



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
March 2, 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, Ronnie Gross, Pam Willoughby

:Absent: W.P. Johnson

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

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess

:Guests: John Graham, Joy Powers

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the March 2, 2016 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the March 2, 2016 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 3, 2016

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the February 3, 2016 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the February 3, 2016 meeting minutes, as presented.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administrator's Report

Mrs. Blido stated she had received a report from Mr. Boggess to read at the meeting. His report stated that applications for the Assistant County Administrator position have closed and they plan to begin interviewing in the next month. He hopes there will be a better administrative presence at Ag Board meetings in the future once an Assistant Administrator is hired. Mr.

Bogges also wrote that the Board of Supervisors will appoint Fair Board members on March 14, and that County Attorney Patrick Skelley is currently drafting articles of incorporation and will file those after the March 14 meeting.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported that she submitted a \$40,000 Southside Economic Development Grant this month in partnership with the CAER to create a firm that will focus on cybersecurity for nuclear power plants and other power generation industry providers..

Mrs. Blido stated she found out two days ago that the Governor announced that a \$600,000 Industrial Revitalization Fund (IRF) grant will go to the EDA in helping a developer, Dave McCormack, create a craft brewery and restaurant in downtown Bedford. The project will generate county tax revenue and jobs, and bring a positive impact to Tourism.

Mrs. Blido reported that Bedford County's Office of Economic Development hosted an Ag Board Workshop recently in partnership with VDACS and the Virginia Rural Center to educate several counties who are interested in starting an Ag Board. Mrs. Blido stated that Scott Baker did a great job of setting the stage for how our Ag Board came to be, and Ag Board Chairman Jeff Powers shared accomplishments of our Ag Board and answered questions about how the Ag Board advises the Board of Supervisors on agriculture issues and opportunities in Bedford County.

Mrs. Blido reported that the GP Big Island Mill will be celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, and they're recognizing women at the mill in the month of March. GP has produced a magazine for the anniversary year, which Mrs. Blido passed around to show the group.

Mr. Grove asked about the Board of Supervisors appointing the Fair Board. Mr. Powers stated a lot of the Board of Supervisors had a hand in the fair last year, but they have received guidance on appointments.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported that Campbell County has been fully approved for the grant through the Tobacco Commission that will involve surrounding counties such as Bedford, and that a public meeting will be held to talk about what the grant can help with. Some projects included are hay wrappers and cold storage units, but the Tobacco Commission is really looking for new ideas. The grant money is smaller than the past, but Mr. Baker did hear that there may be more funds available in the next cycle (fall). Grant informational meetings will begin in April, and applications will be accepted in May.

Mr. Baker stated they continue to work on the Region 2000 strategic plan, which began with the food hub feasibility study. The consultant came back to the committee and asked to speak to local producers about what he discovered in the process. Grocery store chain Wegman's has

significant expansion plans into Virginia and North Carolina and they have interest in local products. The consultant is supposed to be getting a representative from Wegman's to talk specifics on the beef side, and our producers would have to find out if it makes sense for them.

Mr. Baker reported that well water testing through Virginia Tech is being offered this year for \$52. Mr. Graham asked if results from the water testing would certify potable water and if the health department would recognize these results. Mr. Baker stated he would find out.

Dr. Gardner asked if the consultant is considering the possibility of a wholesale farmer's market type like they have in Halifax. Dr. Gardner said he has been discussing this topic with Sam Williams from Southern States about how commodities have taken a hit the last year or two, how some people need to diversify, and how the ability to grow 3-4 acres and have a market for it may be worthwhile in this area. Mr. Baker stated the model the consultant presented that looked most feasible was an e-commerce model, with a value-oriented consumer base, and that the potential looks to be aggregate fruit and sending it out of here to high population areas.

(6) Tourism Report

Mr. Craig reported there was nothing new to report, except that Monday they will be unveiling three historic markers that have been made for Smith Mountain Lake's 50th Anniversary. The Bedford County marker will be installed at the Smith Mountain Lake State Park. Monday was chosen as the unveiling date because it marks 50 years since the Lake reached full pond.

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson was not in attendance; however Mr. Baumgardner reported there were 20 students that recently attended the State Young Farmer Expo in Danville. There were 250 young farmers from around the state in attendance at the expo. Mr. Baumgardner also reported that the Farm Bureau has opened up its scholarships for this year for graduating seniors going into ag related fields.

(8) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Upcoming Events

a. Bedford County Fair update

Ms. Powers reported they had another committee meeting at Glenwood Center and have vendor and sponsor applications up on the website. The committee made a few changes in pricing and put together some vendor policies this year that they will send out to the board. The committee is hoping to double its amount of vendors this year, and they feel that will be possible.

Ms. Powers reported they selected a fair theme for this year that will be "Let's Get Growing." The theme reflects the ag aspect of the fair, and also the goal of further growing the

fair. Mr. Palmer reported he knew someone who would be willing to set up a chicken coop exhibit to show visitors how to take care of chickens to get eggs. They also do incubation demonstrations. Mr. Palmer corrected himself from last meeting, stating that Curry Martin has not purchased the land adjacent to the current fair grounds.

b. Ag Expo update

Mr. Powers stated they will continue to discuss when the expo should take place in the fall. Ms. Tomlinson stated she reached out to the middle school guidance counselor about the newly added ag program, and she stated that she has promoted it but couldn't give any numbers yet on students enrolled. Ms. Tomlinson also stated that National Ag Day will be March 15 and that she is working on some endeavors to celebrate and promote the day, such as "drive your tractor to school" day, a cow plop, and more, to raise money for Special Olympics. They're also working on Ag Literacy week. The Bedford Farm Bureau's Women's club will be providing ag-related books to read in the schools.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

a. Presentation from Dorothy McIntyre and Paul Stern

Dorothy reported metrics from the 2015 season, including 50 vendors (27 full time), half of which were from Bedford County in some way. She had two Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs coinciding with the market, which helped to draw in new people. She has a third CSA in the works. At the beginning of the season, the customer count was at 50-75 people per hour early in the day. Dorothy reported about the indoor markets at the Forest Rec Center. She went from 6-10 vendors at the indoor market three years ago to 27 vendors this past year. Dorothy reported she had asked her vendors to estimate their sales in a season and for 2015, the Forest Farmers Market as a whole made \$350,000 - \$450,000 in direct to consumer sales.

Dorothy reported she has collaborated with the master gardeners since she had people wanting to take classes. The market became more civic oriented this past year and included groups such as the Lions Club, Boy Scouts and JF Theatre. The Lions Club reported they had an increase in membership as a result. Dorothy plans to do more with master gardeners and volunteers in 2016, and would also like to bring in 4-H and FFA, which may spark something in our area to get agriculture in Forest area schools.

Dorothy also reported she has been talking about a new location for a Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday afternoon market. She will keep us updated on the progress.

Paul reported his appreciation for the camp program at the market this past year and is looking forward to it returning. He stated he was blessed to have had an intern in the market this past year, but has had a hard time replacing the intern due to transportation logistics. Paul reported

increased vendor numbers this year, and averaged 325 - 535 visitors on First Saturday markets. The Saturday market saw an increase in vendors from 10 to 30. Two years ago, there wasn't much of a presence of beef, chicken or pork, but last year they saw a jump in meat products. The Bedford Farmers Market will be changing to just one location this year, at the Centertown Pavilion. The market hours will be 3 - 6 p.m. on Tuesdays, and 7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. on Fridays. They increased their hours this year due to many people showing up at lunch time ready to buy. As a result of this, Paul is starting a new initiative called Food Truck Fridays. It is his hope that this will bring regional food trucks to Bedford, along with their followers from social media. Several downtown restaurants and businesses are excited about it.

Another initiative Paul is including this year is SNAP. Paul reported there is a huge population in the Town of Bedford (roughly 3,000 households) that are eligible for SNAP. Andy Crawford, with Social Services, told Paul they processed over 250 applications for SNAP in the month of December. Paul invited all the Ag Board members to be present for the market's first swipe opening at the market on May 7th at 10 a.m. (Saturday). Paul is currently requesting matching funds for the SNAP program through a grant. Paul asked if the Board would be willing to provide a letter of support for this grant. The board voted unanimously to draft a letter for Paul.

(2) Coyote Lottery update

Dr. Gardner stated the coyote lottery drawing will be held Saturday, March 12 at Southern States at noon. There were 82 total coyotes checked in this year. Mr. Powers asked how we were advertising the drawing, to which Dr. Gardner said there are posters up at Southern States stating the drawing date. Mrs. Blido asked if they would take a picture of the winner or of someone drawing the winner once it takes place.

Dr. Gardner stated we definitely need to send thank you letters to sponsors and will work with Mr. Powers on this.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

1. Transition Workshop update

Mr. Baker stated last month he was at the statewide conference and ran into a farm business management agent that has done transition workshops before. His recommendation would be one full day program or 1-1/2 day program. The agent typically brings in an attorney that's an expert in transition and stated he would be happy to assist us with that. Mr. Baker has been discussing the details and believes he can still access some funds for this program. Since it will be a full day it will require a facility and a meal. In addition, Mr. Baker stated they would probably charge a small registration fee. This event is being planned for the fall and Mr. Baker should know at the next meeting if we can have a program that addresses everyone's needs. Mr. Baker asked if the board felt it should be a week day program or a weekend program. Mr. Fellers stated the one in Amherst was on a weekday in the middle of the day and it was a packed house.

(9) Other Business

Mr. Powers wanted to make committee appointments including Ken Palmer, W.P., Keith and Lindsey, with Ken as Chairman for Education & Events, Ken Newman, Matt, Ronnie and Don on Marketing & Production, and Pete, Pam, and Chuck, with Pete as chairman for Land Protection & Conservation.

(10) Informational Items

Mr. Powers reminded the board that their April meeting will be at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Graham reported he recently visited George Mason High School a few weeks ago, which is creating an aquaculture and hydroponic program at the high school. Mr. Graham was there to help set it up, and it should begin next year. The hydroponics program will be a standalone system growing leafy greens for the cafeteria.

Mr. Powers sent an email to the Ag Board with his annual report to the board. He plans to highlight the fair, talk a bit about the Ag Life segment and how it got started, and will also highlight events coming up in the near future. He will present to the Board of Supervisors on March 14, 2016.

Mr. Baumgardner stated there will be a dairy meeting in Franklin County next Friday on the 11th. Those looking to attend can ask Scott about registration.

Dr. Gardner stated there is a group that keeps coming before the legislatures about their desire to sell uninspected meat and raw milk. So far, their initiative has been defeated. Dr. Gardner stated that raw milk comprises 2% of all milk sales in the U.S. and 87% of all dairy food poisoning cases.

**(11) Adjournment
-8:30 p.m.**