



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
October 7, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board:

:Present:

Jeffrey Powers, Ken Palmer, Ken Newman , Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Pam Willoughby, Keith Tuck, Matt Baumgardner, W.P. Johnson, Chuck Grove

:Absent: Ronnie Gross, Spencer Tinsley

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

Staff Absent: Carl Boggess

:Guest: John Graham, Brent Wills, Allen Boaz

(1) Approval of Agenda

Jeff Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the October 7, 2015 agenda.

Mr. Powers stated the Coyote Lottery needed to be added under Marketing and Production.

A motion and a second were made to approve the October 7, 2015 agenda, as amended.

Adopted Unanimously.

(2) Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 2, 2015

Mr. Powers asked for a review of the September 2, 2015 meeting minutes.

A motion and a second were made to approve the meeting minutes of September 2, 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 last week she co-hosted the Virginia-Maryland Ag Marketing Professionals tour with Pittsylvania County and VDACS. They had 32 people attend the tour. Scott Baker was able to speak with the group about Bedford County ag, and Mr. Craig talked with them about the many aspects of ag tourism in the county. In addition, the group toured Eco-Friendly Foods, Georgia Pacific, Royal Oak, and Gardner Heifers. Secretary Haymore participated in the opening reception.

Mrs. Blido reported she has been meeting with Mid-Atlantic Broadband and BRWA to see where broadband fiber could be laid that would make the most sense in certain areas of the county where the water line will go.

Ms. Hupp stated that staff nominated Dr. Fred Conner for the Technology Council's STEM Educator of the Year. Ms. Hupp announced Centerfest would also be taking place this weekend.

(5) Cooperative Extension Report

Mr. Baker reported that the significant amount of rainfall we received thankfully did little damage and things are looking better from a pasture and hay standpoint.

Mr. Baker stated that the regional group has seen the initial draft for a feasibility study being done for a regional food hub. In the meeting, there were many different types of stakeholders including the new owner of Seven Hills Meat Company. Mr. Baker stated he sent out a notice about them hosting an open house. Mr. Baker stated that Seven Hills has a pretty aggressive plan and it remains to be seen how we as a county can contribute and benefit from it being there.

Mr. Baker stated Seven Hills is looking at utilizing Virginia-branded meat products through ground meat to market to institutional buyers whether that is school systems or hospitals. The feasibility consultant said he talked to Food Lion and they'd be willing to have a section for local beef if they could get it at the right price. Mr. Powers asked if Seven Hills planned to process sheep and goats. Mr. Baker stated he did not mention processing sheep and goats, but their long term plan is to be a full service provider.

Mr. Baker reported there is an effort underway to get a community garden going in the Town of Bedford, called the Bedford Urban Garden. Mr. Baker stated there is a group in Lynchburg known as the Lynchburg Food Council that has funds available through the health department for community garden initiatives. Some involved in the Lynchburg Food Council will attend the community meeting on Friday at noon.

(6) Tourism Director's Report

Mr. Craig reported they've been discussing entering the fair into a contest at the State Fair Convention being held at The Homestead in January. There are 20 different categories we can enter into.

Mr. Craig stated that today he hosted the final meeting with the Virginia Tourism Corporation for their Drive Tourism program. Bedford County is the 16th municipality to become certified in Drive Tourism in the state. Mr. Craig stated the program gives each county a blueprint of where they would like to be in five, 10, and 20 years. Mr. Craig stated that the stakeholders group solidified its five-year project as an Ag/Conference Center. Through Drive Tourism, the Tourism Department will receive a \$10,000 grant to be used for a feasibility study aimed at the viability of an ag/conference center. Unfortunately, \$10,000 from the grant will not even begin to cover the cost of a feasibility study, but it's a good start. Mr. Craig stated there was still much that needs to be discussed such as who's going to manage such a project, but he's excited about it .

(7) Bedford County Farm Bureau Young Farmers Report

Mr. Johnson reported they just held their Annual Dinner last night, and he hoped everyone who attended had a great time. Mr. Johnson reported next month that Sam Williams will be talking about corn and soy beans for those interested. Mr. Johnson stated they are also selling gun raffle tickets as a fundraiser to help the Young Farmers go to a conference in Kansas City. Tickets are \$10 a piece, and there are 10 guns to be raffled off. Mr. Palmer asked what type of guns would be raffled. Mr. Johnson stated they had everything from a bow to a muzzle loader. The drawing will begin December 7.

(8) Broadband Update

Mr. Allen Boaz, Chairman of the Broadband Advisory Committee reported that last year at this time they found out from Jeremy Satterfield with MBC that a 195-foot tower had been left over from a failed project and that Bedford County could use it if we wanted to. On December 8, 2014, the committee went before the Board of Supervisors and presented the Montvale Tower project as its first pilot. Mr. Boaz explained that the location was selected due to its close proximity to an MBC fiber line, and close to areas that had no or very little internet service. The Board of Supervisors decided to give \$75,000 toward the construction of the tower and MBC offered to put in up to \$50,000. After that, MBC started a new division called MBC Towers to do projects similar to ours. On July 13, 2015 a memorandum of understanding was signed between Bedford County and MBC to move forward with the project, which has currently submitted a Special Use Permit. There will be a decision on October 20 by the Planning Commission, and then it will go before the Board of Supervisors in November. Now, MBC is in the process of getting RFP's together to send out to Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Mrs. Blido stated two ISPs already submitted a proposal and they are expecting two more by Friday. Mr. Boaz expects a tower will be up by January 5, 2015.

Mr. Powers asked who decides where the next tower will go. Mr. Boaz stated it is mainly up to the advisory committee to recommend the next location, and that he will be doing field study work in the next few weeks to determine where. Huddleston is currently the most likely location. Mr. Boaz hopes by next month to have some studies with maps to show where towers need to be and the expected coverage.

Mr. Boaz stated that the county will make a portion of the profit that comes from an ISP lease to MBC. Mr. Powers asked if anyone has looked into the USDA loans for the broadband projects. Mr. Boaz stated he has looked into it, and the loans are relatively difficult to get because they are usually intended for ISP's to apply rather than counties. Mr. Powers stated what he had read stated it was a locality grant, and that down the line the advisory committee should look into applying. Mrs. Blido stated she was under the impression that it was only if the county was running the network, however she will explore it further.

Mr. Powers asked how soon Mr. Boaz could see the whole county having broadband coverage. Mr. Boaz stated if the committee could accelerate the way they're moving now, optimistically they could have enough towers in place for people to have accessible internet in 3 years. Mr. Boaz stated they could see three towers going up, and the other areas that they've been made aware of that can't get anything they hope to get the ISP's to address.

Mr. Johnson asked if the committee could apply for two towers simultaneously, to which Mr. Boaz explained it is really a matter of money, as the county has to prioritize many types of projects and there's a county cost associated with the installation of these towers.

(9) Committee Reports

a. Education & Events

(1) Ag Complex

Mr. Palmer stated that the ag complex has had no new updates except for what Mr. Craig was talking about in his report. This Saturday is Centerfest and a week from Saturday is Gross' Orchards festival, and then the following Saturday is the Sedalia Chili Cook-off.

Mr. Palmer stated he has a friend who does laser cutting on different types of materials and that he had her do a sample of the county fair logo. He then passed the sample around.

Mr. Powers stated they are talking about making some changes to this year's County Ag Expo and that they would bring an idea to the board once its further hammered out.

(2) Upcoming Events

b. Marketing & Production

(1) Farmers Markets

Mr. Graham stated there was no new news to report. Mr. Baker stated there have been some discussions on changes to the markets for next year including moving the Y market on Tuesdays to the Centertown Pavilion.

(2) Coyote Lottery

Mr. Powers stated that \$2,650 have been raised so far for the coyote lottery. Mr. Powers asked if staff had begun working on the poster yet, to which Ms. Hupp volunteered to put the poster together. Mr. Baker said Southern States already had customers asking about the lottery, so he will let them know we are going to do it again this year.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers stated Fauquier County crossed the 100,000 acre mark for conservation easements. Bedford County has a little over 10,000 acres in conservation easements.

(10) Other Business

A. Central Virginia Livestock Show funding

Mr. Powers stated this topic stemmed from a motion that was tabled about the county monetarily supporting the youth livestock show. Five counties are included in the show and we rank first or second in the number of participants.

Mr. Grove stated there needs to be more support for youth in agriculture. He would like to see additional funding as premiums or for another scholarship for kids to participate in the show. Mr. Grove stated that if Bedford County puts money in, maybe other counties would put money in as well.

Mr. Powers suggested having Mr. Grove, Mr. Tuck, and Mr. Baker meet before the next meeting to come up with a plan of how much they'd like to ask the Board of Supervisors for. Mr. Baumgardner said our county was not in the top percentile for bringing money home from the show even though our county's kids won the majority of the show's prizes.

Mr. Grove made a motion that the board look into asking the County to provide monetary support to the Bedford County students who participate in the Central Virginia Livestock Show. Mr. Palmer seconded that motion. The Ag Board voted yes unanimously.

(11) Informational Items

Mr. Powers stated that Mickey Johnson with Fox 21/27 has recently built a new station and he recently met with Mr. Powers about creating an Ag Life segment in the morning and evening news starting this month. If it is successful, they will add a 30 minute show on the weekend. Mr. Powers stated that Bedford should be well represented since Mickey is from Bedford and got this started. Mr. Powers stated they asked Joy to be a correspondent for the series, but Mr. Powers

doesn't think she's interested in being behind the camera.

(12) Adjournment

-8:46 p.m.