



Meeting Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, September 7, 2022
7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Board

Present: Joy Powers (District 2), Don Gardner (District 3), Chuck Grove (District 4), Ethan Tanner (District 5), Melody Divers (District 6), Pete Fellers (District 7), Matt Baumgardner (At-large), Ken Newman (At-large), Sam Gardner (At-large), Dorothy McIntyre (At-large)

Absent: Jeff Powers (District 1), Lindsay Tomlinson (At-large)

Staff Present: Pam Bailey, Holley Scheffel

Staff absent: Scott Baker, Robert Hiss

Guests: Supervisor Mickey Johnson, Josh Powers, Johnny Divers

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Don Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Chairman Gardner called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda.

Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Baumgardner to approve September 7, 2022, meeting agenda
Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. August 3, 2022

Vice-Chairman Gardner called for a motion to approve the August 3, 2022, meeting minutes.

Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Mr. Newman to approve the August 3, 2022, meeting minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Supervisor Johnson questioned the Zoning Ordinance of Agricultural Village (AV) after describing a recent retail project that is currently under construction. This project proceeded without a hearing or an approval process because the building fell within the scope of “light commercial” and is a “by-right” under the AV designation. He expressed frustration with several zoning ordinances because the scope is broad for both AV and Special Use Permits.

Vice-Chairman Gardner felt that it was appropriate for the specific section of the code that included the AV designation to be sent to board members to review prior to next month's meeting.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey shared that she is holding a Business Roundtable on Thursday, September 15 at 8:30 a.m. at the Bedford Area Welcome Center. The topic for this event is entitled, "Creative Approaches to Hiring and Recruitment." Tim Saunders with Virginia Career Works and JD Fedor with the Virginia Department of Corrections are presenters for this session.

She also attended an Agri-Tourism conference at the Olde Dominion Ag Complex. She learned that Educational Agritourism accounts for 53%, Farm Festivals represent 38%, and Event Venues account for 34% of the types of programs that farms can now offer. Some trends that were discussed were health and wellness retreats. Agritourism accounts for \$2.2 billion in economic activity in the Commonwealth.

The EDA approved Ms. Bailey to apply for a Business Ready Site Program Grant. It's a \$127,000 project that requires a 50% match by the Economic Development Authority.

The Healthy Foods Group will be holding a cooking event at Elba's. This event will be held on October 8 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Lastly, Ms. Bailey shared that a new Administrative Assistant is going to be hired. It is a shared position between Administration and Economic Development. As part of their responsibilities, this person will be tasked with preparing board meeting packets, preparing Ag board minutes, and will be distributing information for meetings. It is expected that the new hire start sometime in October.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Nothing to report this month.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Mr. Baumgardner stated that the Young Farmer's activity for the month was to support the FFA students by providing food during the Chapter Officer Leadership Training on September 1. Six counties were represented that day.

Mr. Baumgardner also noted that the big Farm Bureau is still taking resolutions for things to consider for this year. The annual Farm Bureau meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 4. Tickets are required for admission. For those wishing to attend, tickets can be obtained by stopping by the local Farm Bureau Office.

One item the Farm Bureau is trying to push forward is in regards to the Asian Longhorned Tick. This tick is responsible for killing cattle and has been spotted as close as Pittsylvania County. The local and state Farm Bureau is trying to persuade the USDA to consider adding this specific tick to the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP). There will be an informational meeting held on September 15 at 6:30 p.m. at the Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex.

Vice-Chairman Gardner also brought another issue forward for the farming community. Specifically, he shared that two seed companies are now producing herbicide-tolerant forage and grain sorghum. This has never been available before. One problem the seed companies are concerned about is that Sorghum and Johnson grass are very similar genetically and that the herbicide tolerance could be transferred into Johnson grass and then it would not work. He also shared that many state and county roads are inundated with Johnson grass and VDOT needs to remove Johnson grass from their right of ways next to crop fields.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events
2. County Fair update – Ms. Powers shared that there was a recent meeting with county staff and the fair board about the county fair. At the meeting, there was a discussion about possibly holding the county fair next to the Sheriff’s Department next year as a suitable location has been difficult to secure. Additionally, there was a conversation regarding a future Ag center. The fair and the potential future Ag center are two separate conversations, however, these items will be brought up again after the meeting participants have had some time to think about and consider the next steps for both items.

3. School Ag Programs update – Mr. Josh Powers noted that they are in the process of recruiting members and collecting dues from members for FFA. He shared that there are several teams going to the State Fair. The first membership event is a Tailgate before the SRHS and Liberty game on Friday, September 9. He also shared that several FFA chapters are currently selling mums.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer’s Market updates – Mrs. McIntyre indicated that the first week in August is National Farmer’s Market Week. She distributed beeswax wraps to all members and guests of the board. These were giveaways at the market. Regarding sales at the market, she shared that as of July 15, the market yielded \$320,000 in sales which is up from last year which was \$256,000. She noted that on any given Saturday, the market brings anywhere from 1,800 – 2,000 shoppers. Market vendors from Bedford County represent 38%, Lynchburg vendors represent 36%, and the remaining are from Amherst, Appomattox, Buchanan, Prince Edward, and Pittsylvania Counties.

- c. Land Protection & Conservation – Mr. Fellers spoke to the group about a letter he received regarding buffers and fencing for wetlands at no cost to farmers. After speaking with several individuals, he stated that there are many hoops to jump through in order to obtain the fencing. He cautioned that people should be extra vigilant when considering utilizing the service.

(9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Please provide pictures to Holley Scheffel for the Ag board website. There will be a camera on site next meeting for anyone not sending in a picture before then.

Ms. Powers stated that a solar company has been harassing her father at his place of business. Mr. Powers had to personally escort the company off of his property.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

8:20 PM.