



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

January 7, 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 January 7, 2015 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the January 7, 2015 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 3, 2014

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the December 3, 2014 meeting minutes.

Mr. Baker stated he had one edit which included the changing of the second workshop at Springlake to read “on the following Saturday”.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of December 3, 2014, as amended.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) Organization

A. Election of Officers

Mr. Powers asked if there were any nominations for new officers as Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary.

Mr. Grove made a motion, seconded by Mr. Palmer, to elect the same slate of officers as 2014, which include Jeff Powers as Chairman, Dr. Don Gardner as Vice-Chairman, and Pam Willoughby as Secretary.

Voted Unanimously.

B. Appointments to committees

Mr. Powers stated he would like to give everyone the opportunity to let him know if they would like to continue to serve on their current committee or join a new committee. He stated the acting committees include Education and Events, Marketing & Production, and Land Protection & Conservation. Mr. Powers stated he would really like to elect the same Chairmen from last year for each committee.

C. 2015 Meeting Calendar

Mr. Powers asked for the board to look at the proposed meeting calendar for 2015. Mr. Powers stated that all dates look cleared of conflicts with holidays. Mr. Baumgardner asked how snow days at county schools would affect the meeting of the Ag Board. Mr. Powers stated we haven't ever had to cancel a meeting before, but would notify the board if the conditions were unsafe for everyone to meet. Mr. Powers stated this calendar acts as standing dates, but can be changed for different complications.

Mr. Baumgardner made a motion, seconded by Mr. Grove to adopt the proposed 2015 Ag Board meeting calendar, as is. Adopted unanimously.

(4) County Administrator's Report

No report was given as Mr. Reeter was not present for the January 6, 2015 Ag Board meeting.

(5) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that she is currently working on several different ag-related activities including the VDACS meeting coming up next week. Mrs. Blido stated she has also asked Mr. Powers if he would like to attend. This VDACS meeting is for Directors and officers at the state level to participate and present what each county has been working on. Mrs. Blido stated that 12 counties will be represented in these meetings that occur twice a year.

Mrs. Blido reported she has been coordinating an Ag tour similar to the tour she took part in for Maryland Agriculture last year, but that it will feature Pittsylvania and Bedford County's Agriculture industry.

Mrs. Blido reported that at the end of month she will be traveling to the International Production and Processing Expo (IPPE) which Virginia will have a booth at to represent ag counties in our state. Different farm businesses will be showcased in the booth including Shamrock farms, Lunenburg, Loudon County Distillery, Nelson County's Blue Mountain Brewery, and our own county's Trident Seafood.

Mrs. Blido reported that Trident Seafood is having a job fair in house tomorrow, with five to six outside companies attending to help find its current employees new jobs. Mrs. Blido stated that there was also a job fair today at Citadel Plastics. Mrs. Blido stated that many companies in the Town of Bedford are growing.

Mrs. Blido reported that the unemployment rate was advertised today, with Bedford County as the lowest rate in the region and the Town of Bedford's unemployment rate has also decreased.

Mrs. Blido stated we had printed directories made for the Bedford Grown program. Mrs. Blido brought a stack to go around and stated that there will be a re-print in a year or two to include new companies that have joined the program.

Mr. Johnson asked if there was an opportunity for members of the Ag Board to speak with those planning to attend the Virginia Ag tour being coordinated with VDACS. Mrs. Blido stated they would love to have Ag Board members involved, and once the schedule has been put together she will let the board know.

(6) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported he brought with him McKayla Parker, a senior at Jefferson Forest High School, who is interested in Agriculture and has been brought in to Cooperative Extension as an intern. Mr. Baker asked the ag board members if they would introduce themselves and explain the type of agriculture they do. Mr. Baker stated he would be contacting them at a later time to see if anyone would be interested in hosting McKayla at their farms as part of her internship.

Mr. Baker reported that there are plenty of training and workshops taking place soon, including one at Springlake Stockyard featuring guest speaker Keith Tuck on January 22, which will include a farm tour at Keith Tuck's farm the following Saturday. Mr. Baker reported that Virginia State University has a grant program for those interested in diversifying in small berry production. If anyone knows a farmer that may be interested, they can get funds for at least an acre to get berry production started.

(7) Tourism Director's Report

Mr. Powers introduced Jerry Craig, the new Tourism Director, who will now be taking an active role in participating in the Ag Board meetings.

Mr. Craig stated that there's a great need for agri-tourism to teach people what their county produces and how it's produced. Mr. Craig explained his plan for incorporating agriculture into tourism would begin with forming a new advisory board with up to 15 members, which include 4 anchors (D-Day being one of those anchors) and 9 additional tourism segments (which would include Agri-tourism).

Mr. Craig explained this new board would include new tourism sectors that have never been invited to the table. He plans to meet with each segment, and would depend on this board to help him name who the contributing players should be, such as who would be the equine contact. In turn, the ag segment would choose its own representative to sit on the new advisory board. Mr. Craig wants to bring in all parts of ag, including the sustainable ag community.

Mr. Craig acknowledged that the only time the county has ever tried to brand was done by the Ag Board with Bedford Grown. Mr. Craig would like to create a larger brand for Bedford which would include Bedford Grown. Mr. Gardner asked what the new group would do, to which Mr. Craig said it would be comparable to how the ag board functions with the Board of Supervisors, by advising on matters of tourism related to agriculture.

Mr. Craig stated he had talked to Nancy and Danny Johnson about how well the Bedford Barn's project went and asked if he had considered the tomato canneries of Bedford County. Mr. Craig stated there were 120 canneries at one time in the county, and Bedford was considered the epicenter of canning in its day. Many of these canneries are still standing. Mr. Gardner said he agreed they have historical significance, however they are usually far off the road and falling apart. Mr. Craig said he would make sure all existing canneries would be documented. Mr. Powers stated at one time tomatoes were probably the biggest crop in Bedford and that Mr. Craig should contact Betty Gereau to get the historical society involved.

Mr. Gardner stated there needs to be more in the county to keep people in Bedford on a weekend. Mr. Gross stated a destination needs to be created, and asked if the Welcome Center could play a part by taking on a room dedicated to Agriculture in Bedford. Mr. Craig stated an interesting addition could be interactive displays to showcase barns, alpacas, etc. that show every different aspect of agriculture here in Bedford.

(8) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported that he was in Bath County during last month's meeting for the Farm Bureau's annual meeting where several resolutions were passed. Mr. Johnson stated that a publication will be sent out on what legislation they plan to support and not support this year.

Mr. Johnson also reported that January 29th will be Legislative Day where Farm Bureau members get to meet with our local representatives to discuss any bills that may affect agriculture in our counties.

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

Mr. Palmer reported he met with Curry Martin shortly after the last meeting to discuss using his facility for a county fair, and stated Mr. Martin is enthusiastic about the prospect. This fair could include crafts, livestock, and horse shows, which Mr. Martin's land is big enough to host. Mr. Palmer stated Mr. Martin was also insured enough to host such an event.

(2) Upcoming Events

a. Coyote Lottery

Mr. Gardner reported that 61 coyotes had been checked in since Monday, which is ahead of schedule compared to last year. He also reported that he received a phone call from a supervisor from Shenandoah County who was asking about how the Coyote Lottery in our county was organized. The supervisor stated they have an issue there with coyotes and would like to immolate Bedford's Coyote lottery.

Mr. Gardner also brought up a meeting that he attend at Staunton River High School with other board members to discuss and support vocational agriculture curriculum in the county schools. Mr. Gardner stated there were several events taking place in the summer that teachers were taking students to on their own time and paying for themselves to attend. Mr. Gardner stated he thinks the board should be instrumental in approaching the school board to extend vocational agriculture teachers to 11 months in order to support those seasonal events. He believes this extends to all ag teachers in the county, and asked the board for suggestions.

Mr. Powers stated there is one full time and one 10-month position at Staunton River, and both teachers are full time at Liberty, so it is really only affecting one teacher. Mr. Powers stated he has told these teachers he would support them when they needed help. Mr. Powers stated he has a vested interest with his son taking agriculture classes, which may mean he needs to sit out of that discussion.

Mr. Gardner stated that one of the teachers at Staunton River got a grant to buy a greenhouse so she could begin some horticulture classes for her students, but because a greenhouse exists at BSTC she was told that Staunton River didn't need one. Mr. Gardner stated that the ag board needed to reach out to the school system as much as possible.

b. Ag Conference Expo

Mr. Johnson reported the following suggested agenda for the March 14 Ag expo at CVCC Bedford:

7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. Registration

8 - 8:15 a.m. Welcome from Chairman

8:15 - 9:15 General Session for the legislators (The committee is inviting all of our local officials and representatives to discuss Ag-related policy issues in the realms of county, state, and federal government.)

9:15 – 10:00 a.m. Two Tracks: Animal Safety with Karen Baum and Jennifer Ligon or Food Safety and fresh produce from VCE

10:00 - 10:25 a.m. Vendor showcase

10:30 – 11:15 a.m. Bio-security and Emergency Training

11:15 – 11:20 a.m. Equipment Safety Demo (with W.P. and Amy Johnson)

11:20 – 11:35 a.m. Break/Continued Vendor tradeshow

11:40 – 12:25 p.m. Two Track session: Machinery and Highway Safety or General Health and Well-being with Amy Johnson

12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Coyote Lottery Drawing and lunch

1:30 – 2 p.m. Trade show and door prizes until close

Mr. Johnson reported they planned to keep the vendor and application fees the same as last year, which will be \$25 per business and organizations are free.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Gross reported that most market activity is currently dormant, but that several markets are holding indoor winter markets for those looking to buy local produce.

Mr. Baker stated a lot of work has been taking place to improve the Bedford Farmers Market, with a panel of local stakeholders working to make some new changes. The group sent out surveys in the town and received over 130 responses. The next step will be meeting in the first week in February to make tentative decisions on what changes will take place.

Mr. Gardner asked Mr. Baker how farm-to-table initiatives with the school system could become a feasible option for Bedford County. Mr. Baker stated that Harrisonburg-area schools have made it possible and at one point Lynchburg City was using Turpin Arthur's beef, which shows that it is possible, and it just depends on how receptive the school system would be with the idea. Mr. Baker stated that if the meat can pass USDA inspection then it should be ok to go into the schools.

Mr. Gardner asked who he should speak with regarding this topic, to which Mr. Baker responded the head of Nutrition for the school system, Karen Arthur. Mr. Gardner asked Mr. Gross if he's had any luck working with the school system as a distributor. Mr. Gross stated it was great in theory, but the problem lies in the number of vendors being allowed for one school. Mr. Gross reported that when there are a limited number of vendors, there is less need for people checking quantity and receipts, plus the bigger distributors typically have lower prices. Mr. Gross stated it

is not as easy as it seems like it would be, but stated that working with Ms. Arthur was great, and that the community needs to keep in mind they are working on a budget.

Mr. Gardner asked if each vendor has to deliver their own product to each location, or if there was a central location to drop off the commodities. Mr. Gross stated that each producer is responsible for drop off and that Conner Produce, who was working with Lynchburg, has a problem with delivering specialty items and apples, because when apples were pulled from his schedule it messed up his routes.

Mr. Graham stated how grants are supposed to help local produce vendors get into the local schools, however he's never seen anything in terms of getting local beef into schools. This is the same situation with fish.

Mr. Gross stated he had been turned down before because certain schools had been donated bushels of apples and no one notified them. Mr. Johnson stated that a lot of the grants state a time frame of 10 years of produce support for the schools, but after 3 years the grant support to the vendor would go away.

Mr. Powers suggested speaking about this again at the next meeting to identify these opportunities of connecting with the school system.

Mr. Gross asked if it would be possible for the leader of the Bedford Farmers Market to come to a meeting and update us on what's been happening. Mr. Baker stated he could arrange this for next month.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers reported that it's the time of the year that the general assembly is working against land conservation, which is obvious with the current House Bill 1488. This bill could do a lot of damage to land trusts. Mr. Fellers stated he would send more information to Mr. Powers to distribute to the entire board. Mr. Fellers asked Mr. Johnson who he should speak with to get Farm Bureau's opinion of this farm bill, to which Mr. Johnson stated to contact Martha Moore.

(10) Other Business

(11) Informational Items

Mr. Powers asked for Mr. Johnson's opinion on Farm Bureau's issues of the year that were sent in an email. Mr. Powers would like board's commitment to contact our delegates about each issue.

Mr. Powers also brought up a bill brought forward that the state may start to impose cheese and milk making regulations for those being sold at farmer's markets. Mr. Johnson stated that most people are opposed to raw milk sales due to pathogens that contaminate non-pasteurized milk. Mr. Gardner explained that the dairy commodity group is opposed to the sale of raw milk

because there has been an increase in demand for raw milk, but whenever there is a food poisoning issue that arises from its sale they may not know where it specifically came from, and have to generalize it to a category. Mr. Gardner stated there have been an increasing number of food poisoning issues related to the sale of raw milk. Dr. Gardner said he believes this is strictly a milk issue, and that the issue has nothing to do with over-regulation of direct market sales.

Mr. Baker stated he was contacted by Lindsay at Liberty High School and she is trying to put together a youth cattle working group.

(12) Adjournment

8:58 p.m.