



## Meeting Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board  
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek  
1257 County Farm Rd., Bedford, VA 24523**

**November 3, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Present:** Pete Fellers, Don Gardner, Sam Gardner (by Zoom), Ken Newman, Jeff Powers, Chuck Grove, Joy Powers, Ethan Tanner, Lindsay Tomlinson, Pam Willoughby

**Absent:** Matt Baumgardner, Dorothy McIntyre

**Staff Present:** Scott Baker, Pam Bailey

**Staff Absent:** None

**Transcriber:** Julia Peters

**Guests:** Ann Jones, Holly Willoughby

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### **(1) CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **(2) WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Powers welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Pam Willoughby, who was back in attendance after several months' absence.

### **(3) APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the November 3, 2021 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the November 3, 2021 agenda, as presented.

**Adopted unanimously**

**(4) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - October 6, 2021**

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the October 6, 2021 meeting minutes. Clarifying corrections were made. Language on page 3, "... **There is a recommendation to** increase the gun season...", was changed to read "... **There is an** increase in the gun season...". On page 4, language was added to read "... grant proposal has been submitted **by the Region** for a cost share program. **The region's extension agents** were asked to refine ..."

A motion and a second were made to approve the October 6, 2021 meeting minutes, as amended.  
**Adopted unanimously**

**(5) ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

No report available.

**(6) LAND PROTECTION & CONSERVATION**

Chairman Powers reported that he and Martin Gwin from the Planning Commission visited Climax, VA to see a program that the Farm Bureau/Virginia Young Farmers sponsored. They heard from speakers from all sides of the solar power issue. He handed out copies of information pertaining to solar projects. He said the push for solar power has come about because of an Executive Order expecting a certain percentage of green energy that has to be produced from renewable sources by the power companies; 40% by the year 2030. He spoke about a farmer in Climax who is 51 years old and has been farming many years and his mother was contacted about putting solar panels on his prime farmland. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) and community farmers have asked the Ag Board to look into this subject, and Chairman Powers foresees setting up a committee with Pete Fellers and others to discuss solar farms and present a plan to the Ag Board for their review. There have been problems in Halifax and Pittsylvania where they rushed into this and some of the solar companies didn't know what they were doing. He is strongly leaning toward a large company like Dominion handling these solar projects rather than a small company that may be bought-out in the future and not take responsibility. Discussion followed. Topics discussed were big and small energy companies, erosion issues, commercial/industrial zones as location alternatives to rural prime farmland, the usability/non-usability of land dedicated to solar equipment for 40 years, current technology becoming obsolete, monetary compensation to farmers, DEQ specifications, land taxes, ordinance requirements, setbacks, and the capacity of the electric grid.

If anyone is interested in working with Mr. Fellers and Chairman Powers, they can contact Chairman Powers.

**(7) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Ms. Bailey stated that she had an opportunity to travel to Richmond and Norfolk with other

Economic Development Directors from the Lynchburg region. They visited the Virginia Talent Accelerator Program which is an incredible program available to businesses new to Virginia. It provides job training, marketing, and other incentives for companies. They also visited the Port of Virginia, which was a very impressive facility. Damage Prevention, a company in the New London Business & Technology Center park, will be holding a job fair in December. They currently employ ten people and plan to hire three more by the end of the year. Mr. Baker and Ms. Bailey hope to garner support from the BOS for an Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) grant at their Work Session on Monday. The joint Town/County tree grant project, which provided trees along the corner of Elba's Butcher Shoppe in Town, has added some green to the area, making it a more inviting place. The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) has completed its study and has recommended a train stop in Bedford. They have applied for a grant to do some environmental work which will take the project to the next step.

**(8) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT**

Mr. Baker reported that revisions are being made to the grant proposal for the Tobacco Commission. The agent in Campbell County met with economic development staff and will have Tobacco Commission staff review the revised proposal. The Tobacco Commission meets in January when they will reconsider the region's grant application. He will be talking to the BOS on Monday about matching funds for the AFID grant. The stream exclusion weed cost-share program has been administered for the last two years. Total funds for the program have not been spent either year so he may ask for less money from the County for next year's program.

Gene Goley passed away a couple weeks ago. Mr. Baker will obtain more information so the Ag Board can send a card and condolences.

**(9) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU/YOUNG FARMERS REPORT**

Sam Gardner reported the Farm Bureau is pushing to change regulations for deer season and adding another doe to the Earn a Buck program to promote hunters to harvest does over bucks. Chairman Powers offered to send a letter of support on behalf of the Ag Board if needed.

**(10) COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- a. Education & Events**
  - 1. Upcoming Events**

See Ag Programs Update.

- 2. County Fair Update**

Ms. Powers said that the fair is on pause and they will see what can be done for 2022.

### **3. School Ag Programs Update**

Ms. Tomlinson reported that students from SML and Liberty FFAs travelled to Indianapolis. They had a winning State livestock judging team. At the national contest, they came out with a silver rating. Charlie Moser placed sixth in the nation. She thanked Ms. Powers for her coaching the kids through 4-H and helping the students get through their FFA contests. Both Liberty Middle and High were recognized as national chapters. There were two American degree winners and they hope to have three this year. Ms. Ann Jones said the national convention was a great opportunity for the kids that could make the trip and they appreciate all the support the community gives.

Ms. Powers reported that 4-H continues to grow with new families participating every month. Ronnie Gross donated pumpkins for kids to have a painting/carving contest. Charlie Moser is on the State 4-H team and hopefully will represent Bedford and Virginia in the national competition.

#### **b. Marketing & Production**

##### **1. Farmers' Market Updates**

Ms. McIntyre sent her report on the Forest market to Ms. Bailey. She said the market's regular season ended October 30. The next market will be held outside on November 20 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. There are 86 vendors on the roster, with 41% from Bedford County. Many vendors shared that this was one of their strongest seasons at the market.

The Bedford market has two upcoming holiday market days, one in November with live music and one in December with carolers.

### **(11) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

John Graham has a group of hunters who are willing to hunt on the farms of interested parties. Dr. Gardner suggested he list contact information and post it at Southern States to reach those interested landowners.

Chairman Powers would like to work on a comprehensive plan for the Ag Board after the first of the new year.

Next month's meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. and will be the Christmas get-together with snacks.

Tyson is officially opening in the Danville area. It will be a true opportunity for farmers to raise chickens because it will be a big plant. Thanks goes to Beck Stanley who made arrangements for

Chairman Powers and Mr. Stanley to meet with the Executive Director of the Virginia Poultry Federation to discuss opportunities for Bedford County.

Sam Gardner's fencing business went to Galax and competed in the East Coast Fencing Competition. Crews participated from all over the East coast and his crew won as Grand Champion. An article about the competition will be posted in the Bedford paper.

Charlie Moser demonstrated his skill at livestock judging by giving a set of reasons to meeting attendees. His knowledge, hard work, and talent in judging is why he earned a gold medal at the national competition.

The FFAs will be holding fruit sales and a poinsettia sale.

**(12) ADJOURNMENT**

8:33 p.m.