



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

Wednesday, March 1, 2023
7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (District 1), Don Gardner (District 3), Ethan Tanner (District 5), Melody Divers (District 6), Pete Fellers (District 7), Sam Gardner (At-Large), Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large), Ken Newman (At-Large)

Absent: Joy Powers (District 2), Chuck Grove (District 4), Matt Baumgardner (At-Large), Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large)

Staff Present: Pam Bailey, Justin Stauder, Trish Luger, Scott Baker

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Charla Bansley, Logan Morris, Johnny Divers, Josh Powers,

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the meeting agenda.

Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Gardner, to approve the March 1, 2023, agenda.

Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. February 8, 2023

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the corrected February 8, 2023, meeting minutes.

Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Gardner to approve the February 8, 2023, minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Due to budget season, the Board of Supervisors will be heavily involved in upcoming worksessions each Monday evening for the next six to seven weeks.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Joint Town and County EDA meeting will be held Thursday, March 2. A presentation by Go Virginia will explain benefits and opportunities.

Wicked Diesel established the first apprentice program in Bedford County. The Dept of Labor was on-site, and a press release was made public.

The Tourism Zone plans are progressing and is currently with Tourism.

Ms. Bailey will be attending the Building Capacity & Community Agritourism Conference in Blacksburg March 28 & 29.

The Bedford Area Chamber is hosting the 10th annual job fair April 6 at the Forest Library. Mr. Gardner spoke of a news article mentioning Lynchburg losing potential business due to not having large sites for construction. Ms. Bailey stated the need for pad-ready sites and buildings in Bedford County and the need for site readiness for business attraction and expansion.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

A pesticide recertification class will take place in Lynchburg next week. This is offered to commercial workers: government employees, landscapers, arborists, and exterminators. In April, a class is available to VDOT employees.

Upcoming events include a Cattleman's Conference at Knoll Crest Farm March 24 and a vineyard meeting at Burnbrae Vineyards. Specialists from Virginia Tech and grape growers will have the opportunity to network. Virginia Forage and Grassland Council offers livestock fencing school. Mr. Baker will teach the class at the Bedford Extension Office on April 19 and onsite training at a farm through Glenwood. Thirty spots are available, of which 22 have been fulfilled. The Central Virginia Livestock show is scheduled in May. A summer paid internship (10-weeks), May through August, is available to college students that are currently in their sophomore, junior or senior year.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Young Farmers is currently recruiting new members.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

In the absence of Ms. Powers, Chairman Powers stated that Ms. Powers has been in contact with Rides on Time, having gathered parameters for the upcoming meeting. Ms. Powers will contact Mr. Stauder and Mr. Hiss to get a date finalized.

2. School Ag Programs update

Bedford 4-H Senior Advanced Livestock Team placed 10th overall (out of 34 teams) in the Virginia Tech Block and Bridle Livestock Judging Contest.

Liberty High School's Kiss the Pig fundraiser assisted a family whose three siblings were in a recent car accident.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer's Market updates

The Forest Farmer's Market will be held March 11 and a vendor meeting will be held on March 8 with Weights and Measures in place to certify scales.

Ms. McIntyre thanked the Ag Board for help in bringing Moneta Farmers Market to downtown Moneta. The market will be open Wednesdays 3 p.m. - 7 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day with room for 25-30 vendors. A meeting at the Moneta Public Library is scheduled for prospective vendors on March 22 from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. Ms. Bailey offered help with the press release and logo. Due to a lack of response from contacts for a Montvale Farmers Market, Ms. Divers shared contact information for Roni Sutton.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers mentioned Amherst County beginning a 400-acre solar project and Chairman Powers spoke about Apex Solar. The payout is large but consequences to land is detrimental, taking a considerable amount of money and many years to develop back to growing crops. As years pass and the land loses its worth, you're at the mercy of the solar panel company to install more panels, if still popular. Counties also receive money, and this may persuade Board of Supervisor members to vote accordingly. There is support for solar companies that install at home and businesses. Additional solar information can be found at these websites:

<https://www.citizensforresponsiblesolar.org/>

<https://www.npr.org/2023/02/18/1154867064/solar-power-misinformation-activists-rural-america>

(9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Baumgardner and Ms. Powers were absent from this meeting and Chairman Powers asked that we keep them in our thoughts.

Ms. Bailey mentioned the Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce is holding its Align Before 9 and hosting Attorney General Jason Miyares at the Bower Center for the Arts tomorrow at 8 a.m.

Mr. Baker stated a new 12x20 hoop house has been erected by the master gardeners and plans are underway to utilize the space.

Ms. Divers mentioned Layman Family Farms for consideration of the County Fair. Eric Layman has expressed interest.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

7:52 pm.