



Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, October 4, 2023
7:30 p.m.

Agricultural Board

Present: Jeff Powers (District 1), 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), Sam Gardner, (At-Large), Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large), Ken Newman (At-Large), Lindsay Tomlinson

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

Guest: Michelle Miller

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Baumgardner to approve the agenda.
Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. September 6, 2023

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the September 6, 2023, meeting minutes. Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Baumgardner to approve the meeting minutes.
Adopted Unanimously

(4) Special Appearance: Michelle Miller, National Agriculture Advocate, and Influencer

Guest Speaker Michelle Miller spoke with enthusiasm about her platform to highlight and bridge the gap between consumers and farmers. Her blog, thefarmbabe.com reaches five million viewers monthly.

(5) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Mr. Hiss spoke about personal property tax and accessing vehicles at 100 %. The Board of Supervisors elected a 15% reduction off the top, resulting in being taxed at 85%.

Operations at the landfill are winding down as trash is being transferred outside of the county. Inflation has increased prices in fuel and transportation and there are discussions to reopen another cell or move forward with closing this site.

The County has 4 internet/broadband contracts currently in place with Zitel, Shentel, Riverstreet, and Verizon. This project totals \$80 million, will serve 12,000 passings, and covers 1,100 miles of fiber being laid. The projects should be completed within the next 24 months.

(6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Ms. Bailey did not have any updates to share.

(7) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Virginia Dept of Agriculture pesticide disposal program targeted at commercial businesses, including farmers and golf courses, collected 3,000 lbs. of pesticides.

The weaned/vaccinated feeder at Spring Lake Stockyard sold 257 heads with an average premium of \$283 per animal, which brought an economic value of \$72,000.

Planning has begun for next year's Livestock show, which will be the first weekend of May 2024.

Walter Gross passed away Monday, October 2, 2023

(8) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

The annual Farm Bureau meeting is on Tuesday, October 10 at 6 p.m.

(9) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

2. School Ag Programs update

Ms. Tomlinson stated that SMLCA FFA hosted the Southbridge Area Chapter Officer of the Year Leadership training. A record number of students participated (approximately 180 students attended).

Several students participated in the state fair with competitions in small engine contests, junior foresters, and an assortment of middle school contests. Ribbons were brought home to Bedford County along with receiving scholarships.

Smith Mountain and Liberty FFA chapters are geared up for forestry and tractor operators' contests.

Students are doing outreach at local festivals to get kids thinking about FFA and learning Agriculture.

Liberty FFA, a three-star national chapter, is working hard to raise funds for the National Convention. A group of 13 students, five American degree recipients, and one state proficiency winner who competed at the national level are excited to attend and claim prizes.

4-H Ag club is visiting local agribusinesses. Contact Ms. Tomlinson if you are interested in hosting.

Liberty Middle School teacher, Cymber Croft, was recently awarded Bedford's Best Award.

Centerpieces will be made by the students for the Farm Bureau annual meeting. If attending, a donation of peanut butter is requested.

Campbell County has added a tremendous amount of Ag programs and Ag teachers and the hope is that other schools will follow suit.

Ms. Jones with Smith Mountain FFA added that fourteen students attended the state fair and two students competed in the livestock show. They are also gearing up for forestry and tractor operator's contests.

3. County Fair Report

Ms. Powers stated that the County fair will not take place this year due to the rescheduling of Centerfest to October 28 due to rain. A meeting with the fair board will be planned next month to discuss preparations for 2024.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer's Market updates.

Moneta – The season has ended. The HOA for the property contacted Ms. McIntyre. She believes they saw the benefit of the market as they are willing to accommodate the changes needed.

Forest – The market will run another 3-4 weeks. A canned food drive will run in the month of October with collections being given to Gate Ministries.

Montvale – has had continual business the entire season.

Bedford – Ms. Miller will be attending the market Saturday, Oct 7 from 8 a.m. -12 p.m.

2. Coyote Lottery

Dr. Gardner spoke about the Coyote Lottery and how the process is working as complaints have decreased. Since September 1, 23 coyotes have been checked in.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers will give an update at our next meeting.

(10) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Presentation on proposed public relations committee

Chairman Powers proposed to set up a three-member public relations standing committee, with one member being the chairman.

A motion was made by Mr. Baumgardner to table the proposed public relations committee, seconded by Mr. Newman.

The motion was not adopted unanimously. The motion to table has the majority therefore this topic will be discussed at the November meeting.

b. Informational items

Mr. Baumgardner dispersed forms to complete tags for farm-use vehicles. The intent is to remove vehicles with tags that are not being used for this purpose. Increasing taxes for farmers is not a desired outcome.

Mr. Tanner presented a spotted lantern fly for viewing.

Ms. Powers presented information on the 2023 Farm Bill. Some members of the Freedom Caucus are insistent on decimating the Agriculture Appropriation Bill, in addition to the nutrition funds, relating back to 2001. Ms. Powers would like the committee to write a letter in support of the Agriculture Appropriations Committee reminding our representative of the importance of agriculture and its direct benefit from these programs.

(11) ADJOURNMENT

8:55 p.m.