



Meeting Minutes

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

December 1, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Matt Baumgardner

Staff Present: Pam Bailey

Staff Absent: Scott Baker

Transcriber: Julia Peters

Guests: Supervisor Charla Bansley, Andy Dooley, Carolyn Fellers, Supervisor Mickey Johnson, Josh Powers, Mrs. Powers, Richard Ruff, Holly Willoughby

(1) CALL TO ORDER

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

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers asked for a review of the December 1, 2021 agenda.

A motion and a second were made to approve the December 1, 2021 agenda, as presented.
Adopted unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - November 3, 2021

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

A motion and a second were made to approve the November 3, 2021 meeting minutes, as amended.

Adopted unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Ms. Kaufman reported that the County has submitted grant applications for the expansion of broadband infrastructure. The combined applications focus on 20,000 addresses in Bedford County that are unserved or underserved and the funds involved total \$60 million. They expect to hear about the awards by the end of the calendar year and are hopeful to be awarded at least two of the grants for this round. The County has hired John Putney, specifically to coordinate the broadband project. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) held a strategic planning retreat about a month ago. The plan is being finalized and it will go back to the BOS for final adoption during the first BOS meeting in 2022. One of the goal areas of the revised plan pertains specifically to the work of the Ag Board and addresses the protection of natural assets and agriculture.

(5) LAND PROTECTION & CONSERVATION

Chairman Powers reported that the solar project subcommittee met and two of the BOS members attended. There are too many unknowns with small upstart companies, new products, etc., that they opinion is it is not the time for the County to pursue solar panel farms. The solar subcommittee will meet again in January before the Ag Board meeting and draw up a resolution. Too many other counties did not do the due diligence that is necessary and many are regretting these early decisions. Dr. Gardner noted that the information available is incomplete and too confusing. Much of the energy behind solar farms is being driven by executive orders and a bill that was passed called the Virginia Clean Energy Act. Discussion followed. Points discussed were state mandates, needed buffer zones, erosion, topsoil removal, ag enterprises vs. industrial development, technology becoming obsolete, land leases and cleanup after a lease expires.

(6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey reported that the EDA held a strategic planning session in September. Final revisions are being made now with a rough draft provided to the EDA in January. Damage Prevention Solutions is a company that has moved into the New London Technology Park. Their open house has been delayed but they hope to have it during the first quarter of 2022. Staff is working on CIP requests now and will have discussions regarding the projects in a couple weeks. Currently, there are two good prospects for the Teva facility. The Town of Bedford is proceeding with the next phase of the study for a train station. County staff drafted a letter to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in support of the project. Ms. Bailey has met with BOS regarding the VDACS AFID grant to gauge their interest in matching funds up to \$25,000 and they have

agreed. VDACS limits each locality to one project per cycle, although many projects can be submitted.

(7) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Nothing new to report.

(8) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU/YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Nothing new to report.

(9) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming Events

Ms. Tomlinson said the students continue to have fruit sales and work on parades.

2. County Fair Update

Ms. Powers said things are looking positive for 2022. They are currently exploring a spring festival versus a fall fair.

3. School Ag Programs Update

Ms. Powers reported that Charlie Moser placed fourth in the country at the national livestock judging contest in Louisville, making All American. He is the second All American to date and his State team tied for first place with Illinois. Charlie will have the opportunity to represent the U.S. as a whole and judge this summer in Scotland and Ireland. The 4-H club continues to grow, new families continue to join, and a new group of officers has been elected.

b. Marketing & Production

Chairman Powers said the Tyson processing facility being built in Danville will not be a kill facility and will only process parts. In light of this information, he asked Hobey Bauhan, President of the Virginia Poultry Federation, if there was a possibility of poultry houses in Bedford. Mr. Bauhan said he had studied the map and thought chickens were not a good possibility but there is potential for turkey houses. If someone is interested, the Federation could work with turkey producers and processors. With the high price of building materials, the last few turkey houses put up in the Harrisonburg area cost in excess of \$700,000 each. Discussion followed regarding the poultry industry in general and poultry production in Bedford. If anyone is genuinely interested in producing turkeys, they can contact any Ag Board member who can reach out to Mr. Bauhan.

1. Farmers' Markets Updates

Mrs. McIntyre reported that the Forest Thanksgiving market was a huge success. There were 45 vendors and the December market will have over 50 vendors. The Bedford market on November 27 was a great success as well. She believes that Santa will make an appearance at the December Bedford market. The Smith Mountain Lake market has finished its season but hydroponic products will continue to be sold Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Vittone Farm.

(10) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None.

(11) ADJOURNMENT

7:58 p.m.