently spoke with an agent there who reported they are moving forward with it in a trial capacity. The first dates will take place in early May, and they are aiming to run it on a twice a week basis. The produce auction will be run by the German Baptist community. They are also looking to build a structure for it at an industrial park in Boones Mill.

Mr. Baker stated that WFXR Fox had reached out to him and some other extension agents to get some help on story ideas. A group of them met the first of last week and will be meeting again tomorrow. This will likely turn into a quarterly meeting to look at calendars for the next three months for upcoming events or story ideas. They hope this will help them to not have to scramble for Ag Life stories and to make sure they are correct on the timing.

Mr. Baker stated he has been updating the board every month on where they are going with the Region 2000 Food Hub Feasibility Study. The next step will be on the beef side of the industry.

They plan to have an individual from Meyers Natural Foods come talk about their beef program. They did find out that Wegman's grocery expansion plans would need a lot more beef than they have right now. Mr. Baker stated that Steve Wilkerson attended the event, as well as Troy Rice. Dr. Gardner asked what has been going on with Seven Hills in Lynchburg. Mr. Baker stated he has no updates, but the owner of Seven Hills has come to these meetings and every time he's talked with Scott he expresses a lot of interest in growing the beef business. Dr. Gardner stated he had a client who was ready to sell a cow and that he called Seven Hills, but they were slow to get back and said they aren't buying any cows right now. Dr. Gardner was surprised he didn't have any interest in it. Mr. Baker stated that when he heard Seven Hills speak at a recent meeting, he understood that they are growing really slow and got the impression they are working more selectively with people. Dr. Gardner asked who Seven Hills is marketing finished product to. Mr. Baker stated he is marketing to the restaurant trade outside of the region, but not sure where. In general terms, he seems to be looking for finished cattle.

(6) Tourism Report

Mr. Craig was not in attendance.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported that the Agritourism Conference was held today in South Boston. Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore was there and talked about employment being at all time high for Virginia. He plans to put \$35,000 in his department budget to put toward the tourism department in order to research how much agritourism brings to Virginia annually. He stated that Virginia was ranked third behind New York and North Carolina at \$42 million. He believes it is likely way more than that and wants to find out. Secretary Haymore was also promoting AFID grants, stating that they want communities to make use of them or they may lose the money in the future.

Mr. Johnson reported that the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers just got back from its Spring tour at Harmony Harvest, which is a fresh cut flower operation. They also visited Ridgeview Farm (sheep and beef cattle operation). Right now they are focused on sheep and getting them ready for show. The group also went to a concealed carry class. Next, they plan on going to Hickory Hill Winery to learn about viticulture and Turner's Dairy. In August, they plan to learn about show hogs and poultry, and are also working on planning a tour for Farm Bureau members as a whole to see Caterpillar Machinery.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

a. Bedford County Fair update

Mr. Tuck reported that things are coming together for the fair. Springlake Stock Yard has committed to being a sponsor again this year. They are currently looking for some more major sponsors, since they would like to print the flyers soon with the sponsors names on them.

Mr. Tuck stated the pageant will be on Thursday with two to four categories. Friday will be for equine events and they are trying to get school groups to come in for educational events and displays. Saturday will be the livestock show and Sunday will be the car show. They would also like to have an antique tractor show and are trying to get more of that equipment to show off.

The Farmers Market at the Fair will be on Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The wine garden will be open from 5-7 p.m. on Friday and 3-7 p.m. on Saturday. expanding those hours just a bit.

Carl Boggess and Patrick Skelley are working on the tax exempt status, as the committee keeps getting bigger and having more people volunteering to help. The Board of Supervisors appointed a five member board including Joy, Keith, Susan, Holly, and Pete. Tax exempt status requires you to have a board. The committee will still do most of the work, and the board will handle the business side of the event.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Graham stated he has nothing new to add that Traci didn't already cover. April is opening month for most Farmers Markets. He was at the Staunton market last Saturday and apparently it was their best opening day ever. Direct market producers will be busy until the end of October. Mr. Powers stated he wrote to Paul Stern and Dorothy McIntyre and thanked them for being at the meeting last month, as said the Ag Board enjoyed their reports and thinks they are doing a great job. Mrs. Blido stated Dorothy and Paul will be presenting to the Board of Supervisors on April 25.

(2) Coyote Lottery update

Dr. Gardner stated the Coyote Lottery drawing took place a couple weeks ago. Zach Harmony won the grand prize of \$2,000, Morgan Meador won \$500, Jerry Wade won \$500, and Kelsey Padgett won \$250. Dr. Gardner stated he was pretty certain Farm Bureau had mailed out all the checks. Dr. Gardner stated he took plenty of pictures and has spoken with John Barnhart to get it in the paper. Zach Harmony is a CVCC student taking a machinist course, and stated the money will help further his education. He also believes Morgan Meador is a college student at Virginia Tech. Overall, there was a good turnout. Dr. Gardner stated he would like to do a survey on participants to see if they would have been active in pursuing coyotes without the lottery. He believes learning more about why people participate will maybe spur more participation.

Mr. Graham asked whether there have been any marked results out of the coyote lottery, such as less predation. Dr. Gardner stated that most people who had told them they were having

problems have said they see significantly less than before. The coyote population has definitely not been wiped out, but once you start going after them they become less bold. This gives farmers at least a little more control. Mr. Graham asked about predation issues in the fish farming business. Part of the reason why trout farming isn't big in the state is due to the environment, and predation problem. Many protected species are usually the predators on his trout (bald eagles, cranes, otters, etc.) Mr. Graham asked if many people have been talking to government officials about the issue. Mr. Johnson stated it is becoming a big enough issue to be discussed in Richmond. Mr. Johnson said they have been discussing it, but protected species have to be dealt with at the federal level. Dr. Gardner said otters are trappable species, and he's been told by a number of people that otters will come into ponds and raise pups that will wipe out a supply. Luckily with trapping you can target their entry and exit into the pond.

Mr. Baker added that there will be a Tobacco Commission grant information meeting that is mandatory for participants on April 21 at Lynchburg Livestock. It will begin at 6:30 p.m. The grant will provide cost share funding for hay wrappers, cold storage facilities, and more.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

1. Farm Transition Workshop update

Mr. Fellers said he plans on going back to Amherst at the end of this month to see another transition workshop. Mr. Baker gathered from the feedback he received that we do want to have a transition workshop here in Bedford. Mr. Baker said he plans to work with a farm management group and hold two back to back programs. One will be held in Bedford and the other in Campbell County. The attorney the farm management group uses comes up from North Carolina, so it's best to make good use out of his time here. The tentative date for the Bedford workshop will be Monday, November 14 and the Campbell County workshop will be Tuesday, November 15. Mr. Baker believes it will be at the community college in town. The workshop will be a full day program and they plan to structure the agenda to cover basic things about estate planning, so if you have a small property not in agriculture you could still benefit from the information. Planning for long term care will also be included. Mr. Baker stated the idea behind working with this group is that we will be able to apply for a grant to cover the cost of their services.

(9) Other Business

Mr. Powers stated that Brent Wills had sent out a press release from USDA about a kit being offered to identify direct markets and its economic impact on the county. Mr. Baker stated he talked to someone in Blacksburg about how the kit can be utilized. The kit is a detailed process that would go through and look at input, output, and economic multipliers and how money circulates in the community once it is spent. Pieces of it would be very useful. If the community would want to utilize it, you would want to include people with ag and economic experience to get the best value.

Mr. Powers stated that we all realize how much momentum direct marketing has, but no one has yet grasped how much it affects our local and state economy. He believes we need to take him up on the offer and take advantage of this opportunity.

(10) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that Lindsey was unable to attend tonight but wanted to pass along to the board that she met again with the people necessary to make a middle school ag program happen, and the project seems to be back on track. She is positive about it and planning to put on her summer program again this year. Mr. Powers stated that some of the Ag Board hosted students at their farms last year, and that she wants to hit some different types of ag businesses this year for the program. Ms. Tomlinson is also organizing a cattle working exercise to get kids used to working with cattle. Ms. Tomlinson said they will have group of students from FFA at the Olde Liberty Fibre Fair.

Mr. Palmer said there has been a lot of interest in the Fibre Fair. Mr. Powers shared his concern that for the first time in 20 years when Karen and Josh came home there were two dogs chasing their sheep around in the pin. The County is down to two animal control officers right now. One of the animal control officers has plenty of large animal experience, but anyone that is hired new to animal control might not have that experience. Mr. Powers stated he plans to speak personally to some of the sheriff's department, as they need to have someone around that is prepared to deal with these types of issues.

Mr. Powers reported that the Virginia Beef Expo is next weekend. There will be 8-10 head there from Bedford County, and we are happy to be represented. It is a great event to attend at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds if anyone else would like to attend.

(11) Adjournment
-8:23 p.m.