



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

August 5, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

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

:Absent: Ronnie Gross

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Jerry Craig, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess

:Guest: Lindsay Tomlinson, John Graham, Brent Wills

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the August 5, 2015 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the August 5, 2015 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 1, 2015

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the July 1, 2015 meeting minutes.

Mr. Palmer stated that he was incorrectly quoted, and that it should read he has secured \$3,100 worth of sponsorship funds. He also stated David James Homes was the sponsor he recently spoke with.

Mr. Tinsley made a correction to his quote, stating that the biosolids trucks were being handled correctly.

Mr. Baker stated under his report for Cooperative Extension it should say FFA camp, not 4H camp.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of June 3, 2015, as amended.
Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator's Report

No report as Mr. Boggess was on vacation.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that this month she traveled with MBC to San Jose, California and Ottawa, Canada to meet with a prospective company that MBC would like to partner with to do a pilot project with new technology. Mrs. Blido attended this trip in order to try and recruit these prospective companies to Bedford County.

Mrs. Blido stated we continue to get mixed messages about the economy. Staff continues to get a lot of calls about land and incentives available through the EDA, but we also see other company's having layoffs.

Mrs. Blido stated she did some research on how we are tracking with building permits and new construction values and found that although building permits fell flat last year, we saw valuation increase from \$103 million last year to \$143 million this year.

Mrs. Blido stated that staff has posted four billboards throughout the county in order to increase awareness of available lots. The billboards read "Grow here!" with the county seal and our website URL. We hope this message will drive people to our website, and increase the number of phone inquiries.

Mrs. Blido stated we're really excited about the fair and that Jessica receives about a dozen calls a day from people interested in being a vendor or submitting an item in one of the contests. People seem to be very excited to attend.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported that they had 10 young people at the past 4H event where they toured Ronnie Gross' orchard and Jim Revel's diversified vegetable garden. Mr. Baker stated they got to see a great blend of agriculture in the county.

Mr. Baker reported that work with the Region 2000 Ag strategic plan continues. They have been looking at doing a feasibility study to gauge the value of a food aggregation facility or food hub operation for the region. Mr. Baker stated that a consultant has been selected with a lot of experience and they will be meeting later this month to interview local farmers on their perspective.

Mr. Baker reported that Dr. Gardner has recently done a trial in the field on a number of sorghum forage varieties. Mr. Baker stated that an Extension Forage Specialist will be planning a field

study and walk around of the farm to discuss the pros and cons or sorghum use and what to look out for.

Mr. Baker stated he has tried to keep up to date on how the Big Island mill is looking to apply wood waste products to land in the county. Big Island selected a contractor and got application work underway about 2 months ago. Mr. Baker stated he visited the field last week, and so far he believes it visually has some promise, however it has only been applied to hay fields thus far.

Mr. Baker stated that last year the Wharton Center and Bower Center put on Bedford's Finest Fare, which acts as a fundraiser for the center's and a way to showcase local food. They plan to have it again this year on Sunday, September 13 from 4-8 p.m.

(6) Tourism Director's Report

Mr. Craig reported that the tourism department has been working on a strategic plan for tourism through the Virginia Tourism Corporation called "Drive Tourism". Through this program they have brought in different stakeholders of tourism throughout the county to workshops with exercises that lead stakeholders to a "game-changing five year product". Stakeholders in attendance at the past few workshops chose a convention and agriculture center as the game-changing five year product.

Mr. Craig stated that the elk resolution that sought to extend the no-hunt zone outside of the three counties it originated in was voted down by the Board of Directors. The resolution sought to have elk roam free of harm through the western portion of Virginia.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported the Bedford County Farm Bureau's Annual Dinner will be held October 6 at Thaxton Baptist beginning at 6 p.m.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Ag Complex

Mr. Palmer said no new news on the ag complex.

(2) Ag Education Update – Lindsay Tomlinson

Ms. Tomlinson addressed the board about potential ideas for the ag program in Bedford County Schools. Ms. Tomlinson said with all the talk about the new middle school being placed behind Liberty High School she believes this would be a great opportunity to begin creating a middle school agriculture program and utilizing the space between the middle and high school to create a land lab facility. She has addressed the school board about the idea and stated that most counties that have strong agriculture programs have some sort of land lab or school farm. The

closest example is in Appomattox, which has somewhere between 15-20 acres with sheep, goat, some cattle, nature/biology walk and pond, as well as an area for tractor driving and mowing hay. Ms. Tomlinson stated Halifax also has a great land lab on the fair grounds near their school with a barn and horses. Ms. Tomlinson stated she isn't looking for something of that scale, but something large enough that will give students hands on experience with farm animals, tractors, and equipment. Before the land lab, Ms. Tomlinson is hoping to get an ag program started in the middle school, as it is much more effective to start students earlier and it really helps FFA chapters. Most students that come to her class don't have a 4H background, so they have never been to livestock shows. Ms. Tomlinson believes beginning in middle school would give them a better shot at competing in these types of shows.

Ms. Tomlinson stated she would also like to see agriculture across the board, even at Jefferson Forest High School. The school system is currently working on diversifying agriculture curriculum at Liberty High School so she hopes to see it at JF soon. Ms. Tomlinson stated she understands in this area there are not a whole lot of big industries other than cow/calf and that she hopes to give students other options, possibly through an animal systems pathway that could lead to veterinary science or biotechnology, and eventually biological systems. Ms. Tomlinson stated she was excited that Staunton River is trying to get a greenhouse built to support students interested in horticulture.

Ms. Tomlinson stated she went on a tour to see some other school farms in Southside Virginia and was blown away with what some of the other counties have, from beef production to homology. She stated we have a much larger calf/cow industry here to not have what those schools do. Ms. Tomlinson stated that a small farm near Liberty was donated, however they've had issues with the owners trying to get involved and transportation to the farm takes so much out of class time.

Ms. Tomlinson stated she would like in the next year to have an Agri-Science elective at the middle school. As the county begins building the new campus, she sees the land lab as a central location on campus that could house the ag program for both middle and high school students. Ms. Tomlinson reiterated the program would not just be aimed at ag production, as there are a variety of kids interested in welding, vet tech, small engine repair, working on farms and going to a four year school. This land lab would fulfill the need for its own space to accommodate all the different areas of interest.

Dr. Gardner said the ag board would be more than happy to support her initiative if she could put together a concrete plan. Mr. Powers asked how administration at the school board had received Ms. Tomlinson's idea. Ms. Tomlinson stated that every person, including administration at the school board, was very receptive and thankful for the idea. Ms. Tomlinson stated she has been working on incorporating agriculture as part of the STEM career paths as the school system seems to be focusing on careers in those fields, and it could transform into "STEAM".

(3) Upcoming Events
-County Ag Fair

Ms. Powers reported that the fair would be open on Friday 1 – 9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. – 9 p.m., and Sunday 1 – 6 p.m. Friday will be mostly equine events and the wine garden will be open from 3 – 6 p.m. All ag competitions will begin on Friday and last through Sunday. Saturday will kick off the livestock show with lambs, heifers, cow/calves and the wine garden will continue to be open. Sunday will host the antique car show and unique animal exhibits. Ms. Powers stated they will have live music and rides throughout the duration of the fair. Ms. Powers stated she received a ride list from Cole Amusements which will include a Ferris Wheel, carousel, and a good mix of adult and children's rides. Mr. Powers stated there will also be games. Ms. Powers stated the livestock show will be great for 4H and FFA kids, and even better for kids who have never seen those types of animals up close. Cheyenne Klein will be the designated livestock judge. Ms. Klein has judged the Blacksburg Block and Bridle show in the past.

Ms. Powers stated that media coverage has been growing, with Facebook still getting new likes and the webpage getting a lot of hits. They are starting to kick off TV ads and just approved the scripts for advertising with WSET. They also have a Lynchburg radio group that will have 3 stations in the area covering the fair, and will provide live broadcasts from the fair on Friday and Saturday.

Ms. Powers stated she has been working with Chris from the News and Advance and he has come up with some interesting ideas for articles they'd like to feature. He hopes to have a couple stories highlighting the FFA and 4H kids, some on the fair competitions and how people can get involved, and he also plans to have a cover story in the Sunday paper the weekend before the fair about the history of the fair and why we're bringing it back this year.

Ms. Powers stated she has been working with Kathleen on the poster design and passed the final version around to the board. She plans to get them printed soon and asked anyone willing to help post them around the county to meet with her to get a stack.

Ms. Powers stated she also put in the ribbon and t-shirt orders. The t-shirts will be kelly green with a white logo and no date so they can be used again next year if they don't sell them all. Ms. Powers stated they are pretty much booked on food vendors but could use a hamburger or hot dog vendor. They are still accepting regular vendor applications for those looking to sell crafts and wares.

Ms. Powers stated they are doing okay so far thanks to sponsorship money, however they will need to create a plan for next year and start contacting people at the beginning of the year. Ms. Powers stated most sponsors have given small donations but would love to give more if contacted earlier in the year and sponsorship for the event can be placed in their budgets.

Ms. Powers stated they need volunteers and have started a sign up list. They're already getting help from the sheriff's office to do parking and have had several youth groups from different churches to volunteer to assist in two hour shifts. Ms. Powers stated they plan to have one to two information booths so they will need someone to man those during fair operating hours.

Mr. Palmer stated there will need to be a fence put up around Smith Mountain Lake Parkway around midways to keep people from walking across the road. Ms. Powers stated that she believes ag students are coming from ag production classes to do some of the manual labor for the fence on Thursday.

Ms. Powers stated there will be antique tractors there and that tractors don't need to be in pristine condition because they are only being displayed for educational reasons. Mr. Craig stated he still needs more antique cars for the car show. They currently have 30-40 but would like to have 50-70.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Graham had nothing new to report.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers had nothing new to report.

(9) Other Business

Mr. Johnson asked how we can tie the ag board with the broadband initiative because of the extensive impact it would have on ag in the county. Mr. Powers stated he has spoken to Carl and he believes that is already in the works. Right now only looking at number of residents

Dr. Gardner asked if someone could speak to them about it. Mrs. Blido stated the one in Montvale will be the pilot project. Board given 75k mbc donated tower and same amount of money. Inviting ISPs as soon as tower is up. Going through a special use permit for it. If everything goes as planned, will see internet in the whole goose creek valley area, the board may pay more attention to other broadband deficient areas in the county.

Mr. Powers stated he would touch base with Carl to see if they can get a more detailed report on broadband at the September meeting.

(10) Informational Items

(11) Adjournment

8:28 p.m.