



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
January 6, 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

:Absent: Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp, Jerry Craig

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess

:Guests: Brent Wills

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the January 6, 2016 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the January 6, 2016 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 2, 2015

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the December 2, 2015 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of December 2, 2015, as presented.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) Organizational

A. Election of Officers

Mr. Powers opened the floor up for nominations for Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary. Mr. Grove made a motion, seconded by Mr. Palmer, to nominate the current slate of officers,

which includes Mr. Powers as Chairman, Dr. Gardner as Vice-Chairman, and Mrs. Willoughby as Secretary. Board voted unanimously to elect above slate of officers.

B. Appointments to committees

Mr. Powers asked that if anyone on the board would like to change committees or join a committee to please let it be known in the next couple of weeks.

C. 2016 Meeting calendar

Mr. Powers asked the board to review the draft meeting calendar. Mr. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Newman, to approve the calendar as presented. Board voted unanimously to adopt the calendar.

(4) County Administrator's Report

Mr. Powers stated that Carl was unable to be here, and asked Mrs. Blido if she had any news to report on his behalf. Mrs. Blido stated as they may have seen in the newspaper, the Board of Supervisors has a new Chairman, Mr. Steve Wilkerson, and Vice-Chairman, Mr. Curry Martin.

(5) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported WFXR was recognized by the Ag Board at the station's open house last month and Mr. Powers presented station officials with a resolution for their new Ag Life segment, as well as their contribution to the Bedford County Fair.

Mrs. Blido reported she will be attending the International Production and Processing Expo (IPPE) at the end of the month in Atlanta. There are going to be 1,250 exhibitors and over 30,000 visitors. Mrs. Blido will be there with the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS) wearing both the Virginia and Bedford County logos showing what we can bring for ag companies. Dr. Gardner asked if she was aware of any forward movement for the poultry processing facility Pittsylvania County has been discussing. Mrs. Blido stated she has not heard any recent updates from Freddie Wydner, the agriculture director there, but she would make sure to spread the word of our interest.

Mrs. Blido stated the next Virginia Agricultural Development Officers (VADO) meeting will be January 14 in the VDACS office in Richmond. Mr. Powers attended this show last year to discuss how Bedford County formed an Ag Board to serve as a template for the group, and this year they plan to roll out the information they gathered on best practices of forming an Ag Board in Virginia.

Mrs. Blido stated that the Lions Club who normally hosts the Old Liberty Fiber Faire has decided to step down from hosting the event this year. As a result, A Goode View Alpaca Farm is interested in running the fiber fair this year and are looking for any help he can get to spread the word. The fair will be in April, as they like to have it a month before other counties start

having their fiber fairs. She suggested that Jerry Craig follow up with them from a tourism aspect.

(6) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported there are a number of ag production meetings coming up including the annual vet school cattle health conference on January 30 from 8 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. The information for the 4-H and FFA Livestock Show has been finalized and will be on May 6 and 7. This is the 35th year of the show, and they decided on turning it into a two-day fair as it was getting too difficult to fit everything in on the same day.

Mr. Baker reported that the state is creating a pollinator protection plan to do a better job protecting pollinators. VDACS will be running Virginia's plan and is seeking public input as they draft it. Overall, they want a better system so that people managing colonies are in communication with people using pesticides on a regular basis. There will be seven listening sessions to attend, with the closest being in Roanoke on January 28th.

Mr. Baker reported they are moving forward with the Region 2000 strategic plan. One priority that came out of the plan was having a feasibility study done on a food aggregation facility. Stakeholders plan to meet with them at end of the month. One of the most likely possibilities of this study is to try to grow the beef industry to move beyond just production side and get beef into institutional markets.

Mr. Baker stated that the Virginia Association of Biological Farming will be holding its annual conference nearby. This is a great opportunity for people to come together to learn about ag in all of its forms. The Secretary of Agriculture will also be there. The event is primarily on Friday and Saturday, but there are pre-conference workshops on Thursday. Registration for the entire conference is about \$200. Student registration is \$50 a day, or \$95 for the whole conference. Attendees may pick and choose what they want to attend.

Mr. Baker stated there is also an annual foraging and grassland winter conference the last full week of January. This year's topic is "Tall Fescue in the 21st Century". <http://vaforages.org/>

(7) Tourism Report

Jerry Craig reported that the Tourism Department went through Virginia's DRIVE Tourism workshop in order to receive a \$10,000 grant. Several stakeholders had decided that the top priority of this grant would be toward a feasibility study for the ag convention center. They were unable to find the additional \$15,000 needed for a study.

Mr. Craig plans to call another meeting with stakeholders to find a different project to put the \$10,000 grant toward. Another option for the grant could be toward the feasibility study for the

Amtrak stop. Mr. Grove asked if Mr. Craig has asked the Board of Supervisors for the additional funding, to which he stated they have already assisted several other tourism projects this year.

Mr. Craig stated that the Virginia Association of Fairs conference will start tomorrow.

(8) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported that Sam and Ashley Gardner won the Virginia Farm Bureau Achievement award and will be competing this weekend at the national level in Orlando. On January 27-28 they will be going to the Richmond Legislative Day. The Young Farmers Legislative Day will be on February 8. The state Young Farmer expo will be taking place in Danville on February 26-28. The Ag Trade Conference is on March 7-8, and the Spring Conference will be on March 11-15. The Young Farmers are also preparing to go to the Whitestone Spring Production sale March 25-27.

(9) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

a. Bedford County Fair update

Mr. Tuck reported the committee met for the first time this year. The fair will take place September 1-4, 2016. They will have Cole Amusements providing the rides again this year, and will not have to provide any money upfront. The committee will be adding a pageant this year. The group has selected all committee heads in order to get things rolling for the next meeting. In addition, they plan to extend the hours to 10 p.m., but times aren't yet set in stone.

Mr. Tuck stated some of the group will be going up to The Homestead Resort for the Association of Fairs Conference. There are 27 award categories, and the Bedford County Fair entered 10 categories. Mr. Powers stated that although the Ag Board will still be involved with the fair in some capacity, it will be a stand-alone entity from now on. They have been discussing how to set up a 501(c) 3 for the group.

b. Ag Expo update

Mr. Palmer reported he had nothing new on the Annual Ag Expo. He did hear that Wythe County has acquired a 95-acre piece of land, part of which will be made into a multi-purpose facility, including an ag section. They received \$750,000 worth of grant funding from the Tobacco Commission. Mrs. Blido stated that Wythe County gets much more money from the Tobacco Commission every year than Bedford County, as it is based off of how much tobacco was grown in each location.

Mr. Powers stated that Simmons is on board to be the Ag Expo location this year. They plan on going with Scott and others to go to Simmons to talk details, and they are open to hosting us

whenever. Mr. Powers stated that John Graham had given some great suggestions for potential speakers. There will be more details on this event next month.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

There was no new news to report.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner reported 60 coyotes have been turned in so far for the lottery. It has been a difficult last 30 days for trying to trap in the raining and freezing conditions.

Dr. Gardner stated that he read a report out of *Trapper's Post* called "70% solution? Is Coyote Population Control Possible" written by Jerry Levine. He stated in the article that there is a premise that you have to kill 70% of the coyote population every year for three years in order to make a dent in the population. This premise originated from a population model. Like all models it was pieced together as a best guess estimate, and its predication is only as accurate as its components. The article stated it was unable to find any scientific study in the past 40 years that sought to test the accuracy of this model. Dr. Gardner stated there are people who want to denounce the control of predators by stating that a lottery system doesn't work, but he wanted to let the board know what we are doing with the coyote lottery does have some basis in fact and he has heard people have had a lot less problems recently with coyotes since the lottery was started.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers stated that he has worked his way into the farm transition, and his wife Carolyn has been talking to Scott to create a workshop for anyone in Bedford County who wants to know how farm transition works. Scott stated that he polled the board and heard back from most that it would be beneficial to do a program on farm transition. Mr. Fellers said there is apparently a team that will do these meetings, but that they don't have to do it that way. Mr. Powers stated he would like this to be an ag board event in collaboration with whoever else would like to help. Board voted unanimously to host a farm transition informational meeting.

(10) Other Business

Ms. Tomlinson reported that a group of 70 students from Staunton River and Liberty High School went to Virginia Tech today to visit the College of Agriculture, Environmental and Natural Resources, and Vet school. This is always a great opportunity for students to get a better idea of what they'd like to do after graduation.

Ms. Tomlinson reported that the new middle school program of studies for ag has been put on hold and she has not been updated. As soon as the program is approved they should be able to move forward.

(11) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that Don was on the news talking about the Cuban trade deal. Governor McAuliffe is the fourth governor to go to Cuba but was the first one to strike a deal, most likely due to the port. Most likely it was focused around the swine industry but it will likely open other industries as well.

Mr. Powers stated that since there are new board members they will need a new picture at the next meeting.

Mr. Grove stated there is a problem in the county and in the state with black vultures and that the State of Tennessee just passed a law that despite vultures being a protected bird, it's okay for a farmer to kill them. Mr. Grove asked who he should contact to get this issue addressed. Mr. Powers suggested talking to Chad Fox. Mr. Craig suggested going straight to the office of forestry, that may send someone from their office to check out the problem.

Mr. Newman stated that you can get a kill permit, as he did for seagulls and vultures, and it was signed off on by Chad Fox. He then got a letter from DEQ stating he is allowed to kill 200-300 per year under strict guidelines.

**(12) Adjournment
-8:11 p.m.**