



**Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board**

July 2, 2014 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Chuck Grove, Pam Willoughby, Pete Fellers, Spencer Tinsley, Daniel Layman, Ken Newman, W.P. Johnson

:Absent:

Don Gardner, Ronnie Gross, Matt Baumgardner

Staff Present: Mark Reeter, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp

Staff Absent: Scott Baker

(1) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the July 2, 2014 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the July 2, 2014 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 4, 2014

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the June 4, 2014 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of June 4, 2014, as presented.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator's Report

Mr. Reeter reported that the Board of Supervisors had adopted an operating budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year at their meeting on June 9, and appropriated those funds at their June 23 meeting. The board also had its joint public hearing with the planning commission on June 9 to approve the new CAFO ordinance.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported Region 2000 has a new Executive Director, Megan Lucas, who has extensive experience with the Chamber of Commerce in Nebraska, and previously worked as

Economic Development Director of Altavista. Mrs. Lucas hopes to focus on our overall regional marketing to make sure prospects are aware of the business benefits of our area.

Mrs. Blido reported that she attended the Virginia Agricultural Development Officers (VADO) meeting this past month and met with several other counties to hear about their agricultural communities. Mrs. Blido stated that Secretary Haymore was there to announce the Chinese company that is investing \$2 billion and 2,000 jobs in Chesterfield, with plans to make paper products out of grain and corn waste. Mrs. Blido reported that she spoke with Stephen Versen from VDACS at great length about recruiting worldwide companies, and Mr. Versen expressed his willingness to come to one of our Agricultural Board meetings to talk through what other counties have experienced with the creating of a processing facility.

Mrs. Blido reported that as of June 30, the Bedford Joint Economic Development Authority has been dissolved and that the Bedford Center for Business will now be under the ownership of the county EDA.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Powers stated that Mr. Baker was absent this meeting, but that he had asked him to remind the board that the Farm Tour is coming up on August 16.

(6) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported that the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers will not be meeting this month. The next important event for the Bureau will be the annual dinner, scheduled for October 7 at 6:00 p.m.

(7) Committee Reports
a. Education & Events

(1) Ag Complex

Mr. Palmer reported there was no new business with the Ag Complex. Mr. Palmer stated he attended the Apple Valley Old Timer's Day this past Saturday and there was a great turn out.

Mr. Powers reported that many people have expressed an interest in an agriculture-based county fair to take place in 2015.

(2) BEA Equine Education Day – Aug. 9, 2014

Mr. Palmer reported the BEA meeting is coming up next Tuesday. The planning of the driving and draft horse competition and exhibition for BEA Education day is going smoothly.

(3) Bedford County Family Farm Tour - Aug. 16, 2014

Mr. Powers reported the Bedford County Family Farm Tour will take place on August 16 at Russell Dairy Farm from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Admission is free, and there will be master gardener seminars, plenty of animals, and walking tours of the farm available.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers' Market

Mr. Graham reported that the YMCA market is currently going through growing pains in terms of vendor and customer base, and believes people are still finding out about its location and time.

Mrs. Blido reported the Forest market is doing very well, and Mr. Graham added that it had 30 vendors now.

(2) Central Virginia Produce, Livestock, and Feed Storage Systems Grant

Mr. Powers reported that Mr. Baker didn't leave him with any additional information on the Central Virginia Storage Systems Grant, which is still in its middle phases at this point in time.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers thanked everyone who showed up for the public hearing on June 9. The Blue Ridge Land Conservancy fundraiser will be held Sunday, September 14 to support local land trusts.

Matt Lohr was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

(8) Other Business

a. Virginia Farm-to-Table Program

Mr. Graham reported on resources that may be helpful for the processing facility cause. Barry Turpin worked up some numbers for mobile processing units and matching fund capabilities.

Mr. Turpin reported he put together some figures based on both a mobile processing model and a barn space that could possibly be turned into a processing facility. Barry Jones, from VDACS, informed Mr. Turpin that using the barn space was possible and could accommodate for a cutting room, freezer, and office space. However, another hardstand facility would most likely need to be constructed.

Mr. Turpin reported that in terms of turning a profit you would need to process six animals a day, assuming you would set it up on a cooperative basis where enough farmers are coming in to front part of the cost. As a whole, such a facility could cost \$500,000 with reconditioned equipment, and capitalization money. Mr. Turpin stated schools get grants to buy local, so if there was a space to keep the meat as a county, it would be possible to tackle supplying to schools.

Ben Coleman of Mountain Run Farm said he would be willing to call EcoFriendly Foods to see if the owner's interest in processing more meat at his facility has changed.

Mr. Grove stated concerns for EcoFriendly's ability to process all of the cattle in Bedford and said he believed if the need was strong enough private enterprise would have taken up the cause at this point. Farmers used to sell by halves and quarters, but there's too much sticker shock now. Mr. Powers stated that he believed it would have to be a movement in order to work. Now that people are buying more local food, there will need to be more local food available to them. Mr. Powers also stated the processing facility is not limited to cattle only, making 2-3 sheep equal to one cow and 3-4 swine equal to one cow. Mr. Graham pointed out the difference between selling beef and selling produce, stating that the limitation for beef is reaching the consumer. People are purchasing at Food Lion and Kroger, but individual farmers can't sell their beef product at those stores because they would have to drop their costs in order to compete. Mr. Graham suggested if we had a product or brand for the county, a local product might be more likely to show up in bigger stores.

Mr. Powers stated that his research online on processing systems the board has been considering has shown very few failures. Mr. Powers reported the advantage of going through the county would be the benefit of matching grants, but it would have to be a cooperative effort between county and private entities in order to be feasible.

Mr. Grove inquired about how much of the process the mobile facility is responsible for, to which Mr. Turpin responded that it covers every step of the process, up to freezing. Mr. Grove asked if the inspector always had to be there. Mr. Turpin stated only if you're slaughtering animals for retail sale. Mr. Coleman commented that farmer's market beef is only state inspected, and can't cross state lines. He also pointed out that part of the processing idea needs to be to teach farmers how to use land, finish beef on the farm, and double profit by selling inspected beef.

Mr. Powers suggested the board work with the public to create some type of conference that could focus on sustainable agriculture and inform consumers of the quality by comparison to store sold beef. Mr. Graham mentioned the Bedford's Finest Faire event was designed to showcase Bedford's products.

(9) Information Items

Mr. Powers informed the board they should be aware of a bill that could be passed that will put stringent requirements on water regulations through the EPA, and could take rights away from localities (farmers, builders, etc.) in handling their own water.

(10) Adjournment

9:08 p.m.