



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board**  
**November 4, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:**

**:Present:**

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Ken Newman , Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Keith Tuck, Ronnie Gross

**:Absent:** Chuck Grove, Spencer Tinsley, Matt Baumgardner, W.P. Johnson, Pam Willoughby

**Staff Present:** Scott Baker, Traci Blido, Jessica Hupp

**Staff Absent:** Carl Boggess, Jerry Craig

**:Guests:** John Graham, Joy Powers, Lindsay Tomlinson

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**(1) Approval of Agenda**

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the November 4, 2015 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the November 4, 2015 agenda, as presented.

**Adopted Unanimously.**

**(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 7, 2015**

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the October 7, 2015 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of October 7, 2015, as presented.

**Adopted unanimously.**

**(3) County Administrator's Report**

Mr. Boggess was not in attendance.

**(4) Economic Development Director's Report**

Mrs. Blido reported that GP Big Island is currently in the midst of a \$40 million expansion that will be completed at the end of the year. Mrs. Blido reported she had met with officials from GP Big Island and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to hopefully support some of the company's new environmental initiatives, in addition to the pulp mill expansion.

Mrs. Blido stated that the mill began in 1891, and in 2016 they will celebrate 125 years. The mill burned down in 1914 and was rebuilt in 1915 and has dealt with many floods. On Saturday, October 8, 2016, GP Big Island will hold an event called "A Fine and Dandy Day" at the Sedalia Center to celebrate their 125 years, as well as themed events monthly at the Mill. GP Big Island had an impressive economic impact this year of \$133 million in Bedford County including payroll, fuel, etc.

Mrs. Blido stated that the broadband project is moving forward and that the special use permit was approved 6-0 by the Board of Supervisors. Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation (MBC) has already received five responses from Internet service providers and we should soon know who will be providing Internet service to that area shortly. The success of the project has caught Delegate Kathy Byron's attention and she will be talking about it tomorrow evening at one of her meetings. Mrs. Blido reported that the Broadband Advisory Committee also won an award at the Region 2000 Technology Council's TechEdge awards earlier this month in which Chairman Allen Boaz accepted.

Mrs. Blido stated she will be attending the International Production and Processing Expo with VDACS again this year in January. Bedford County Agriculture will be featured along with several other counties at the Virginia booth.

#### **(5) Cooperative Extension Report**

Mr. Baker stated he heard from Brent today and that he could not make it due to his son's soccer banquet. Mr. Baker stated that Seven Hills Food Company recently held an open house and he is anxious to see what the facility is capable of.

Mr. Baker stated that they have begun planning the 2016 Central Virginia Livestock Show and he will have more information about it as the plans progress.

#### **(6) Tourism Director's Report**

Mr. Craig was not present. Mr. Powers stated that he suggested taking the ag complex off the agenda until we see what the tourism grant can do for the process. Mr. Powers stated the Virginia Association of Fairs Conference is in January at The Homestead. There are many different categories the committee plans to enter the Bedford County Fair into, but wasn't comfortable personally nominating a Person of the Year for that particular fair award. Mr. Powers stated the committee would like the board to select a person for that award category.

Ms. Hupp asked if anyone from the Ag Board would be attending the conference to represent the fair. Mr. Powers stated that hopefully someone from the fair committee will get to go. Ms. Hupp stated that \$1,500 was set aside for the Ag Board to use for this type of event. Mr. Powers stated he assumed Jerry would be the only one going; however the fair committee will keep that in mind.

Mr. Fellers stated that Ronnie Gross received an appreciation award for 25 years of tourism excellence from the Bedford County Tourism Department.

## **(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report**

Mr. Johnson was not in attendance. Mr. Baker stated the Bedford County Farm Bureau had a very successful annual dinner. Joy stated that the Young Farmers had a gun raffle going on right now for those interested.

## **(8) Committee Reports**

### **a. Education & Events**

#### **(1) County Fair update**

Joy stated they are still wrapping up business with this year's fair but are moving full steam ahead on next year's fair plans. The committee has selected September 1, 2, 3, and 4, 2016 as next year's County Fair dates.

Ms. Powers stated they have also been working on a 501(c)(3) status. Ms. Powers stated one of the committee's goals this year was finding a way to involve the local elementary schools, so they are hoping that by holding the fair on a Thursday and Friday the students may get to come on a field trip to see all of the farm animals. In addition, the committee would like to see bigger educational displays and demonstrations, such as the bee exhibit from this past year. Ms. Powers stated they hope to have new forms, rules, and contact lists out by January 1, 2016.

Mr. Tuck stated that the committee and Ag Board should start thinking about who they would like to contact for sponsorships for next year and should begin seeking sponsorships before the end of the year so that the fair can be included in business budgets.

Mr. Powers stated that Joy would be coming to the Board of Supervisors meeting next week to give them a final update on the fair, and asked the Ag Board to be there for support if available.

Ms. Powers stated in the last committee meeting someone brought up making a donation to Liberty's FFA, the Smith Mountain Lake FFA and the Bedford 4-H Livestock Club, because without them the fair probably wouldn't have been possible. These groups helped pick up trash, direct cars, put up fences, and more. Ms. Powers stated that because the fair was so successful they felt comfortable making a \$500 donation to each of the clubs.

Mr. Palmer stated he was hoping to have a horse show arena at the fair next year and that he thought a similar set up to what Bedford Main Street had for their beer garden at Centerfest could work. If they can add an arena, he has equestrian events that could be added.

Mr. Palmer reported there are a few upcoming events to put on your calendar including Beth Mays is having her Barnfest this Saturday, with barbeque, music and a bonfire. The Bedford County Hunt Club will be having their annual Blessing of the Hounds this Saturday. Mr. Palmer stated that Randolph Macon will have a horse show on November 22, 2015.

## **(2) Upcoming Events**

### **A. Ag Expo**

Mr. Powers reported that the community college is not available this year on the weekend they generally host the Ag Expo. Mr. Powers stated that after the fair, he was approached by someone familiar with expos, who suggested the Ag Board look into having some type of Heritage Day. Mr. Powers reported that Sharon and Garland Simmons have offered their place as a location. They have a barn where the seminars could be held. Mr. Graham mentioned having a small crops seminar on hops. Since these events have continued for several years now, it may make sense to consolidate some instead of the Ag Board planning multiple annual events.

With that in mind, Mr. Powers said the board could discuss this further in December.

Mr. Powers asked Ms. Lindsay Tomlinson to give a report on the National FFA Convention. Ms. Tomlinson stated that she and Spencer Blankenship took eight students to the convention this year held in Louisville, Kentucky. Ms. Tomlinson stated the FFA did an awesome job putting it together and that the sessions were exceptional. Students had the option to attend one or more sessions each day, with about 14,000 kids in a room. She also stated they had fabulous keynote speakers on topics from leadership to general agriculture. Overall, it was a great experience and they are excited to go to Indianapolis for next year's conference.

## **b. Marketing & Production**

### **(1) Farmers Markets**

Mr. Baker stated the Bedford Market had a meeting last week and agreed to have all Bedford Market days take place at the Centertown pavilion. Traditional market days will be Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings, as well as a once a month Saturday family market. Mrs. Blido stated the Saturday markets are looking for local "celebrity" people willing to do cooking demonstrations at these events, depending on the monthly theme.

Mrs. Blido stated our office has sponsored the county's market managers to go to the annual Farmer's Market Association conference. Mr. Baker reported that starting this year, the Bedford Market will allow people to use EBT benefits. Mr. Baker believes this might spur more participation in the community.

Mr. Gross stated how fortunate they are to have two great market managers in the County. Mr. Gross stated he participated in a lot more this year and that Dorothy (Forest) and Paul (Bedford) have made the process well worth their time. Mrs. Blido stated Dorothy may be looking at another market on the other side of Forest, in Boonsboro at some point in the future.

## **(2) Coyote Lottery**

Dr. Gardner stated the lottery has officially begun and they have around \$3,000 worth of prize money for lottery winners. Dr. Gardner stated he needs the board to decide how they'd like to split it up. Dr. Gardner stated that this is also becoming a mature event, as it is becoming harder to acquire sponsorship money. There are a couple new sponsors this year, but most sponsors have donated in the past. However, there is still a lot of interest in participating. Dr. Gardner asked Ms. Hupp to update the flyers with the sponsors.

Dr. Gardner said we typically have had four prizes in the past. Mr. Powers would like to stick with that. Mr. Tuck suggested splitting up the prizes into \$2,000, \$500, \$300, and \$200, and the board agreed to this break down of the cash prizes.

## **c. Land Protection & Conservation**

Mr. Fellers stated he will be going to the Fall Transition Workshop next Tuesday and will report back to the board on it in December. Mr. Fellers also stated that the Bedford Women's Club will be holding its 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Craft Show on November 21.

## **(9) Other Business**

### **A. Central Virginia Livestock Show funding**

Mr. Powers stated that a motion and discussion came up at the last meeting concerning livestock show funding. Mr. Grove, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Tuck all met and discussed the best way to approach the Board of Supervisors to see if they'd be willing to fund the show. Mr. Tuck stated he had talked to Curry Martin who suggested they wait until the first of the year when the new board is seated.

Mr. Baker said they discussed the need to be able to make the case for why the Board shouldn't fund other local groups. Mr. Baker stated that Chuck made some great points that sets ag apart from the other organizations, because these students are spending money in the community on their projects and may continue to spend money in Bedford County if they start farms here after school. Mr. Baker stated the funding number being suggested has been anywhere between \$2,500 and \$5,000. Mrs. Blido said she would be willing to work with the group on creating a request if its helpful to them.

Dr. Gardner asked if the money would be used toward prizes, promotions, or scholarships. Ms. Powers stated that she had an idea about creating a microloan program for students that they can

put towards their projects. Ms. Powers stated that Appomattox School System currently does something similar to this for students in their ag program.

Ms. Tomlinson stated that a microloan is a great idea, however they currently use FSA funds which works out well. She and Spencer Blankenship were just discussing funding for projects and how to include the plan in their curriculum for next year.

Mr. Powers stated the way it was done in the past was that the money was divided up evenly among students, or they awarded scholarships through a point system. Chuck, Keith, and Scott all have tremendous experience with this. Ms. Powers stated she believes if the board asks for money, the students should be expected to be there to help explain how this money advances their projects.

Mr. Powers stated he believes the County will be more than willing to assist the ag students. The board just needs to make sure it is clearly defined how the money is being used. Dr. Gardner stated it should increase the number of participants and quality of student projects.

#### **(10) Informational Items**

Mrs. Blido stated she has passed around a book that Don Gardner put together to showcase his dairy operation that he shared with the Virginia-Maryland Ag Marketing Professional's tour participants in October. She said it's a great example for anyone else who would like to create a marketing piece for their agriculture business.

Ms. Powers stated because of the Bedford County Fair and the partnership it had with Fox 21/27, Fox has started a new Ag Life segment to their daily news that airs twice a day. Ms. Powers stated there have been a couple of hiccups, including a report about a beef recall under the Ag Life segment.

Ms. Powers stated overall Fox 21/27 have been great to work with and she is going tomorrow to the studio to give them some ideas for upcoming news stories. Joy invited the group to give them any ideas they come across. Mr. Powers stated he has given some Ag Board member names to the news station so they may be contacted.

Dr. Gardner stated this is a great opportunity to educate the community who may not understand the ins and outs of agriculture on topics like genetically modified organisms (GMO). Mr. Powers stated that Erica Tuck's next FFA speaking opportunity is about GMO's.

A discussion followed about GMO's.

Mr. Graham stated Fox will be at his farm this weekend recording an aquaculture farm story for the Ag Life segment. It is a bittersweet event to host a farm tour when you're talking about fish and tanks, as people have their preconceived notions of what that means. Most people don't understand what they're seeing, so it will be an opportunity to educate the community.

Mr. Graham also wanted to report that the Virginia State University 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Open House had the biggest participation this year to date and it was a beautiful day for the event. Mr. Graham stated they had their demonstration tank there that they had at the fair, and it was one of the most popular exhibits there. Mr. Graham stated there is a growing desire towards self sufficiency and people's ability to control the foods they're eating.

**(11) Adjournment**  
**-8:51 p.m.**