



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

February 4, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

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

:Absent: Spencer Tinsley

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp

Staff Absent: Mark Reeter

Guests: John Graham

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the February 4, 2015 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 4, 2015 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 7, 2015

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the January 7, 2015 meeting minutes.

Mr. Palmer stated that under the election of officers section it should state “voted and approved unanimously”. Mr. Baker reported a typo under the agenda for the ag conference; staff agreed to correct it.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of January 7, 2015, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator’s Report

No report was given as Mr. Reeter was not present for the February 4, 2015 Ag Board meeting.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that she went to Richmond yesterday to talk with Delegate Austin about a local company and the availability of state incentives.

Mrs. Blido stated that we have two new EDA members starting tomorrow evening and the EDA has been getting more requests for financial involvement in local businesses. Mrs. Blido stated she is pleased to announce that Trident Seafood will still be in business for at least another month.

Mrs. Blido reported that she attended the International Processing and Production Expo (IPPE) last week with the Virginia Department of Agriculture. Mrs. Blido stated there were over 1,300 exhibitors and it was a great opportunity for her to share best practices in our agriculture industry with other ag-focused counties in the state.

Mrs. Blido reported that she and Mr. Powers went to the Virginia Ag Developers and Officers meeting in Richmond, which hosts a sampling of counties that are heavily involved in agriculture and forestry. At the meeting, they heard from legislators about different bills that have come up in past meetings and Mrs. Blido felt they had a good handle on things with expectations that the bills would go the way the ag board was hoping. Mrs. Blido reported that this VADO meeting was focused on writing a Commonwealth Ag Board tool book and that Mr. Powers was helpful in assisting the other counties with information about how our county's Ag Board was created.

Mr. Powers reported it was apparent that there were three successful Ag Boards represented and that all have been successful despite being set up in different ways. Mr. Powers stated he doesn't believe there's an easy formula, but that different counties will have to create a board that fits their need. Mr. Powers also reported that there was a county represented at VADO (Page County) that has been hugely successful in its Farm-to-School initiative.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported that Ashley Nauta, the new Ag and Natural Resources Extension Agent from Halifax County, is in attendance to observe how our Ag Board functions. Ms. Nauta's job is to focus on agriculture marketing and tourism and he hopes that she will find commonalities to report back to her board in Halifax. Mr. Baker also introduced Patrick Ellis, who has been serving on the newly formed Farmers Market Managers team, and who plans to share more later in the meeting about plans for the upcoming season.

Mr. Baker reported that the second ag production meeting which took place at Springlake Stockyard went extremely well. Keith Tuck presented at this meeting of about 65 people and Mr. Baker stated he was very impressed to hear about Keith's personal experiences and the hard

numbers Keith provided in switching to a pasture system. Mr. Baker stated they plan to continue the production meetings on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Baker reported that they have started the planning for the 2015 4-H and FFA Livestock Show and that he hopes those in the ag community that are approached by kids participating will be generous and helpful.

(6) Tourism Director's Report

Mr. Craig reported he received a phone call from the Tourism Manager in Botetourt County about an event they are planning known as "Love at First Bite". The event's intention is designed to connect local producers with restaurants. The event will hold various workshops and will bring in chefs to make food with the local produce. Botetourt is hoping to bring in several different counties to participate, with the idea of Bedford County eventually hosting its own event.

Mr. Graham asked if the event has a wholesale concept and Mr. Craig stated that was how he understood it. Mr. Baker said its purpose is to connect buyers and sellers in a different setting than the typical farmers market.

Mr. Craig reported he wanted to move forward in creating an agri-business brand and would like to sit down with some of the board members to put together a list of agri-tourism sectors. With this small committee's approval, they would bring back the list to the Ag Board to see what sectors, if any, have been missed.

Mr. Craig stated the Ag Board needed to decide if they would like to have their website linked to tourism or keep it with economic development, or both.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported they recently attended Legislative Day in Richmond. He found that legislators were very receptive to most of their ideas and one of their major concerns was tabled indefinitely. EMS Safety Day will be taking place this weekend in Chatham. Mr. Johnson reported that several of them would be going to Nashville for an ag conference from March 12-16. Mr. Johnson reported that they will be attending the Highland County Farm Tour on March 7. Mr. Johnson stated they have begun working on an EMS open house for March 16 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the house to introduce first responders to agricultural equipment and injuries.

Dr. Gardner stated that his wife went as a contingency to appear at the senate hearing concerning the food safety and inspection related to raw milk sales. He stated he was amazed that there were 23 state organizations opposed to the bill that were very aware of the dangers of tourists getting food poisoning from changes in food inspection in the state.

(8) Committee Reports
a. Education & Events
(1) Ag Complex

Dr. Fred Conner from Bedford County Public Schools reported that this year an ag teacher had been added at both Liberty and Staunton River High Schools. In terms of enrollment, Dr. Conner stated there are currently 190 Liberty students enrolled in ag classes for next year, and 132 at Staunton River. This is a huge improvement from last year, which only had 80 students enrolled at Liberty and 116 at Staunton River. Agriculture enrollment is obviously growing, he said.

Dr. Conner reported that during the 2014-15 school year they added two new classes, including Small Engine Repair and Introduction to Power, Structural, and Technical Systems. For the upcoming school year 2015-16, they are adding an Ag Fabrication/Emerging Technologies dual-enrollment course with CVCC, as well as Fish and Wildlife Management and Horticulture Sciences classes.

Dr. Conner stated that there have been significant changes in the use of the Perkins Grant Funds, which were previously used along with local funding from the school board towards travel funds for competitions. Effective this year, instruction can no longer fund registrations, hotels and travel for those student competitions through the Perkins Fund, except when the student is economically disadvantaged, disabled, or is in a non-traditional status, meaning a male in a traditionally female competition, or vice versa. Dr. Conner doesn't see it impacting student opportunities, but it is something they plan to work through.

Dr. Conner stated that there is a new specialist at the state level for ag education, Carly Wolfolk. So far she has done a good job developing pathways for ag in education. Dr. Conner gave a recap of questions from the last Ag Board meeting. Dr. Conner stated he heard the board's concern for the lack of opportunity and course offerings at JF. He stated earlier in the school year they began looking at possibilities with courses related to ag with a heavy science relation. Dr. Conner reported they are working on a carole which has been purchased for temporary use for livestock animals and they are now exploring potential sites for a greenhouse at Staunton River. Earlier in the day they did a walk-through of the grounds with administrators and will be working to move that plan forward.

Dr. Conner stated that the Ag Board had mentioned contract length for the ag teachers, which he will put on the list of budget items for consideration next year. Dr. Conner reported that he brought a description of the units and competencies related to the middle school ag class, and they plan to take a closer look at what's happening in the classroom to make improvements.

Mr. Powers asked about teacher stipends and how those have changed through the years. Dr. Whitehurst stated that many teachers at one point were on those types of contracts, but when hard times hit many of those contracts were pulled. Dr. Whitehurst says they do see the value in

longer contract lengths, particularly in ag related courses, but that it is also on the list of budget items being submitted this year.

Mr. Palmer said there was nothing new on the ag complex but that he met with Curry Martin again about ideas on a Bedford County fair. Mr. Martin has several different ideas with the amount of land available and what could be done with the land. Mr. Palmer stated the fair could be aimed at FFA livestock, crop production, social and community activities, that could be opened up to the general population for home-economics type events and competitions. There could be a small midway because some of the rides from the Salem Fair are assembled on Mr. Martin's land.

Mr. Palmer stated they were open to anyone's input. Mr. Palmer stated this could be the beginnings of a permanent fairground in the county and if people like it, and it's successful, it can be expanded. The fair is aimed to take place sometime in the latter part of June.

(2) Upcoming Events

a. Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner reported that as of 10 days ago, 87 coyotes had been checked in. He reported that he also received an email from a Board of Supervisors member in Shenandoah County, Martha Shruntz, who was looking for more information on organizing a lottery. She stated they were going to be having a town hall meeting about starting a lottery since they've been having a lot of issues with coyotes in their county.

b. Ag Conference Expo

Mr. Hale reported not much has changed from the schedule since the last report. A lot of speakers are more concrete, and they've received great donations in order to put on lunch for the event.

Mr. Baker asked that Ag Board members help get the word out about this year's event as much as possible. He reported that Ms. Hupp has written a press release for the event which would be going out shortly.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Patrick Ellis reported they had their first community meeting in November, and from there a small management team was formed. Mr. Ellis stated he believes the best thing that came out of the committee's ideas was a survey the Chamber of Commerce put out through email and electric bills. The committee received an overwhelming response about wanting the market to take place more than one day a week. When looking at the county as a whole, it already has three

different market days. From information they gathered from the surveys, they are planning to add a monthly Saturday market in Bedford in addition to the Friday market. They believe Saturday is the day most people can get out to shop. The committee is also looking at renovations to the downtown pavilion and adding local street art. Mr. Ellis reported that Lowe's has stepped up to assist in funding the pavilions renovations. The committee also plans to hire a part-time paid market manager and they anticipate paying about \$6,500 meaning they need to raise about \$6-7,000 of the \$12,000. The committee is convinced that the market can't grow unless there is someone paid to help it thrive.

Mr. Gross stated he had said in the past that there should be a paid position to take care of the market and he is excited to see it moving in that direction. Mr. Ellis stated that Dorothy does an excellent job running the Forest Market, however she is an independent contractor for that job so if Dorothy were to leave, the Forest Market would cease to exist. The committee is working on a structure that wouldn't rely solely on each market's manager, by including stakeholders and its volunteers. Mr. Ellis said it would be good if the county could hire someone to manage all of the markets.

Mr. Powers stated he still believes there is a huge need for a market in Moneta, especially with the Lake crowd that shows up in the summer. Mr. Graham stated that he agreed with Mr. Ellis that if there was a manager of all markets, they could continue to run without each individual market supervisor.

Mr. Gross stated his only concern with the once a month Saturday market is how they plan to draw people into the town on a Saturday, since most market-goers on Friday work in the town. Mr. Ellis stated that their goal for the Saturday market is a more family oriented event with entertainment, but also a way to bring people into local businesses.

Dr. Gardner asked if vendors would have to choose between the Forest and Bedford Markets. Mr. Graham stated there aren't enough vendors in Forest that it would matter to, because they come from all over, and would not necessarily come to Bedford because they're already established in Forest. He doesn't believe there would be much of a competition of vendors. The Forest Market isn't as crafter friendly, so there may be a tossup for that type of vendor between the two markets.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers reported that there was good news related to federal tax deductions, which would increase them and make them more permanent.

(9) Other Business

A. Farm-to-Table in school system

Mr. Powers stated that he was anxious to learn more about Page County's Farm-to-School initiative that has been successful so far. Mr. Gross stated he believes the success of such an initiative hinges on how motivated the head of nutrition is at the school system.

Mrs. Blido reported that Pittsylvania County recently did a feasibility study on a poultry integrator and is rolling it out with their consulting group on Thursday, February 19, 2015 at the James Emerson Education Center in Chatham. They will be presenting their findings to the Board of Supervisors there and opening it up to questions. Those interested in hearing more are invited to attend.

(10) Informational Items

Dr. Gardner stated he saw a link on YouTube for presentations similar to those found at the recent beef meeting. Dr. Gardner stated a nutritionist from one he watched has exposed some disturbing developments on federal nutrition guidelines that effect the school lunch and military food programs. The findings reported that the regulations are steadily eroding the food pyramid away from animal products. The nutritionist made a point that the obesity crisis started around the same year these nutritional guidelines went into effect. Dr. Gardner said he would forward it to the board so they can watch it as well.

Mr. Powers asked if Staff could get him a chance to give a report to the Board of Supervisors at the end of February.

Mrs. Blido reported that the Farm-to-School Conference is taking place March 18-19 at Doubletree Hilton in Charlottesville. She will send the information to Jessica to disperse to the rest of the board.

(11) Adjournment

8:58 p.m.