



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

December 6, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers, Don Gardner, Chuck Grove, Pam Willoughby, Pete Fellers, Lindsay Tomlinson, Beth Bays, Ken Newman, Sam Gardner, Joy Powers, John Graham, Ronnie Gross

Absent: Matt Baumgardner

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Reid Wodicka, Scott Baker

Staff Absent: None

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests: Andy Dooley, Kevin Willis, Charla Bansley, Josh Powers, Ken Palmer

(1) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the December 6, 2017 agenda. There were no objections.

A motion and a second were made to approve the December 6, 2017 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes - November 1, 2017

Dr. Don Gardner noted that a website, www.agexplorer.com pertains specifically to agricultural careers and it would be a great resource to forward to the guidance counselors. Mrs. Blido said she will email them about this and include the link.

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the November 1, 2017 meeting minutes. A misspelling of Dr. Francis' name was corrected in the minutes.

A motion and second were made to approve the November 1, 2017 meeting minutes as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administration Report

Mr. Wodicka introduced the two new members of the Board of Supervisors, Charla Bansley and Edgar Tuck. The Board of Supervisors is losing Steve Wilkerson and Curry Martin with whom he enjoyed working and looks forward to working with the new members as well. He also said the budget season will begin shortly and now is the time for the Ag Board to think about what they want to accomplish this year and he knows some good things were accomplished last year. Ms. Powers stated that the middle school programs have been so successful that the Ag Board is hoping to see if the program can be expanded to a full program for 7th and 8th graders. Mr. Wodicka said they would be excited to have that conversation in the future.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido thanked the Ag Board for the great year where we did ag tours for students and now are talking about future ag tours for teachers. The EDA meeting is tomorrow with several items to discuss. At New London, we are watching for LU to begin work in the spring on their School of Engineering building and a full restaurant/cafeteria building with classes beginning the fall of 2019. Nanotouch is also going to begin building. There is a new wooded trail of six miles in New London Park and in the spring, kiosks will be installed at the trail heads. The Bedford Center is updating to LED lighting for CVCC. At the Virginia Economic Development Association meeting today, the Governor said that in 2017, there were 1,063 economic development announcements made and 78% of those were for existing business expansions. Mrs. Blido stated that this shows both Bedford County and Virginia put a lot of priority on existing companies and want to see them grow. She also reported that she still has an open position and is hoping to review resumes and interview soon so she can hire someone to help her in January.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker noted another resource for Ag careers that he received through an e-mail. The website is AgCareers.com and it is a resource for instruction, recruitment, and maybe those not yet interested in the Ag industry. He will send an e-mail to the Ag Board members and it can be shared with the guidance counselors also.

Mr. Baker also reported the cattle sales went well and the next sale is January 19, 2018. There is a 60 day wean period so calves would have to be weaned by November 19 to be eligible and hopefully sales will continue to grow. There is continuing discussion with CVCC about a potential career studies certificate program. The next step is to reach out to the ag instructors and a key element is demonstrating to administrators that there are jobs and employers within commuting distance that would value a certificate program. There is interest in starting a Beekeepers Club in Bedford. Currently there are clubs in Lynchburg, Roanoke and Rocky Mount. There was a good turnout at the meeting last night and it is another opportunity for networking in ag and natural resources in the county. He asked the board members to help spread the word since this club just formed.

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

Sam Gardner reported they are fundraising for the trip to the Chesapeake Bay/Tangier Island. Gun raffle tickets are for sale at \$10 each. Beth Bays has tickets available if anyone wants to buy one. The Virginia Farm Bureau recognized the county's young farmers with the New Horizons Award for having the legislators out to see the agricultural impact on the region and its businesses. Mr. Powers said he received an e-mail about the award and also an e-mail about the Grown Here at Home segments with Neesy Payne on Channel 7 news. Mrs. Blido said that she can post these e-mails on the ag news website if he would forward them to her.

(7) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

Ms. Tomlinson reported the fruit sales for Liberty and Staunton River High Schools are well underway. They are also selling sweet potatoes. Gross's Orchard apples are being sold as a fundraiser for the local FFA's. She also reported that there are several new classes coming up for next year to help kids refine their career pathway skills and hone in on skill development for ag related careers. She has compiled different letters to business owners asking for feedback about what they are teaching in these classes and to ascertain what skills and jobs are needed after high school. She hopes to get a good collective response so they will be able to get the kids ready to better serve the local employers. Mrs. Blido said a couple businesses have told her that the FFA students are great workers when hired and are not afraid to use tools. Ms. Tomlinson noted that the Dept. of Education has imbedded in the class competencies 64 soft skill competencies that they also include in their lessons. John Graham noted that the ag trained students have better problem-solving understanding because they have worked with their hands while others have only classroom experience. Dr. Gardner said he has hired prior ag students and they have valuable skills like welding and can work on equipment where other kids cannot. Josh Powers reported that the ag program at Staunton River High School is decreasing its offerings of classes in business or production. Mr. Powers noted that Josh will not be able to do a related internship or retain a related work-release job next school year due to not having ag business or ag production classes. Discussion followed regarding concern that what is offered will not be of interest to many students and how the classes and programs are not providing training to pursue many jobs available.

A motion and second were made to authorize Chairman Powers to contact the Board of Education regarding the high school agricultural curriculum.

Adopted unanimously

(2) County Fair update

Ms. Powers reported the next year's fair is scheduled for the last week of September. The fair meeting is set for next Tuesday. She was called by Vanessa Angus from Amherst County to talk

with her and an Amherst County administrator about their county planning a fair. Their fair will be held the last week in August at Sweet Briar College. Their Board of Supervisors approved \$60,000 to fund their fair and they will have the Richmond or Charlottesville Symphony perform, as well as a jousting event. It was nice that they looked to Bedford to emulate.

(3) School Ag Programs Update

Ms. Powers is going back to Malawi with Restore the Harvest at the end of this month. An intern, Shelby Lanier, who is an FFA senior at Staunton River High School will be going with her. She will teach and facilitate an ag program to rural farmers in Malawi. The farm has grown to 20 acres and they have also built a church.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Coyote Lottery Update

Dr. Gardner reported that 49 have been checked in so the program is progressing and most sponsors have signed up again.

(2) Ag Board budget for training

Mrs. Blido reminded the members that the Board of Supervisors approved \$2,000 for training, which includes education services. The Ag Board can use the money for whatever they choose to approve and they may want to send Chairman Powers or another member to attend the Governor's ag trade meeting in March.

Mr. Graham attended a meeting in Boones Mill and they will be renovating a building into a farm market. They want to open year-round beginning in May for four or five days a week providing fruits, vegetables, and meats and are looking for ways to hire staff to supply the labor. It is an example of a locality funding a local market for local producers. Boones Mill is also beginning a produce auction on Tuesdays.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Pete Fellers stated there is a new conservation easement. The people that run the Sierra Vista preserved 315 acres with David Perry of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy.

Mr. Powers reported that the Planning Commission made some changes to the zoning ordinance upon suggestions of the Board of Supervisors and he thanked the BOS for their input.

(8) Informational Items

Mrs. Blido reviewed the 2018 calendar of meetings with the Ag Board.

A motion and second were made to move the January meeting of the Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board to January 10, 2018.

Adopted unanimously.

Mr. Graham asked whether the Ag Board would be doing an expo for 2018. Discussion followed regarding an expo, county fair, and other events such as a series of breakfasts and the value of these events.

Mrs. Blido said W.P. Johnson reports that the Farm Bureau has \$124.84 left to use on behalf of the Ag Board and she asked the members if they want to use it for the coyote lottery prize money.

A motion and a second were made to approve \$124.84 be used for the coyote lottery.

Adopted unanimously.

Andy Dooley from the Board of Supervisors expressed thanks to the Ag Board and the EDA for all their efforts and said he will continue to support these boards because he sees the benefits they bring to the county.

**(9) Adjournment
8:25pm - p.m.**