



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
January 4, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

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

:Absent: None

Staff Present: Jessica Hupp, Traci Blido, Scott Baker, Reid Wodicka

Staff Absent:

:Guests: John Graham, Brent Wills, Joy Powers, Chris Roberts, Jessica Roberts

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the January 4, 2017 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the January 4, 2017 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 7, 2016

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the December 7, 2016 meeting minutes.

Dr. Gardner stated that Jeff was incorrectly listed as in attendance. Matt Baumgardner mentioned that the Honorary American Farmer award Stewart Byrd was given was from the National FFA organization. Mr. Baker stated it should read that the Forest Extension Specialist is leaving, not Forest Extension Agent. A motion and a second were made to approve the December 7, 2016 meeting minutes, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) Organization

A. Election of Officers

Mr. Powers welcomed our two new Ag Board members, Beth Bays and Sam Gardner. Mr. Powers opened the floor for nominations for officers. Mr. Palmer made a motion to elect the current slate of officers.

A motion and a second were made to approve Jeff Powers as Chairman, Don Gardner as Vice-Chairman, and Pam Willoughby as Secretary.

Adopted Unanimously.

B. Appointments to Committees

Mr. Powers stated he would like some time to review the current committees, but would also like anyone with interest in changing committees or getting on a committee to let him know. He plans to make the appointments fairly quickly, possibly next month. There are three committees including Education & Events, Marketing & Production, and Land Protection & Conservation. There are occasionally newly appointed committees as events arise.

C. 2017 Meeting Calendar

Mr. Powers asked the board to look at the back sheet of their agenda packet to view a draft meeting calendar for 2017. Board meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of every month at 7 or 7:30 p.m. depending on the season.

A motion and a second were made to approve the 2017 Meeting Calendar as presented, with an agreement that a particular date could always be changed if necessary in the year.

Adopted Unanimously.

(4) County Administration Report

Mr. Wodicka reported that between now and April they will be developing the budget, so if there is anything that needs to be addressed, please let him know. Mr. Wodicka stated he knows a discussion has been going on for middle school ag facilities and for a county agriculture complex, which are the types of projects he believes are good to be included in future budget planning. Mr. Wodicka stated they'd like to have a better fleshed out idea of what an agricultural complex entails, the county's role in its future use, and so on. Some discussion followed about conducting a Strategic Plan for the Ag Board in 2017 and Reid's possible assistance with that process.

(5) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported the EDA hosted its quarterly business roundtable meeting on December 8 at Poplar Forest. Staff got to hear from the businesses in attendance, as well as from Poplar Forest staff about its planned \$5 million expansion which includes putting in a new parkway connecting

the property to Enterprise Drive. They also plan on putting in walking trails and creating an exciting new visitor experience.

Mrs. Blido reported the population in Bedford County is currently at 77,977, and growing. Unemployment is 4.2%, and it is always the lowest in the region. Mrs. Blido reported that over 1,000 new jobs were created or recovered over and above last year's numbers, and the county has seen a 20% increase in machinery and tools tax collected, which shows an increase in capital investment related to equipment. Some companies that expanded this year include Smyth, Blue Ridge Optics, and Redco Machine. Runk & Pratt is also looking to expand in Ivy Hill and create new jobs.

Mrs. Blido stated that Beale's Brewery & BBQ which will be opening in the town in June has continued making progress by installing the underground plumbing, repairing windows and masonry, and pouring new concrete floors. The brewing equipment will arrive in April. There has been a lot going on, and staff has been handling the grant and loan process with DHCD to keep things rolling.

Ms. Hupp reported that the Bedford One program is working on planning tours for the current semester and they plan to have more this year than normal (about 6-8). The group will likely be looking to host an ag tour near the end of the semester in a warmer month.

Mr. Wodicka reported he forgot to bring up before that we have a new Tourism Director, and he hopes she will be included in future Ag Board meetings.

Mrs. Blido stated Mr. Wodicka has been helping with broadband by preparing an RFP which will go out in the next month to find an engineering consultant that will help us determine where towers should go and such. The county hopes to have an Internet Service Provider partner with us in the process.

(6) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported January seems to be conference month, and reminded the board that the American Forage and Grassland Council will be having its annual conference in Roanoke. They are offering a one day producer registration. Today, Mr. Baker also got notice of the Beef Cattle Health Conference at Virginia Tech's Veterinary school taking place January 28. Topics will include the new veterinary feed directive.

Mr. Baker stated that he was approached by the Young Farmers of Virginia, which is not the same as the ones associated with Farm Bureau. The group is more or less an alumni organization for FFA. They have been around a long time, and this year's annual meeting will be in Lynchburg. The group asked to see some farms that weekend, so Mr. Baker set up tours of Lynchburg Grows, Mountain Run Farm, and Royal Oak. The group typically has 65-70 attend.

Mr. Baker stated that last month the board discussed putting together a project description for the livestock show, and had some comments and changes to what he put together. Mr. Baker passed out the new edited version, and said they can discuss it at the next meeting. He hopes it will be useful for those going out to find support for the program.

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

Mr. Gardner reported Farm Bureau hosted its Christmas Dinner at the last meeting. They will be going on a trip to the Farm Show next Friday in Harrisonburg. In addition, they are trying to finish selling gun raffle tickets for anyone interested. Mrs. Blido stated she would buy some. They are going to attend legislative day on January 25, and asked if there are any issues the board would like him to take to the state level. Mrs. Blido stated we would like continued support for the AFID grant. Dr. Gardner mentioned fixing narrow bridges across the county.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

Mrs. Tomlinson said she continues to push for the middle school ag program by having students attend school board meetings. She and another ag teacher have been asked to draw up an idea of what they've been thinking as far as what a joint facility might look like with a middle school program. Alongside that, Mrs. Tomlinson was able to meet Chris and Jessica Roberts, who have extensive backgrounds in FFA alumni. For the last few years, Mrs. Tomlinson has been trying to drum up an alumni group, but being a new, younger teacher has made it difficult because she doesn't know previous students. Chris and Jessica approached her at Centerfest, and she found they would be a huge asset to getting an alumni group off the ground.

Chris Roberts stated they moved from Florida two years ago, where they were very involved there in FFA alumni. Chris stated he went through the FFA program, his son went through the program, and they both were officers. Chris still serves on the swine committee for the Polk County Fair, which has about 420 pigs every year. Chris and Jessica helped build a whole new alumni program in Florida with about 50 plus members when they moved. They currently live in Moneta, and would be happy to help build it up here.

Mrs. Tomlinson stated they are gearing up for livestock judging and horse judging, and would appreciate any way you can help enrich these practices and help students improve. Mrs. Tomlinson has been trying to push the Governor's School of Agriculture at Virginia Tech in the summer, but it's been hard to convince them. It is an exceptional program where students get to go to college for a month in the summer and enjoy a very hands-on learning experience. Students' evenings are spent studying and writing papers, and some enrichment programs during the weekends.

Ms. Powers stated she is also working to get an alumni group off the ground, and will be doing a kickoff event soon. Ms. Powers stated there are a ton of kids competing in contests this spring. The 4-H group is getting into livestock judging and having its first meeting tomorrow, which should have a wide variety of ages (8-18). The 4-H club is also launching a new service project by reaching out to different organizations looking for gently used books to be shipped to Malawi, which has been ravaged by several natural disasters. The group would love to send ag materials because many living in Malawi are farmers.

Ms. Powers reported the Bedford County Fair dates will be Sept. 7-10, 2017. They are getting excited and in the next month or so they will be pushing new involvement in the fair by working with county staff and county stakeholders to get everyone on the same page. If you know someone who would like to get involved, let Joy know. Ms. Powers stated that this weekend they will be attending the Virginia Association of Fairs conference at the Homestead. The fair will have several PR and media pieces competing, and there will be some pageant girls competing as well.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Graham stated there is a winter market in Forest coming up on January 14. Mr. Baker stated that Paul Stern is retiring Friday, so he will not be associated with the market this coming season. The YMCA has agreed to continue managing that market. Mary Jo Boone will make a decision on the type of staff person they assign to it or if they will hire a part-time person that focuses just on the market. Mr. Gross asked about Main Street's role. Ms. Hupp stated Main Street ran it before, but seems to be community opinion they would rather Main Street not run the market.

Mr. Gross stated Southside Produce Options has a meeting coming up for growers and sellers on January 14th at 1 p.m.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner reported he checked a while back and the coyote count was in the 40s, which is double what it was last month. Ms. Hupp sent everyone a flyer with sponsors on it, and Dr. Gardner stated he would appreciate it if board members would print and post them at the nearest country store, farmers market, or wherever. Dr. Gardner said there hasn't been a lot of media coverage and he's afraid if not very many coyotes are killed this year that the sponsors won't continue to sponsor the event.

Dr. Gardner wondered if this was something that could run year round. Many opportunities present themselves throughout the year to kill coyotes, like people cutting hay on their tractor might see them and miss the opportunity. Mr. Powers stated we planned it during this time because of breeding season, but having it year round could make sense.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Powers said he received an email that Blue Ridge Land Trust was in its 50th season. Mr. Baker said they sent out information that there has been some effort to reduce the amount of funding the General Assembly puts into that tax credit program, but there could be another bill this year to compromise in order to keep them from doing away with the program altogether. Mr. Fellers said it will likely come down to that, as it has happened in other states.

Dr. Gardner stated he received e-letters from Farm Bureau that Gov. McAuliffe plans to cut best management practices funding for soil conservation districts from \$100 million down to \$10 million. Mr. Baker stated the couple years where funding was so high is an anomaly, and there are many millions of backlog because of that, so he doesn't know specifics of what's being proposed, but the common understanding is that it couldn't stay that high.

(9) Other Business

Mr. Baumgardner reported that Shelby Trail who worked for the Farm Service Agency helping local Bedford County farmers retired this year, and they will be getting a new director in a couple months.

Mr. Powers stated that he has a concern as a livestock producer about the availability of large animal veterinary service in the county. Ms. Powers stated she called Bedford Animal Hospital for a dying pig and the girl that answered said they were almost closing so she didn't know if they could help. The vet on call said she doesn't know much about pigs and it would be wasting Joy's time to come out there. Mr. Powers stated he was watching an ag life segment about veterinary scholarships since it is in such high demand in the area. Mr. Powers stated this has not been the first issue, and that pigs in particular seem to be a problem.

Dr. Gardner stated there's a program run through the state for areas that are vet deficient. The program offers significant reduction in student loans (\$25,000 a year) from federal government for vets to move and serve in an underserved area for up to four years. Dr. Gardner said the situation described has been going that direction for several years, because there are so few swine in this part of the country on a commercial level. Now, people are questioning if telemedicine is ok. When there is a lack of experience or help, telemedicine is the way to go. Mr. Baumgardner suggested those interested going to the Virginia Veterinary Conference in Roanoke. He has attended in the past, and he's picked up some useful information every time.

(10) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that next month will be a strategic planning month for the Ag Board, and that he'd like board members to bring ideas forward to plan for the future. Mr. Powers also stated he plans to get on the Planning Commission's schedule in the next month or so concerning the residential livestock ordinance.

(11) Adjournment
-8:13 p.m.