



**Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board**

August 6, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, Spencer Tinsley, Daniel Layman, Ken Newman, W.P. Johnson

:Absent:

Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby, Matt Baumgardner

Staff Present: Frank Rogers, Scott Baker, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp

Staff Absent: None

Guest: Bev Eggleston, Eco-Friendly Foods

(1) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the August 6, 2014 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the August 6, 2014 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 2, 2014

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the July 2, 2014 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of July 2, 2014, as presented.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator's Report

Mr. Rogers reported that the new fiscal year has now begun and the budget has been approved. There are several director level positions open in the county and administration is now beginning the process of filling those positions.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that Valley Processing, a division of Mitchell Rubber Products, Inc. are beginning to expand and hope to increase their production and employment within the next few years. Two jobs will be posted to the Economic Development webpage next week.

Mrs. Blido reported that Trident announced it will officially be shutting down in September, which Trident employees were aware of and anticipating. Mrs. Blido stated that she is currently working with prospects who may be interested in the space once Trident has left.

Mrs. Blido stated Economic Development will be releasing an August/September newsletter in the next week. The newsletter will discuss several big news stories in Bedford, including the Artisan Trail which is launching this fall.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported they are beginning to allow four or five localities to participate in water testing, with Bedford being selected as one of those counties. Those interested in home water testing quality can see the brochure being distributed.

(6) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported that last weekend the Young Farmers attended the summer expo in South Boston, Virginia, which was well attended. The County Annual Dinner will also be coming up in October.

(7) Committee Reports **a. Education & Events**

(1) Ag Complex

Mr. Palmer reported there was no news for the Ag complex.

(2) Upcoming Events

a) BEA Education Day – Aug. 9, 2014

Mr. Palmer reported this Saturday will be BEA's Equine Education Day. They have great speakers lined up, will have BBQ and drinks available, and are hoping for a great turn-out. There is a slight charge of \$5 per person.

b) Bedford County Family Farm Tour – Aug. 16, 2014

Mr. Baker reported coming up next Saturday at Russell Dairy farm will be the Bedford County Family Farm tour. Plans for the event are shaping up nicely. Mr. Baker reported the audience is generally the non-farm public. The event will function as an open house, where people can come and go as they please between 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Attendees will also be able to see the corn maze being made that will hopefully be ready by fall as an agritourism destination.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers' Market

Mr. Baker reported on the positive feedback he had received on the Forest market. Mr. Baker reported about the new whole-sale produce option in Charlotte County which was started by the Mennonite community has worked well for their county.

Mr. Baker reported there may be corporate options to sell produce for our county, specifically to Fresh Market. Mr. Johnson stated the need to look into Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) certification and how that may affect farmers' ability to sell produce to open markets or larger outlets such as grocery stores. Mr. Powers suggested the board do some research on GAP certification before the next meeting.

(2) Bedford Grown and Website Update

Mrs. Blido stated the Economic Development office decided to move forward with creating a printed directory of the Bedford Grown participants. The office has been working with Blair Marketing to create an eight-page booklet to hand out at grocery stores, restaurants, etc. Once the finished booklet is approved Mrs. Blido will send the PDF to the board. The booklet features all Bedford Grown participants, has an application to become a Bedford Grown farmer, and has the location and time of each farmers market.

Mrs. Blido asked for more recent photos to update the brochure. Mrs. Blido also stated that if anyone had any events or information they would like to be posted to the ag section of the website they can forward the information to the economic development office.

Mrs. Blido also reported that the media has requested we provide board agendas and meeting minutes on the website. Approved meeting minutes and agendas will now be posted from July 2014 onward.

(3) Mobile Processing Plant

Mr. Powers reported he spoke to several board members separately on their thoughts about a future processing facility for the County. The consensus seemed to be that as much as there is a need for such facility, many are not sure the cost is really worth what it would take the county to bring those plans to fruition. Mr. Powers stated there was a concern with how many people could actually use it. From a county standpoint, it would be best to begin by looking for grant money and working with zoning ordinances to assist this process if we decide to move forward in the future. The Ag board plans to keep a processing facility on the table but do more research to how it could benefit the county.

Bev Eggleston stated he was a big advocate for mobile processing but that such a facility has not worked before in terms of cost because consumers don't fully appreciate the meat quality aspect

yet. Mr. Eggleston stated he believed there was more of a need for consolidation facilities where animals can be readjusted to their comfort zone in order to maintain the quality of the meat, which would prove to be a massive undertaking that would not necessarily be appreciated by the market in our county.

Mr. Grove inquired about what it would take to get an inspector. Mr. Eggleston stated it's hard to get inspectors on a daily basis because they are typically shared by multiple facilities, and have the tendency to make it harder for facilities that don't have the staff needed to process.

a) Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Powers reported the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy banquet will be held on September 13, 2014.

(8) Region 2000 Agriculture and Forestry Strategic Plan

Mr. Baker presented the Region 2000 Agriculture and Forestry Strategic plan. Mr. Baker reported that over the last 18 months there has been a focus on creating a regional plan to be presented to the Region 2000 Local Government Council (LGC) in July. Each locality in the region has two local representatives, which is Mr. Baker and Mrs. Blido for Bedford. The LGC has already pledged \$50,000 for the implementation phase of the strategic plan. The strategic plan is a serious effort that is regional, with plans to work across borders.

Mr. Baker reported they created an asset map and inventory of what the resources are available for Region 2000. The council went through an exercise to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The biggest take away from the study is that agriculture is a huge economic driver in our region. The strategy identified three primary goal areas: coordinated regional outreach and marketing, strengthening resources with producers, and promoting small career and business opportunities. What this does is create a good cross section of areas that need to be worked on in agriculture. Each goal is ranked by level of importance into immediate actions, moderate importance, and long-term objectives. As part of the regional marketing, they hope to develop a regional ag website, which would be a good way to grow business, and a good tool to show important statistics such as where the closest Farm Bureau office, supply dealers, and feed mills in the area are located. The study also suggested the importance of considering the concept of a food hub, which would handle aggregation of the supply. If the county wants to grow local foods, the product needs to get beyond its current niche market. This initiative could help make more sense of getting local food into institutions. The group will continue to work to assess the study and make changes as necessary. The strategic plan is unanimously supported by Region 2000, and the next step will be to bring it to the local governments. After closely looking the plan over, Mr. Rogers suggested Mr. Powers write a letter to the Board of Supervisors Chairman to communicate their support of the regional initiative.

(9) Information Items

Mr. Johnson discussed that a meeting was held about the ag expo, and they hope to focus on farm safety in the upcoming months. Mr. Hale would like to come make a presentation of agricultural safety at the next Ag meeting. Mr. Powers asked that he be added as an agenda item for next month. Mr. Baker stated there is an opportunity for education on both sides of farming emergencies.

Mr. Powers reported he received a call from Rodney Dellis after the state regional meeting, who wanted information on the setbacks in Bedford County, in order to compare to what's going on in their area.

Mr. Powers reported that Lindsey Tomlinson has decided to spearhead an ag fair at the Sedalia Center. She has asked several people to help so that a sheep, goat, and beef show for youth can be held on September 6, 2014. Mr. Powers discussed the desire for our county to have an ag fair, as there has become a big movement back towards having county fairs.

Mr. Baker stated that Duis Nursery is now owned by Claire Robertson, known as New Leaf Farms. Mr. Baker stated that it was good that the enterprise has stayed in county hands.

Mr. Grove asked about the length of deer season as only two weeks in Bedford County and wanted to know if there is any way it can be extended. Sam Gardner said Bedford County kills more deer than any surrounding county because we have such a short deer season. He also stated that extending the season could cause a run into bear season, and bear hunters might be opposed to that idea.

(10) Adjournment

9:08 p.m.