



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
February 3, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Don Gardner, Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, Lindsay Tomlinson, Keith Tuck, Ken Newman, Matt Baumgardner, W.P. Johnson, Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby

:Absent:

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp, Jerry Craig

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess, Scott Baker

:Guests: John Graham, Joy Powers

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the February 3, 2016 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 3, 2016 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 6, 2016

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the January 6, 2016 meeting minutes.

Mr. Craig stated that under (11) Information Items he was misquoted and that the minutes should read “Mr. Craig suggested going straight to the Game Department”. A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of January 6, 2016, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator’s Report

Mr. Powers stated that Mr. Boggess was appointed as the new County Administrator and Patrick Skelley was appointed as the new County Attorney.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that she attended a couple Tobacco Commission meetings this month and felt the Ag Board could get a refresher for new members on what the Tobacco Commission does. The Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, which was renamed this year, is a 28 member body created in 1999 by the General Assembly. Its mission is to promote economic growth in tobacco dependent communities using proceeds from the national tobacco settlement. To date, the Commission has awarded 1,940 grants, totaling more than \$1 billion, and provided \$309 million in indemnification payments to tobacco growers. We have received several grants for companies including B&W, FEVA, Mail America, TEVA Pharmaceuticals and agribusiness has also benefitted from its programs. Pittsylvania County is doing a wine grant through the Tobacco Commission and has been talking to her about wineries in mountainous areas. The Tobacco Commission has a new Executive Director, Evan Feinman, who is originally from Lynchburg. They are working on a new loan program that may allow some businesses that aren't ideal for a grant to receive a loan instead. Sarah Capps stated there may be additional funding for ag projects this year and encouraged she and Scott Baker to develop some ideas.

Mrs. Blido reported that most of the board has probably seen the news about an Appomattox economic development deal that fell through that was supported by a Commonwealth Opportunity Fund grant with a Chinese business that was no longer responding. This topic is being discussed at the General Assembly as they want to take steps to ensure these projects are being properly vetted and monitored in the future. We will all watch any developments on this project or changes that may come about as a result.

Mrs. Blido stated that the International Production and Processing Expo was held last week, which she attended with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and other agriculture counties in Virginia. They had great foot traffic at the Virginia booth and had some great conversations with businesses that said they were expanding and showed some interest. The group members will follow up with those businesses this month.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker was not in attendance, but sent Mr. Powers a note that they will discuss under the Transition Workshop agenda item.

(6) Tourism Report

Mr. Craig reported he wanted to thank Mrs. Blido for connecting him with A Goode View Alpaca Farm that will be hosting Olde Liberty Fibre Faire in April. He contacted the gentleman who explained the original event was held at the Lion's Club. Mr. Craig was asked to sit on the management team. The team will be soliciting 55-60 vendors and plan to advertise far beyond Bedford County to bring people in. There is a similar event that's held just outside of Richmond, so the team has strategically placed this event between the Richmond and Maryland fiber fairs.

The Fibre Faire will be held at A Goode View Alpaca Farm. They've expressed interest in inviting the 4-H and FFA and plan to give them a free booth, as well as part of the event proceeds.

Mr. Craig also reported he had previously brought up an event called Love at First Bite, which is a farm-to-restaurant initiative held in Daleville. These events have recently been run by the departments of tourism in multiple counties, including Bedford, Roanoke, Botetourt, Bath, Highlands, and Rockbridge. A different county hosts every year with a tremendous amount of legwork behind the event. Mr. Graham recently attended and felt the concept was good, but they unfortunately had to hold it on the snow date so everyone that had planned to be there on the original date couldn't attend on the snow date. Mr. Graham stated it is advertised as a buyer and producer event, but there weren't very many buyers there.

Dr. Gardner asked about the perception that most alpaca hair sellers sell to each other and those who create products are more into the weaving business. A lengthy discussion followed with some members explaining that alpaca products are sold on-line and at farmer's markets and retail stores.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported nothing new to report.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

a. Bedford County Fair update

Ms. Powers reported that in January they attended the Virginia Association of Fairs conference. They felt it was a very enlightening experience and felt the biggest take away was finding out how we compared to other fairs. The association breaks up fairs into attendance categories including under 7,000 attendees, 7000-30,000 attendees, 30,000 + attendees. With Bedford having a 3-day fair with 15,000 in attendance, we doubled the attendance of some of the more established fairs in the state.

The Bedford County Fair competed in different media award programs, submitting 6-7 total. In the 7,000 to 30,000 attendance group, Bedford County won 2nd best t-shirt, 3rd place for the flyer, 1st place for the radio and TV ads, 3rd place for newspaper ad, and 1st place for the postcard. The Bedford County radio ad also won 1st place in the state overall.

The conference offered some good ideas and they were able to hear about the successes and failures of other fairs. Ms. Powers stated they are starting to get into the planning and structuring of this year's fair. Susan Epperly of Bedford County Extension attended on Saturday to become a

certified judge in vegetables, quilts, and other categories. This will help make the fair contests consistent across the state.

Ms. Powers reported they plan to add a pageant this year, which seemed to be the big event at many other fairs across the state. The committee had a meeting last night, and has finalized the contract with Cole Amusements.

Mr. Palmer reported that Curry Martin discussed obtaining a piece of land that he plans to use for equine activities. Mr. Martin also said he was considering putting up a pole barn where the equine tent was last year, which would be open on all sides, about 60x100 feet, which would expand the scope of what they can do with equine.

Ms. Powers stated the 501(c)(3) status is being worked on, and they have arranged a P.O. box and cell phone for the fair. Mr. Powers stated that Ms. Hupp will handle most of the business calls and all other calls can go to Ms. Powers. Ms. Powers stated they don't have the number for the phone to give out yet as she has to finish registration on it.

Ms. Tomlinson reported she had some students participating in an AI clinic at Springlake Stockyard the last couple of days. Ms. Tomlinson stated they did manage to get middle school ag curriculum put into the program of studies. Ms. Tomlinson stated she will be running back and forth between Liberty and Bedford Middle. In the future, she hopes for a joint ag facility and program.

Ms. Tomlinson stated they may want to ask to have Spencer Blankenship added to the agenda in the future to discuss what he's been working on. Spencer has been working on a community outreach class to have kids that are coded as Ag Production, meeting with different farms in the area and working there. Ms. Tomlinson stated she was blown away with the administration's support of their efforts. They should be reaching out to local people soon to see what type of work they can get students lined up to do.

Dr. Gardner asked if any of Ms. Tomlinson's colleagues have developed a class called Ag Careers. Ms. Tomlinson stated that the Department of Education website has something along those lines, and that they use 9th grade classes to show off everything that ag encompasses. Once students get into specific pathways, they highlight career clusters again, including biotechnology, marketing, financials and so on. Ms. Tomlinson stated one issue they have found is a lot of parents that are sending kids through the program remember it as it was when they were in ag, and ag during that time in schools was very vocational. Parents will assume college bound students won't want to or shouldn't be taking agriculture and they need to be informed on all the great options out there in the field.

b. Ag Expo update

Mr. Powers stated he has spoken to many that were involved and they have decided to postpone the Ag Expo and work towards having more of a Heritage Day event in the Fall. This will make it easier to have outdoor events. Mr. Powers stated the Coyote Lottery will be announced at Southern States instead of at the Annual Ag Expo like last year.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Graham reported there is a winter market coming up at the Forest Recreation Center on March 12. They are currently on a once a month schedule.

Mr. Gross stated he attended a growers meeting in Charlotte County yesterday for the Southside Produce Auction. Mr. Gross stated there is a huge amount of growers in that area and it is nice to see land being cultivated to grow crops. The market has grown and has a nice facility. Dr. Gardner asked if there was potential for that kind of marketing to take place in this area. Mr. Gross said yes as long as they have enough growers to support it.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner reported 67 coyotes have been checked in as of this afternoon. As mentioned last month, the weather has been impossible for trappers, and since most hunting seasons have passed, there are not as many out there hunting coyotes right now. Dr. Gardner also reported that he hasn't heard as much about coyote problems recently and so he believes the lottery is working.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

1. Transition Workshop update

Mr. Fellers stated he expects the Transition Workshop to be a post-County Fair event. Mr. Baker recently sent an email about being at Virginia Tech with Extension and he's been asking questions about organizing this type of event. He's made good connections and thinks we can get grant money to help feed the group and turn it into a two-day event. If it's like it was in Amherst, it could be regional event. They plan to work on a schedule to see what the best timeframe looks like.

(9) Other Business

Mr. Tuck reported he attended a Winter Forage Conference in Blackstone recently. There were 9-10 from Bedford County there. Tall fescue was the main focus, and the event had good speakers. A lot of presenters hit the same information, and the most valuable take away for him was diluting tall fescue with other crops such as clovers was the most effective method. Tall fescue causes foot problems in cattle. Mr. Tuck stated you can watch part of the conference,

which was uploaded to YouTube. You can search Virginia Tech Forages Winter Grazing Conference 2016 to watch.

(10) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that he talked to Jason Carter about the black vulture problem we've been having and he stated that the Virginia Senate did pass a bill to allow farmers to kill black vultures if they are causing problems by permit.

On a similar note, Mr. Powers stated that as a livestock producer if you have a dog, wild or domestic, that is hurting cattle, we're allowed to kill it. There have been strong movements to try to change this by taking away the right to kill and knowing what is done with the animal after capture. They will be working with the sheriff's department on this topic.

Dr. Gardner reported there would be an Ag Life segment coming on tonight about veterinary feed directive issues or the use of antibiotics in feed. Ms. Powers stated that Southern States will be having an annual producers meeting next Tuesday on vet directives which has been organized by Susan Epperly. Dr. Gardner stated that this will probably not affect livestock people in our part of the county, as it's not as prevalent in beef and dairy. Dr. Gardner stated he never found it to be that effective.

Mr. Graham stated Lynchburg College is looking to restart an aquaculture program at Claytor Nature Center. He has been collaborating with them on grants. They unfortunately missed the deadline this year, but there will be more next year. Virginia Tech is developing an ag database that will put purchasers and producers from a multi-state area in better contact with what they're looking for. Clay Ferguson, who went to Staunton River High School and is now a sophomore at Virginia Tech, is interested in aquaculture and came out during winter break to discuss it with Mr. Graham.

Mr. Baumgardner stated that he attended a beef cattle health conference, which had several Bedford County people in attendance, and discussed needs for the beef industry. There will also be a crop meeting on February 11 in Lynchburg at 8 a.m.

(11) Adjournment -8:23 p.m.