



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
February 1, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Don Gardner, Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby, Pete Fellers, Lindsay Tomlinson, Beth Bays, Ken Newman, Matt Baumgardner, Sam Gardner

:Absent: Chuck Grove

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Scott Baker, Reid Wodicka

Staff Absent: Jessica Hupp

:Guests: Joy Powers, Glen and Laura Bobblett

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the February 1, 2017 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 1, 2017 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 4, 2017

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the January 4, 2017 meeting minutes. Mr. Powers stated that the minutes should read that the fair dates are tentative.

A motion and a second were made to approve the January 4, 2017 meeting minutes, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administration Report

Mr. Wodicka stated he has nothing additional to add.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported she met with Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Basil Gooden, at the VDACS meeting and annual legislative dinner. Dr. Gooden has a background with DHCD, the USDA, and he's a beef farmer, and he discussed wanting to utilize more partnerships.

Mrs. Blido reported she went to check on progress at Beale's Brewery & BBQ today, and the floors have been completed. The tanks will be arriving in March, the windows are repaired, and they're now painting the inside. Dave plans to have glass separating guests from the production so you can see the tanks. He also intends to have a Beale's treasure map highlighted on the wall, which will be cool. We're very excited to see it open in the summer.

Mrs. Blido attended the Tobacco Commission meeting in Richmond with staff, where they approved the sale of the CAER to Liberty University. LU wants to put their School of Engineering on Lot 1 in the New London Business and Technology Center, and raise its research level from R3 to R1. As a result, we will likely see some commercialization in that area. The CAER will continue to operate in conjunction with LU, but we are still in the sale agreement stage.

Mrs. Blido stated she told Megan Seibel, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, we were going to start doing some strategic planning, and she thought it was exciting we were working towards our goals and said she would be willing to assist if needed. Mrs. Blido stated that Ms. Seibel leads the VALOR program that is for future leaders in agriculture, and a two-year professional training program, within the U.S., which includes an international travel trip as well.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported in January that Bedford had the opportunity to take a bus full to two operations in the county. The Young farmers of Virginia Association were taken to three operations, and finished their day at Royal Oak Composting. It was a good trip, and no one had really seen anything like that before.

Mr. Baker reported that at the American Forage and Grassland Council, they handed out the Virginia Affiliate Awards for Virginia's Outstanding Forage Producers, and Keith Tuck was nominated and selected for that award.

Mr. Baker stated that the Tobacco Commission Agribusiness Fund gives the county the opportunity to solicit funds from them, and those will be awarded sometime this month. There will be a grant rolled out this Spring for hay barns, grain bins, and fields you may want to bring into pasture rotation that don't qualify for one of the government cost share programs. It won't be available until April, and he will take applications in early May.

Mr. Baker stated there is a pilot project on ag business technology beginning where producers that apply for cost share funds to create computerized record keeping. The District Marketing person started this program, and our county is eligible.

Mr. Gross asked about Lynchburg Grows. Mr. Baker said it primarily grows for a CSA program, and to supplement they buy from several other producers. One of the green houses is managed by St. John's Episcopal Church and all of it is donated to Daily Bread. Mr. Baker said that greenhouse is one of the best greenhouses in the place. Lynchburg Grows is managed by a non-profit, and recently hired a new farm manager.

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

Mr. Gardner reported that they went to meet the Virginia Delegates on Legislative Day, and had a great talk with Del. Terry Austin and Del. Scott Garrett. In addition, they talked to the aides of Secretary Steve Newman, and Del. Kathy Byron. Mr. Gardner said they have in the works a Spring meeting with Del. Garrett to get some delegates and Farm Bureau officials to visit some Bedford County farms. They should be able to pull some local people in as well like board members and planning commission members, but they are still working on a date for that event.

Mrs. Bays said they will start drawing for the gun raffle on the 14th.

(7) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

Mr. Palmer said he had nothing new to report except that he saw something on the ag program at Morrow River Middle School, which has small farm animals and kids are able to take them home and take care of them.

(2) County Fair update

Ms. Powers reported that they've been trying to find a new midway company to work with and there are not many to choose from, especially for newer fairs. She met one at the Virginia Association of Fairs, out of New York and Nevada, who is trying to grow their name in Virginia, but they could only do Centerfest weekend. The committee is still working and keeping the tentative date of September 7-10. They are trying to get more entertainment this year, including racing pigs and are working to make sure that educational components are stronger than last year. We expect a higher participation rate from the schools. The committee looked at doing a standing animal display throughout the fair, since it seemed to be a draw last year. This will be a great opportunity to get some younger farmers in front of the public talking about ag. The fair is in a period of growth right now, and hopefully will have everything set in stone soon. There will be a committee meeting next week.

Dr. Gardner said he believes it's a wonderful opportunity to show the public some of our modern farming techniques, and offered the idea to show the difference between winter with cover crops, and spring before it's planted, while explaining some of the things that happen in between and show the finished project.

(3) Middle School Ag Program Update

Ms. Tomlinson is still plugging along with the regular plan of sending students to school board meetings. She has some boys at the National Cattleman's Beef Association that are the next group of producers for this county.

Dr. Gardner stated there are a number of people, citizens of Bedford County, who have tried to improve vocational ag in the county for years. Dr. Gardner is planning on going before the Board of Supervisors on February 13 to discuss it. He invited a state FFA officer to come talk about what FFA has meant to her and offers young people. He has received a lot of support on the Board thus far, and wants them to have a personal conversation with their school board members to see if they can move this project along a little bit. Ms. Powers stated we've talked about it a lot, and it's important to remember moving forward that the state has that curriculum set up already, and directly correlates to SOL's. Ms. Powers stated that setting it up is not only beneficial to ag students, but its beneficial to students being informed on storm water and other hot topics now, with applicable hands on learning.

Mr. Powers stated he received a phone call from someone who talked about the meeting on the 13th and wants to make sure this doesn't get political.

Ms. Tomlinson stated they are getting ready for all the judging competitions, with 19 kids participating in livestock judging on February 25 in Blacksburg. The 4-H club is still conducting its book drive, and will be shipping a couple thousand books to Malawi, if anyone has any pertaining to ag they would like to share.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Baumgardner stated he was contacted by Harman Croft, a local state grader for this area looking for cattle farmers to put into a Botetourt-Bedford County feeder and quality assurance program in the next 30 days. Kate Lawrence will be the contact, but you can go through Scott Bakers office for that. She sent some information on it, and if anyone is interested please let him know. Bedford County is the third largest beef production county in the state, getting between \$70-100 per cattle sold through this avenue. This will be for calves that were weaned this fall. Mr. Baumgardner wants to make sure others know about these programs who wish they were making more on their cattle.

Mr. Baumgardner reported there is a crop meeting tomorrow in Rustburg. There will be a wheat specialist there to talk at 8 a.m. at Cornmeal Restaurant. This event is free. Also on February 11, there will be a goat production meeting in Halifax that is free as well.

Mr. Gross stated that he's been attending the winter markets in Forest. He stated there may be an opportunity to pick up some additional vendors for Bedford since Lynchburg is going through some construction on the parking areas near the market.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner stated 74 coyotes have been checked in as of a few days ago.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers stated Mr. Foster from Foster Fuels owns 8,000 acres in Virginia, and that he recently placed 226 acres right down 460 on Cranson's Corner into a conservation easement. Dan Owens is director of state policy, and went to the General Assembly to address them cutting the tax credits, and that discussion has now been tabled. Law makers and aides said they got a lot of phone calls and that's what made it happen. Virginia Farm Bureau made a strong case for the tax credit system.

(8) Strategic Planning for 2017

Mr. Powers turned the meeting over to Mr. Wodicka. Mr. Wodicka wants the board to start thinking about what the future looks like for the county and ag board, such as how do we set ourselves up to work on things that will really benefit the ag community.

Mr. Wodicka asked the board what they believe we are doing well. Mr. Gardner stated we have the water project coming in that's going to help and possibly attract some more eastern processing facilities to locate here, like pulp production. Dr. Gardner stated the governing body has always been very supportive of ag such as land use taxation, zoning, that has made it possible for these types of projects to exist. Mr. Powers stated we have a strong extension department that they work well with. Mr. Baker stated that we have an engaged community with volunteers who care about ag.

Dr. Gardner stated that farmers using modern equipment can't get up and down a lot of the state roads. He knows this is out of the control of the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Wodicka said that would be a good thing to look into on VDOT's website. Mr. Powers stated we've been lucky to have supportive economic developers in the county. Mr. Gross said the tourism director is crucial to direct market ag. Mr. Wodicka said he will have Nicole come in a couple of months. Mr. Palmer stated re-establishment of fair and fair grounds had always been a goal of the Ag Board, and we finally did it, but we are still looking for a permanent place. Ms. Powers stated they would prefer it not be called a fair ground, but rather an agricultural complex.

Mr. Baker said our strength is the livestock market and two separate farmers markets where folks have opportunities to sell. Mr. Powers stated the Farm Bureau is very strong in the county, which makes this board's job a lot easier.

Mr. Wodicka asked for things we could work on other than bridges. Mr. Baumgardner said communication and broadband is needed in the more rural area for businesses, and students. Mr. Wodicka said that was really important information for the broadband initiative, and that the committee really needs to be thinking about ag land.

Mr. Powers stated we've never really promoted our forestry industry, but knows it's a large part of our economy. Dr. Gardner said they've also never had a board member aside from Jerry that was informed about forestry. Mrs. Willoughby said she'd like to see more information about biosolids. Mr. Powers said we should do more educational events for the public, and need to develop new crops and new opportunities for producers to diversify. Mr. Baumgardner said FSA just hired W.P. Johnson as their county executive director.

Mr. Gross stated we could use a produce terminal on a small scale, so that produce comes in from different sources as a wholesale market. Similar to what Hillsborough has, different industries can come pick up their produce. Mr. Powers stated we could always do beef cattle better, which could be an educational role. A lot of people raise beef cattle up, sell it out, and the new generation needs to stay on top of getting the most out of beef cattle production. Mr. Wodicka reiterated we need to assist in driving new practices. Mr. Baumgardner stated we could also focus on crop production and getting our farmers a premium. Mr. Powers stated he is always asked when we will hire an agricultural economic development director. County needs to hire to help Traci and Jessica whose primary focus would be agriculture.

Mr. Gross stated it would be nice to have someone trained who knows crop insurance, which is very complex and part of budgeting for a lot of farmers. Mr. Wodicka suggests himself and Mr. Powers get together in the next month to narrow down plans and how to address them.

(9) Informational Items

Mr. Powers said went to the Agribusiness dinner in Richmond with Joy and they had a large crowd there. He wasn't able to talk to Dr. Basil Gooden, but did get to speak with Del. Terry Austin. Everything served was local, and they had great food. Mr. Powers is working on his report for the Board of Supervisors and will be sending out the draft for review. He has asked to be on the agenda for planning commission for residential livestock. Mr. Powers asked about updating the ag brochure. Mr. Powers wants to get ag in the community colleges. In the past, he had talked to Mr. Lowry but then he passed away. Dixie Dalton, who is in Blackstone at the community college teaching ag, told us her numbers are steady, and that she is videotaping four of the classes that directly transfer to Virginia Tech in the ag program. Kids that take those classes at CVCC will then have a transferrable credit to tech. Mr. Powers was invited to go to Fox 21/27 to talk about the Ag Board and the county, and that will be airing tonight. Fox 21/27 also wants to start a Saturday Ag Life kids section.

Mr. Palmer stated the Sedalia Country Fair will be March 2. Mr. Palmer thanked the guests for attending. Ken and Laura Bobblett, from Forest are exploring different ways to grow and want to

do a strawberry you pick farm. He stated that Mr. Baker has been a tremendous asset and a good person to ask questions to.

(10) Adjournment

-8:13 p.m.