



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
September 4, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.
County Administration Building
Ground Floor Training Room
122 East Main Street, Bedford, VA 24523

Present: Matt Baumgardner, Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Sam Gardner, Ronnie Gross, Chuck Grove, Ken Newman, Jeff Powers, Pam Willoughby

Absent: Beth Bays, Joy Powers, Lindsay Tomlinson

Staff Present: Scott Baker, Traci Blido

Staff Absent: None

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests: Erika and Steven McFaden - Bedford Farmers' Market Managers; John Graham - Graham Bass Farm

(1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order and asked for a review of the September 4, 2019 agenda. There were no objections.

A motion and a second were made to approve the September 4, 2019 agenda, as presented.
Adopted unanimously.

(2) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - August 7, 2019

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the August 7, 2019 meeting minutes.

The **Attendance** and **Absent** lists were amended. Chuck Grove, Pete Fellers, and Ken Newman were added as those present and Ronnie Gross was added as absent.

Steven McFaden was removed as a **Guest**.

Under **1. Farmers' Market Update**, Line 1, removed "and Steven" to read "Erika McFaden as one of the new Bedford Farmers' Market managers."

Under **(7) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**, Line 9, amended "\$25,000 stipend" to read "\$25,000 stipend each year for the first three years"...

Mrs. Blido noted that the Tobacco Commission just started paying off student loans for those individuals entering high-demand professions and thinks large animal veterinarians are included. She will check on the specific professions and report back to the Ag Board.

A motion and a second were made to approve the August 7, 2019 meeting minutes, as amended. **Adopted unanimously.**

(3) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Mrs. Blido thanked the Ag Board members, Chuck Grove and Ken Newman, who attended the Governor's announcement where Bettina Ring, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture spoke at Apocalypse Ale Works last month. Mrs. Blido passed around the written announcement and said Legacy Cider will invest \$300,000 to establish a hard cider production facility in Bedford County and hire five new employees over the next three years. They will purchase 12,150 bushels of Virginia grown apples including apples from Gross' Orchard. The value of their three year investment will be \$146,000. The EDA meeting will be tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. where they will hear from the Smith Mountain Lake (SML) Center Board about their proposal to develop and build an amphitheater in downtown Moneta. Many companies are expanding and she will be speaking to the EDA tomorrow about five company expansions with one bringing in 61 new jobs.

Mr. Gross said Legacy Cider will be using seconds, or #2 apples, which is good news. The #2 apples are the ones that are harder to sell because they don't look as good and two local processing plants have closed, so the cost of freight to other processing plants cuts into the #2 apples' value.

(4) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Scott Baker said he has contacted Matt Miller, the Wythe County agent, regarding the specs for the pesticide vegetation management program. He will get the information soon and will provide it to the Ag Board members. He also spoke to the Bedford Beef Producers Directors regarding

the large animal veterinarian program for underserved areas and the student loan forgiveness and they expressed some interest. They think they would be more successful if they combine efforts and work with Campbell County where there is also a large animal vet shortage. Mr. Baker talked to Todd Scott, his counterpart in Campbell County, who told him that Campbell County actually had the underserved designation a few years ago but it expired and the designation must be applied for every year. Mr. Scott will get with his association and see if there is interest to move forward with the program. Dr. Gardner said the USDA is designating those areas and you must apply between October 1 through November 15 so he is not sure there will be enough time to apply this year. Mr. Baker will see what can be done for this year and if not, for next year. He reminded the Ag Board members that the next weaned and vaccinated feeder calf sale will be Friday, September 13, at Springlake Stockyard. He is not sure how many calves will be in the barn but thinks the total in the field will be similar to the previous September sales, about four to five tractor trailer loads. The Sedalia Country Fair is this Saturday and he has been asked to have a display there for agriculture and it will include information about industrial hemp.

(5) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMER'S REPORT

Mr. Baumgardner said the annual meeting is October 1. Sam Gardner said the Women's Committee is putting packets together to hand out at the County Fair booth and animal tent. Eric Johnson from the Farm Bureau is having a raffle for a Yeti cooler at the fair for those who sign up for new membership, and he is looking for local meat donations to fill the cooler. Volunteers are still needed for manning the booth on both Saturday and Sunday at the Old McDonald tent.

(6) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming Events

See below.

2. County Fair update

Chairman Powers reported that the youth essay and poster contest entries are due this Saturday and the Demolition Derby has no entry fee now and will be held on Thursday, September 26. They are accepting volunteers for set-up and tear-down. The ag exhibits and educational tours are looking good. Chairman Powers has posters for Ag Board members to give to businesses and local stores to advertise the fair. There is more advertising for the event than before with three TV stations and five radio stations advertising. WSLs will be a sponsor and meteorologist Jeff Haniewich will be at the fair on Friday with the weather truck. The circus will be there again and free entertainment will be provided in the evenings. Volunteers are still needed and Mrs. Blido will ask the EDA members tomorrow at their meeting if they are interested.

3. School Ag Programs Update

Chairman Powers said there are many students in the ag programs. They have eight ag teachers now in the schools which is more than ever before and there is still talk of getting a teacher for Forest. Charlie Moser who is a junior at Liberty has made the 4-H state team like Ethan Jackson did last year. Ethan has a full two-year scholarship for a junior college in Oklahoma. Josh Powers has made the Virginia Tech judging team.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmers' Market Update

Chairman Powers welcomed Steve McFaden to the meeting. Mrs. McFaden reported that the Bedford market is doing well and they have attracted more people and they counted 465 visitors at the last market. They have seen a steady flow of traffic through the market and vendors are making money and everyone seems to be happy with how things are going. They hope to have an Apple Fest on October 11. Gross' Orchard will have apples at \$.99 per pound and they will have an apple press at the market as well. Cooperative Extension will have a cooking demonstration using apples. The Bedford market is open on Fridays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They are looking to wrap up the season on a positive note and look forward to the 2020 season. Mr. Gross said the Forest market has continued to have strong attendance and sales. Parking can be a problem but the church parking lot next door can be used although many people are not aware. Chairman Powers summarized Tamara Witt's market report and said everything is going fine. She has a good variety of products and vendors are selling at the Tractor Supply parking lot on Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

2. Coyote Lottery Update

Dr. Gardner reported the Farm Bureau has budgeted \$1,000 start up funds again this year. He will be sending out letters to previous sponsors but has asked the Ag Board members to suggest any new possible sponsors so he does not have to ask the same people every year. He is working with Mrs. Blido and Ms. Bailey on a poster to display at the County Fair. Mrs. Blido said they have a graphic artist working on it now. Dr. Gardner said the coyote lottery will run from October 1 through the end of February.

Dr. Gardner said many of the members enjoyed meeting at the new Cooperative Extension offices the past few months and he would like to move that the Ag Board have future meetings there.

A motion and a second were made to hold future Ag Board meetings at the Peaks Conference Room at the Falling Creek Complex at 1257 County Farm Road, Bedford, VA 24523.

Adopted unanimously.

Chairman Powers noted that the protected black-headed buzzards are a real problem. He has had two recent incidents of them attacking his calves. Mr. Baumgardner said there is a group located in Christiansburg that will come down and help him get a license/permit to shoot the buzzards. He will get the information to Chairman Powers who will send it out to all the Ag Board members. Dr. Gardner noted the new hunting regulations in Bedford County call for allowing three buck and three doe per hunter, but a doe must be taken after a buck has been hunted and before another buck can be hunted. Sam Gardner noted that two more weeks have been added to the season for modern firearms. Dr. Gardner said the gun season will now run from November 16 through December 14 which will help the coyote lottery as well.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Pete Fellers reported that Steve Wilkerson reached out to him regarding the airport at New London being rezoned and the Ag Board members and conservation people should be concerned about the basic disregard for the future land use map and general comprehensive plan initiatives. Mrs. Blido said Liberty University (LU) wants to expand the runway and do some developing and are requesting the change. The Board of Supervisors has asked for the Planning Commission to look into the matter. LU has a school of aeronautics which is considered one of the best in the country and their goal is to move as much as possible to the New London site. There is a public hearing on September 17 at Jefferson Forest High School. The land is currently zoned as agricultural and is a large tract. Chairman Powers led a discussion regarding gaining consensus for an official opinion of the Ag Board on this rezoning request.

A motion and a second were made to recommend, via a letter to the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and Economic Development Authority, that the Ag Board recommends the zoning of the large tract of farmland bought by LU at the New London Airport remain as agricultural.

Discussion followed after a concern was raised by Pam Willoughby and Chuck Grove about jumping to a decision without getting more information. The motion was tabled until further details can be provided to the members. Mrs. Blido will forward an email from Community Development regarding the Planning Commission Meeting on this matter to Chairman Powers and Mr. Baker.

(7) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Baker noted that the next Bedford Beef Producers' Association meeting will be held at Springlake Stockyard on October 8. The topic will be hay quality and beef cattle nutrition.

The cold storage grant currently has a waiting list and there is nothing new to report.

(8) ADJOURNMENT

8:45 p.m.