



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
February 5, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Road, Bedford, VA 24523

Present: Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Sam Gardner, Ronnie Gross, Dorothy McIntyre, Ken Newman, Jeff Powers, Joy Powers, Lindsay Tomlinson, Pam Willoughby

Absent: Matt Baumgardner, Chuck Grove

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Traci Blido, Amanda Kaufman

Staff Absent: Robert Hiss

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests: None

(1) ORGANIZATION

a. Election of Officers

Mr. Powers opened the floor for nominations of officers for 2020. A motion was made to re-elect the 2019 slate of officers for 2020.

A motion and a second were made to approve Jeff Powers as Chairman, Dr. Don Gardner as Vice Chairman, and Pam Willoughby as Secretary for the 2020 Ag Board.

Adopted unanimously

b. Appointments to Committees

Chairman Powers said the committees information will be sent out tomorrow but he is open to any changes or suggestions.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the February 5, 2020 agenda. There were no objections.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 5, 2020 agenda, as presented.

Adopted unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - December 4, 2019 and January 8, 2020

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the December 4, 2019 and January 8, 2020 meeting minutes. There were no objections.

A motion and a second were made to approve the December 4, 2019 and January 8, 2020 meeting minutes, as presented.

Adopted unanimously

(4) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Mrs. Blido reported that there are two new EDA members this year, Vicki Gardner who worked at Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce for many years and James Robertson. Two other EDA members, Dennis Novitzke and Wyatt Walton III, were reappointed for another term. The Governor announced that Custom Truck will be expanding and adding more employees and investment in Bedford County. Blue Ridge Optics has also announced an expansion. Virginia is a Right to Work State, but due to having a new Virginia legislative body, there might be some changes made. She will be working to educate new legislators on what an EDA actually does and how an EDA can impact and benefit Virginians' quality of life. She attended a meeting where sediment problems and erosion at Smith Mountain Lake were discussed and how farmers could help. She was able to share that Bedford has implemented a cost share pilot program to help farmers with invasive plant management along stream fence lines.

(5) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Ms. Kaufman gave an update on the Broadband Project. Towers are going up in Big Island, Huddleston, Hardy, and Shady Grove. The project will not be up and running until all the towers are constructed and the completion date is now expected to be August. There is nothing new to report regarding the Airport Zone Ordinance. It has not moved forward. The Board of Supervisors and School Board met regarding capital projects and individual departments will be meeting for budget planning for the next fiscal year.

Chairman Powers noted that Gregg Zody has resigned. He will be moving to a job in Oregon and he wished him the best of luck in his new position.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker reported that the Bedford Beef Producers will have their winter meeting on February 25 at Springlake Stockyard. The topic of the meeting will be emerging trends in the cattle industry. The January weaned and vaccinated calf sale had a good turnout with 400 cattle. Producers received \$125 more net in-pocket than if the calves were sold at weaning. There continues to be more producers participating in the sales. In response to the discussion in the January meeting regarding educating the sheriff's officers and dispatchers about the size and appearance of different breeds of animals to help with identifying animals at-large; Mr. Baker said he has the subject on his to do list and will work on it in the near future.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU/YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Mr. Sam Gardner reported that Farm Bureau staff are meeting with legislators and lobbying for farmers. There are some bills to mandate farmers to fence out their streams. Bedford has a good record on using best management practices which have been voluntary overall, but there are no provisions in any of these bills to provide cost shares. The Farm Bureau will need their help in educating legislators about agriculture and farming. Mr. Baker said he receives quarterly reports from the State to support Bedford's record. It was suggested that Tracy Culbertson from the Peaks of Otter Soil & Water Conservation District be invited to speak to the Ag Board. It is an ongoing challenge to continue to fund these staff positions and retain qualified people in them.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming Events

Nothing reported.

2. County Fair Update

Ms. Powers reported that the fair meeting went well. They have decided to switch things up a bit at the 2020 fair. They want to have more demonstrations of working agriculture and revamp the kids' activities as well.

3. School Ag Programs Update

Ms. Tomlinson reported that the FFA's are getting ready for competitions. She has a student teacher who is doing well and hopes to see him come back to teach in Bedford. They have added two more classes, an environmental class and a horticulture class which has drawn much interest by the students. The middle school programs have helped keep the interest in ag classes up. Some of the middle school kids will be showing animals at the Central Virginia Livestock Show this year and she is happy to see the younger students participating. She is working on planting a

small garden and providing sheep pasture on a five acre lot located behind Liberty Middle School.

Ms. Powers said this is a busy time of year for both 4H and FFA students. They are preparing for livestock judging and have several trips planned. They are waiting to see if they have enough student participation to acquire the third teacher that has been approved. She noted the great participation by the middle school students and how all the students from across the county work together.

Mr. Baker said that eight kids went to 4H Day at the State Capital and he was impressed with the way they conducted themselves.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmers' Market Update

Ms. McIntyre said there will be an indoor market this weekend in Forest with 35 vendors. There will also be a pancake breakfast for donations. The Forest Market will have its 10 year anniversary this year. The Bedford Market will have a vendor meeting on March 5 and she thinks the Forest Market's vendor meeting is March 6. The Bedford Market will be open on Tuesday and Friday mornings beginning May 1 and the managers have applied for SNAP participation. She noted that Bedford County is within the Blue Ridge Region of Farmers' Markets and is the most active of all the regions. She is looking forward to working with the Ag Board members and is excited about the upcoming markets.

Mrs. Blido noted that Poplar Forest will have Virginia Grown foods added this Spring and will use the Bedford Grown branding as well.

2. Coyote Lottery Update

Dr. Gardner said the lottery will wrap up this month and the drawing will be the first week of March. Donations so far have totaled \$2,000 so there should be a first and second prize. The current kill total is approximately 52.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers said so far this year it is very quiet and the legislators are busy working on other areas of legislation.

(9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Ms. Powers reported that Ethan Jackson is now judging on scholarship at Blackhawk College in Illinois. He spoke to a feedlot owner who feeds 10,000 head of cattle at a time who said he would choose Black Angus from south and central Virginia over all other breeds of cattle which was quite a compliment for our region.

Chairman Powers complimented the members of the Ag Board saying they work together and get along even if there is a disagreement and he is proud of the cooperation among its members. He received a call from a concerned citizen regarding ag education for adults. Chairman Powers noted there was some previous work done at least ten years ago but the key is having someone to coordinate and sell the project and funding is also needed. A program at CVCC was brought up a few years ago but there has been no further movement forward. Discussion followed regarding the two-year and four-year programs available at Virginia Tech, Virginia Western Community College, and at Ferrum College; all within an hour or two from Bedford where interested students could enroll.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

8:04 p.m.