



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

August 2, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.

Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Sam Gardner, Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, Ken Newman, Pam Willoughby, Lindsay Tomlinson, Matt Baumgardner, Beth Bays, Joy Powers

Absent: Ronnie Gross, Don Gardner

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Scott Baker

Staff Absent: Reid Wodicka

Guests: Jana Fedele (Bedford Farmers Market), Dorothy McIntyre (Forest Farmers Market)

(1) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the August 2, 2017 agenda. There were no objections.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes

There were no July minutes to approve at this meeting.

(3) Farmers Market Managers Report

Jana Fedele of the Bedford Farmers Market stated that it was a slow start, but has picked up. So far, there have been 4,565 people to visit the market with 362 visitors on their highest day (Food Truck Friday) and 21 people on their lowest day (cold Tuesday in May). So far, \$834 has been spent in SNAP funds with \$150 as the highest in one day. On Fridays, the county runs a bus from the housing projects to Walmart and she has asked that they also stop at the Farmers Market. They can get double their SNAP money at the Market due to matches through the Wholesome Wave Grant and the Bedford Community Health Foundation. There will be three new vendors starting in the coming weeks. A couple food trucks have not been able to attend as expected, but there are two trucks that are there regularly, plus one other truck offering something different each week. Future Farmers of America (FFA) are there this week selling

corn and she has talked with the ag teacher, Ms. Tomlinson about scheduling a Spring event next year involving the FFA.

Dorothy McIntyre of the Forest Farmers Market stated that she has very nice cutting boards courtesy of Bedford County Economic Development. She reported that the Forest Market started in 2011 with 11 vendors and in 2017 they have 30 vendors. Twenty-three are full-time and 11 are from Bedford County. She has 2 CSA programs. Average sales are \$300,000 this year for the full 27 week season. The indoor market is four years old now and has 18-23 vendors. They collaborate with various non-profit agencies and county departments and are getting six picnic tables from Thaxton. Food volunteers do demonstrations and she hopes to get them more frequently and would like to see the FFA come as well. The market is SNAP eligible through the Bedford Health Foundation and has repeat customers come in. She still has many people come in and say they were unaware of the market. In response to a question about native plant sales, Ms. McIntyre reported there is a lot of interest in native plants and they are very popular. She has a woman from Northern Virginia who comes twice a year and brings native plants to sell. She has another seller from Southwest Virginia also interested in selling native plants.

Mr. Powers said Andy Dooley reached out to him regarding a possible Farmer's Market in Montvale. He would like to see if Ms. Blido and Mr. Baker can assist Mr. Dooley in exploring any grants that may help. Mrs. Blido informed the Board that she has connected Mr. Dooley with Mrs. McIntyre so they could network about the market. He will keep everyone updated.

(4) County Administration Report

Nothing to report.

(5) Economic Development Director's Report

Ms. Blido thanked everyone for attending the EDA's Business Appreciation Event (95 attendees) and also Jessica's going away party. The Town of Bedford is hiring an economic developer who will be working with Bedford Main Street and working on communications and helping with getting businesses into the town.

She had an opportunity to visit the Department of Food Science & Technology at Virginia Tech. She passed around literature about what she saw and learned at the visit. They are launching a fermentation program and have a farm readiness safety program. Their focus on food processing was the most interesting. Virginia food processing companies employ 35,000 workers and it is a \$29.9 billion dollar industry which has a huge economic impact on the state.

She asked board members if they have any ideas or suggestions for running an ad in Virginia Agriculture. If there are no other ideas, she will run the "Grown Here" ad she ran last year again this year. An Ag tour with the Bedford One program will run Aug. 31 with about 30 kids.

(6) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker stated last Friday was the first sale at Springlake Auction. They had a total of 325 head of cattle and it was successful. They had 23 distinct producers with 11 or 12 from Bedford. The heavier steer sold for \$1.55 a pound which was significantly above the market price. The lighter steer brought \$1.62 and the heifers brought \$1.39. When comparing this sale to what they would have brought on the open market on June 1 and taking into account the costs of keeping them, there was a \$40 to \$100 premium per head. The next sale date is scheduled for Sept.15 for fall born calves weaned by July 15 with other future sales planned.

Mr. Baker reminded members that in the past they have tried to get a two year program for CVCC. He reached out again to Jim Lemons, Dean of Science and Math at CVCC who owns farm land in Bedford and asked about a possible career studies certificate program and possibly a dual enrollment with high schools. They would also like to implement programs to help kids be more marketable for jobs by getting certifications i.e., a pesticide application license. He will keep all informed in the future about a new grant for grapes and possibly an upcoming sheep and goat grant.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmer's Report

Mr. Sam Gardner reported that the State Summer Expo was this past week, but he could not attend. It was well received. Ms. Powers attended and it was good, with farm tours on Saturday. She was nominated for an Excellence in Agriculture award and although she did not win, it was good to be nominated. Mr. Baumgardner stated the summer trip is this weekend. They will be visiting several farms in Southwest Virginia including a robotic dairy and one of the largest greenhouses in the state. The Farm Bureau women's committee has scholarships for female FFA students and they will have a booth at the Bedford County Fair. They are also selling raffle tickets to support Ag programs in the schools at \$10 per ticket. The prize is four Virginia Tech/UNC game tickets. The sale is until mid September if anyone is interested.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

Ms. Tomlinson said they continue to get ready for the County Fair and the middle school program. Liberty students will attend the school board meeting to say thanks for their support. We will go back to the school board for support to expand the middle school program in October. The alumni committee is strong and supports FFA programs. They are having an equipment raffle coming up to help with convention costs and support other FFA events. The committee is open to anyone who wants to support FFA programs and their next meeting is September 17.

Ms. Powers reported 4-H is going through a growth spurt and the members will run under both 4-H and FFA to advance more opportunities. Four boys are going to the Keystone International Contest in Harrisburg, PA in October and they will be fundraising for the event. They went to camp at Virginia Tech a couple weeks ago. Since these kids have the least amount of resources for programs, they are hosting a barbecue & blue grass dinner at Springlake on Sept. 8 from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm. The money raised will provide seed money and give opportunities to our kids. Tickets are on sale at Bedford Co-op and Powers Tractor. The cost is \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

(2) County Fair update

The Fair is Sept. 28 thru Oct 1.

(3) Middle School Ag Program Update

See **Upcoming Events**.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Coyote Lottery Update

Nothing to report.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Nothing to report.

(9) Informational Items

The livestock ordinance was again discussed by Mr. Powers. The ordinance has already passed by the advisory board and Mr. Baker stated that the previously mentioned clause regarding residentially zoned tracts used historically for ag production had been added to the ordinance. Mr. Powers will notify the Planning Commission Chairman, Josiah Tillet, and let the board members know the status.

Ms. Powers mentioned the Young Farmers Expo. A speaker noted they released a study regarding ag economic development - Ms. Blido and Mr. Newman were interviewed on WDBJ 7 regarding this subject. The study breaks down information under county statistics. The VDACS website has posted the study.

Ms. Powers flies to Malawi for 2 weeks. Keep her in your thoughts and prayers.

Mr. Newman reported that he received the contract for Virginia Tech food waste from their dining halls for three years. It will be used for composting along with the JMU waste which he already receives.

Will Epperly was 3rd in the national auctioneer contest.

Ed Gillespie had an event at W.P. Johnson's farm.

(10) Adjournment

-8:40 p.m.