



Meeting Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd., Bedford, VA 24523**

July 7, 2021 – 7:30 p.m.

Present: Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Sam Gardner, Ronnie Gross, Chuck Grove, Dorothy McIntyre, Ken Newman, Jeff Powers, Joy Powers, Lindsay Tomlinson

Absent: Matt Baumgardner, Pam Willoughby

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Pam Bailey, Robert Hiss

Staff Absent: None

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests:

Mickey Johnson - County Supervisor District 1, Edgar Tuck - County Supervisor District 2, Charla Bansley - County Supervisor District 3

Bedford County Extension Agent for 4-H Maribeth Martin, Peaks of Otter Soil and Water Conservation District Board member Keith Tuck

Bedford County School Superintendent Dr. Marc Bergin; School Board Chairman Jason Johnson; School Teachers Spencer Blankenship, Ann Jones, and Hunter Wimmer

Liberty High School FFA members Harley Carhart, Maegan Cash, Caleb Crumpacker, Makenna Garrett, Alexis Hensley, and Charlie Moser

Staunton River High School FFA members Elizabeth Gillespie, Emma Jackson, and Sarah Tuck
Carolyn Fellers, Josh Powers, Karen Powers, Beck Stanley, Holly Tuck

(1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the July 7, 2021 agenda. There were no objections.

A motion and a second were made to approve the July 7, 2021 agenda, as presented.

Adopted unanimously

(2) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - June 2, 2021

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the June 2, 2021 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the June 2, 2021 meeting minutes, as presented.

Adopted unanimously

(3) SPECIAL APPEARANCE - Dr. Marc Bergin, Bedford County School Superintendent

Mr. Johnson addressed the attendees and congratulated the State President of FFA Charlie Moser, and State Secretary of FFA Emma Jackson on their selection as State FFA Officers. He introduced Dr. Bergin and said the new school superintendent is very student-centered and a great fit for Bedford County. He understands the importance of agriculture to the community because he is a part of the agricultural community himself maintaining 100 animals of his own.

Dr. Bergin said he is aware of the active 4-H program in Bedford and noted he and his wife raised their children who actively participated in 4-H. He began his job here on June 1 and has made many transition visits touring schools and meeting staff. He grew up in Lynchburg and is glad to be here as it feels like coming home. He wants 4-H to be more involved in schools this coming year and plans for a more normal school year. He understands the importance of job shadowing experiences, internships, and apprenticeships for students as they prepare for college or careers. He believes in a strong career technical program and he would like to expand the offerings at the Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center to include HVAC and welding classes. Dr. Bergin answered questions from the attendees.

Ms. Tomlinson presented Dr. Bergin with an FFA t-shirt from State Convention on behalf of the FFA students and stated that both chapters accomplished much this year in spite of Covid. Liberty students participated in small competitions at the federation level, including public speaking and tractor driving and did very well in cattle working. They also had a senior ag mechanics team and had a junior ag mechanics individual, and they placed sixth in the state. They are extremely proud of the livestock judging team and the vet science team competed as well. This is the second year that the chapter was rated national chapter status. Three Liberty students were Proficiency Award winners and two students were State Degree recipients. The

middle school program flourished this year and was recognized as one of the top chapters in Virginia.

Ms. Jones noted that this was the first time she had an opportunity to attend the Ag Board meeting and spoke briefly about her background in Bedford County. She is excited for the FFA chapter's coming school year and said they have an outstanding officer team. Although it was a tough year, students had many accomplishments, including American Degree awards. She thanked the Ag Board for all they do and invited them to contact her whenever needed.

Chairman Powers thanked all the ag teachers for the time they put into their jobs. Ms. Powers noted how fortunate Bedford County is to have Charlie Moser and Emma Jackson as State President and State Secretary for the FFA. Out of 10,000 members, only six individuals are chosen to lead the State FFA and these two Bedford County members hold the first and second ranked positions. Attendees applauded the accomplishments of Charlie and Emma.

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Mr. Hiss reported that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) will be taking some action regarding the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) diagnostic laboratory situation and will vote on approval of a resolution and follow-up letter at their July 26 meeting. Once approved, the information will be transmitted to state legislators and state officials to ensure that the VDACS lab functions appropriately and as intended. The Planning Commission is continuing to tackle the issue of solar farms in the County. They are watching intently the conversations occurring in Campbell County where there is some buyer's remorse regarding their ordinance in terms of solar farms. Chairman Powers noted some disturbing information regarding erosion problems in Central Virginia and projects look good on paper but in reality there are issues. Mr. Hiss acknowledged stormwater is a real issue and erosion onto other properties and road systems is a concern that needs to be reviewed. Broadband is still a hot issue for Bedford County and Virginia. The County will receive approximately \$15 million from the America Rescue Plan. The BOS has not decided how to allocate the funds but a large portion will be going towards broadband and other eligible items identified in the America Rescue Plan Act. A Request for Proposal (RFP) has gone out to the broadband development community and the County received six proposals. This is the one time in history where the broadband issue can be taken care of completely with the millions of dollars coming to Virginia and its localities to solve the problem once and for all. They will be trying to leverage the County's funds while the General Assembly meets in August regarding how to spend the State's portion. Through the RFP process, there are some very good projects outlined from reputable internet service providers so that when funds become available, they can go forward with projects of fiber and wireless internet. The State's goal is for universal broadband. The County's Comprehensive Plan is being reviewed at the Planning Commission level which will involve land use items. Every five years the County is required to complete an update to its comprehensive plan and this update should be

finalized by the end of the calendar year. Recruiting EMTs and paramedics is an ongoing issue for the County. Licensing and credentials are harder to get and he would like to see an EMT credentialing program implemented in the high schools or the technical school. Mr. Hiss answered questions from the meeting attendees.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey reported that the plans for two new companies moving into the New London Park are progressing nicely. Damage Prevention Solutions should be complete in September for its Signal Tape manufacturing facility and Belvac will be finishing out at the end of this month, move in their equipment, and hire employees. Earlier this week, Ms. Bailey spoke with the new Grayson County Ag Economic Development Manager, Lindsay Young. She discussed some Bedford County events that are held and mentioned contacting the Ag Board with questions. The Town of Bedford EDA and the County's EDA will be holding a planning session next week to discuss economic development, goals for the Bedford Center for Business, and other Town priorities.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker reported that since it is a new fiscal year, the stream exclusion weed management program can receive applications from anyone interested or who may have applied last year. He will be contacting last year's participants but would appreciate if Ag Board members spread the word about the program.

The next feeder calf sale is set for July 30, 2021. Cattle will be taken in on Thursday, July 29. Sales information will be available Thursday evening which will hopefully increase marketing opportunities. Extension agents from the region will be submitting another application to the Tobacco Commission. It will be a multi-county request with Campbell County handling the money and the county agents will administer the program. The application will contain multiple components and will include some of the items successful in the past as well as new ag technology items. Mr. Baker reminded attendees about the increase in cost-share dollars from the soil and water conservation districts. Farmers interested could contact him or their soil and water conservation district office regarding these funds. 4-H Camp is coming up. Camp will look different due to half capacity, but Bedford will have about 70-75 campers attending.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU/YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Sam Gardner said cookbooks are available at the Farm Bureau office in Bedford. The cost for each cookbook is \$10. They could not sell them at large gatherings this past year but a suggestion was made to sell them at the local farmers' markets in the county. Mr. Gardner will pass the suggestion to those individuals handling the sales. A trip is being planned for the West Virginia State Fair. The Women's Committee attended the Forest Farmers' Market in June for Dairy Month.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming Events

Mr. Gross said the Horse and Hound Event will be held on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. He will have a U-pick Peach Day the third Saturday in July and a car show is set for the last Saturday in July.

2. County Fair Update

Ms. Powers reported that the County Fair will be held at the Moose Lodge this year. There will be some adjustments made. A shuttle system will operate from area churches to the fairgrounds which will hopefully help with parking issues. The fair will run three days, from October 15 to October 17. Some new livestock components are being added and will include a poultry show and a rabbit show. The youth livestock show will be held on Saturday, October 16, as well as fireworks that evening. Sunday will have equine events, a car show, plus a craft show has been added. Educational tours and the Old McDonald tent will continue this year. The goal is to stay true to the ag community, for the community, and by the community. Any ideas are welcome and they are currently looking for a pageant chairman if anyone is interested.

3. School Ag Programs Update

Ms. Powers stated there is continued growth in the 4-H program. The past few meetings have been standing room only and new families attend every single meeting. Younger kids have been coming with diversified interests which is promising for the county. Some members have participated in the Next Generation Youth Farmers' Market at the Bedford Market. A group attended a livestock judging camp in Illinois and the State Livestock Judging Contest was held. Scholarships were awarded to Emma Jackson and Charlie Moser for livestock judging at Blackhawk College in Illinois. Alumni Ethan Jackson will continue his livestock judging career at Michigan State University. A record amount of 300 students will be attending FFA Leadership Camp this month.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmers' Market Updates

Ms. McIntyre said the Forest market has been strong, with an average of 43 vendors for the last two months and a more diverse selection of goods. Foot traffic is up and SNAP customers are up. Ms. McIntyre, Lynchburg, and Bedford were highlighted in an article in this month's *Lynchburg Living* magazine pertaining to agriculture and its importance. The Bedford market is now doing a second Saturday this month under the pavilion and continues to increase vendors. The Smith Mountain Lake (SML) market is small but maintaining with some of the Forest vendors also going to SML on Friday afternoons.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

1. Tire Dumping at Landfill

Chairman Powers noted the email he received regarding tire dumping. Mr. Hiss reported that the County landfill has always accepted tires up to 22.5 inches in diameter. The BOS decided in January to increase the tire size to 24 inches due to a new tire cutter which helps in the disposal of tires. The old policy allowed up to eight tires per year free of charge. However, now the established policy requires a fee of \$3.00 per tire to dispose in the landfill. The County will see how these changes work and if unintended consequences are found, the BOS may be open to changing the policy accordingly.

Discussion followed regarding the changes, farmers having a tax-exempt status, tractor tires, the tire cutter, and disposal of tires that are not accepted by the landfill. Mr. Hiss will have staff research further and bring any updates to the Ag Board.

(9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Chairman Powers introduced Beck Stanley, Government Relations Director with the Agribusiness Council of Virginia and thanked him for attending the meeting. Mr. Stanley commended the FFA Officers and County staff for their great work and thanked Chairman Powers for inviting him to the meeting.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

9:08 p.m.