



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board

May 3, 2017 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Don Gardner, Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, Ken Newman, Sam Gardner, Pam Willoughby, Lindsay Tomlinson, Matt Baumgardner, Ronnie Gross

:Absent: Beth Bays

Staff Present: Traci Blido, Scott Baker, Jessica Hupp, Reid Wodicka

Staff Absent:

:Guests: Joy Powers, John Graham

(1) Approval of Agenda

Mr. Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the May 3, 2017 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the May 3, 2017 agenda, as presented.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 5, 2017

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the April 5, 2017 meeting minutes. A motion and a second were made to approve the April 5, 2017 meeting minutes, as presented.

Adopted unanimously.

(3) County Administration Report

Mr. Wodicka reported the budget has been approved and they will be working a lot with the school system this year. Mr. Powers stated he requested a work session this coming meeting, so they will be in attendance to discuss the middle school program, fair, and more. Mr. Powers pointed out there are a few Board of Supervisor members up for re-election this year, and he believes it's important to support those running with Ag backgrounds.

(4) Economic Development Director's Report

Mrs. Blido reported May is Business Appreciation month, so be sure to thank all your fellow business owners when you see them. This week we will be sending proclamations out with invitations to our Business Appreciation event at Beale's on June 8 from 5 to 7 p.m. In case it's not completely ready to open, we've called it a "Hard Hat Happy Hour".

This week we hosted Valley Processing employees with some people from the state on how to address those who will be out of work. Mrs. Blido stated they are hoping to find them jobs. The Chamber is hosting a job fair on May 17 which will have around 30 businesses in attendance, and all businesses have current openings.

Mrs. Blido stated the Brewers Conference in D.C. went really well, and the video created was well received. Mrs. Blido stated Moneta's Small Business Expo is this Friday in downtown Moneta.

Mrs. Blido reported that today the LOVE letters were unveiled at the Bedford Welcome Center. While there, she talked to Dr. Tony Francis, who is now in charge of Career and Technical Education, and was told that the middle school ag program was a go, but had not heard about the lab aspect. In addition, SRHS won the state title of the National Association of Agriculture Educators Outstanding Middle-Secondary Agriculture Education Program award. This means they will represent Virginia in competition this summer, and could advance to nationals.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reminded the board about the two agricultural grants available through the Tobacco Commission (the cost share program for equipment and bookkeeping and computer equipment for farmers). If you would like an application, please contact him.

Mr. Baker said the cattle marketing effort hosted a second meeting at Springlake Stockyard on April 20, and between 40-50 people attended, mostly from Bedford. They will proceed with the planning of a special weaned and vaccinated feeder calf sale for July 28. Calves need to be weaned by June 1. Depending on the success of these sales, they might plan another in late fall. Three hundred forms have been filled out at this point, and they will need 500-600 to make it successful.

This weekend is the Lynchburg Livestock Show. Mr. Baker invited everyone to attend, and stated the hog show is Friday evening, and other livestock will show Saturday.

(6) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmer's Report

Mr. Baumgardner stated Farm Bureau has a meeting tomorrow night, and many of them plan on coming to the show and participating and buying. They're working on putting together a fall tour of Southwest Virginia. In addition, Farm Bureau awarded seven scholarships this year.

(7) Committee Reports
a. Education & Events
(1) Upcoming Events

Mr. Palmer stated he had nothing new to report.

(2) County Fair update

Ms. Powers said everything has been going well. The committee met with the midway company at the property, and they seemed excited. Vendor and sponsor applications are posted on the website for those interested. Mr. Powers stated they need a fireworks sponsor. Ms. Hupp stated that the EDA had agreed to sponsor at \$5,000 once our new fiscal year begins, July 1. The EDA is willing to donate their vendor space to a non-profit like the FFA.

(3) Middle School Ag Program Update

Ms. Tomlinson stated from what she understands, the BOS approved some staffing standards for the middle school ag program, and is hoping they will post a job on the site soon. Mr. Powers stated that he talked to Dr. Schuch and that if anyone was interested in the job, they could send a letter of interest to HR.

Mr. Graham reported he just finished up a Liberty High School internship, and he believes it was a good experience since the student still plans to go into marine biology. Mr. Graham stated there is even more interest this coming year, and was asked how many students he could handle. He will also host a fishery student from Pennsylvania.

Mr. Baker stated Scott's is having their annual strawberry festival.

Mrs. Tomlinson stated they were having the ag camp again this summer and are looking for farms to take the students to if anyone is interested in having students visit.

Ms. Powers stated there are a few unsold hogs at CVLS this weekend. The 4H Club has been collecting books to send to Malawi to build a library there. Josh Powers decided to donate one of his lambs to benefit the library in Malawi. Samantha Holdren competed in the public speaking contest and placed second, qualifying for state. Josh Powers competed in the tractor driving contest and finished 2nd. Two other members competed with heifers and they did extremely well.

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Baker said the market is now open for the regular season. Mr. Gross said it has been slow, but it always picks up with the growing season. The new manager has her heart in it, and he thinks it will be a success. Mr. Baker said the first Saturday market in Bedford will be this weekend.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner said he doesn't have a number, but they're being turned in. It is a yearlong program now. Ms. Hupp stated she provided Scott with some flyers to distribute.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers stated land preservation in the county is not going well, as there are new subdivisions going in on 221 on existing farm land. Mr. Powers introduced E.B. Watson to the Ag Board, who has been in the VALOR program and working in conservation for our district.

Ms. Watson stated she is the district manager and conservation specialist for Bedford County. Our district still has the number one workload in the state, and is one of three districts that only serves one county. In a typical year, they'll do \$300,000 worth of work, but just within the past nine months this year they've done \$2.8 million on the ground, and expanded 60 miles of creek. Ms. Watson stated that ranking and money from state is based on water quality data, and this year almost all of ours got switched to low need, which means it will be harder to get state money. But, this shows our water is improving in Bedford.

Ms. Watson stated in the next three years, you'll start to see the funding becoming more competitive, but there are already a lot of economic dollars coming into the county for improvements. Mr. Baker said many people don't understand the impact, as most farmers participating in the program hire contractors to do the work. One contractor switched from buying fence posts by the truckload to fence posts by the train load.

Mr. Grove stated they've been in the process at their farm, and he said it's been a good experience so far.

From an ag standpoint, Ms. Watson believes we're at the right pace. Dr. Gardner asked if anyone monitored no till versus cultivated till cropping. Ms. Watson said they collect that data and it gets reported, but she doesn't have a percentage off the top of her head.

Ms. Watson stated that her VALOR experience was very stimulating. She's met all kinds of interesting people, including a D.C. food advocate looking to get fresh food into the cities, and an environmental lawyer. It's a very diverse group of people representing ag in the state. It's a great way to get exposure to all sorts of experiences and people from non-ag backgrounds moving into or investing in agriculture. It's encouraging to see people investing in agriculture. Overall, the program is two years, with 12 individuals participating a year. There were over 450 applicants.

(8) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that they had a big program at the Welcome Center to unveil the LOVE letters. Many students, including FFA were involved, and want to thank them for that. Liberty High School and BSTC were the main contributors to it.

Mr. Palmer stated tonight will be his last meeting. The DMV has decided he is no longer safe to drive after dark, so he is resigning his position. He has been thrilled to serve on this board and made many friends along the way. Mr. Palmer plans to stay on the fair committee.

Mr. Powers thanked Ken for everything he has done and said how much everyone would miss him. Mr. Powers told Curry there was no rush in filling Ken's position, just someone dedicated to ag. Mrs. Tomlinson said she would chair the education and events committee in Ken's place.

(9) Adjournment

-8:30 p.m.