



Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, June 5, 2024
7:30 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (District 1); Joy Powers (District 2); Don Gardner (District 3); Chuck Grove (District 4); Melody Divers, (District 6); Pete Fellers (District 7); Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large); Matt Baumgardner (At-Large); Sam Gardner (At-Large); Ken Newman (At-Large); Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large)

Absent: Ethan Tanner (District 5)

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

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Bob Davis, Josh Powers, Johnny Divers

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

a. May 1, 2023

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the May 1, 2024, meeting minutes, as corrected. Mr. Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Baumgardner to approve the meeting minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Mr. Stauder shared updates from the Planning Commission. The amendments will go to the Board of Supervisors for initiation on 6/24/2024. Mr. Stauder will provide contact information for Community Development so any proposed changes or recommendations can be submitted.

Zoning Ordinance
Definitions – Agritourism Activity
April 2024

That **Section 30-28, Definitions**, be amended to exclude certain activities in the “Agritourism Activity” definition:

Sec. 30-28. – Definitions

Agritourism activity: Any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. Such activities must not include any of the following: helicopter rides, antique/flea markets, go-cart/all-terrain vehicle tracks, and mechanized amusement park rides.

An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity.

Zoning Ordinance
Definitions – Farm Winery/Brewery/Distillery
April 2024

That **Section 30-28, Definitions**, be amended to include a definition for “Farm Winery/Brewery/Distillery”: (*Meadery* to be added)

Sec. 30-28. – Definitions

Farm Winery/Brewery/Distillery: Agricultural operations devoted to producing wine, cider, beer, and/or spirits, using agricultural products grown at the agricultural operation. Such uses shall be licensed under Code of Virginia §4.1-206.1 as a Virginia farm winery, limited brewery, or limited distillery.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Well Farm Meats has applied to the Tobacco Commission and another entity to raise funds for the meat processing plant. The project has been tabled until funding is secured through the other entity.

A new agricultural incentives program is being developed and could create additional opportunities for agricultural producers.

Ms. Armstrong traveled to Richmond with the Regional Economic Developers (RED) team. The new economic development brand was unveiled for the Lynchburg, VA region, the Edge of the Blue Ridge. Guests received door prizes made by local companies.

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center D-Day remembrance is at 6:15 p.m. followed by bell ringing at 6:44 p.m. right outside the Administration building.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker introduced summer intern, Emily Arrington, a recent Ag Science graduate of Ferrum College. Emily will begin a master’s program at Virginia Tech this fall. Her interest is in Livestock Production and educating the public about the importance of agriculture. She will be interviewing farms, including the Divers, and has created an informational trifold to be used at events.

Mr. Baker spoke about Carbon Credits incentive programs for farmers that sequester carbon. Currently, there are programs for Forestry & Agriculture. There are no penalties if unforeseen circumstances prevent the implementation of practices and no penalty for not meeting the practice requirements. Currently, there is limited applicability for Ag operations in Bedford.

Grasslands Partnership Ag Incentive Program has six eligible practices and enrollment is underway. Please see Scott for additional information.

The spotted lantern fly is more widespread than last year but is not the major crop pest as believed. The quarantine program may soon be eliminated now that it is well established and may be updated with a public awareness campaign.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Farm Bureau gifted nine scholarships in Bedford County. Farm Bureau hired field agent, Justin Coleman. He travels throughout the County and can deliver items purchased through the Farm Bureau store.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

2. School Ag Programs update

The CVLS went well, and the support for the kids' market projects was much appreciated. Bedford County won first place in both the pig and goat categories.

Banquets were held in May for SMLCA, Stanton River, and Liberty High School.

The State Convention is June 24-27th at Virginia Tech.

Leadership camp is in July.

3. County Fair Report

Ms. Powers stated that the fair committee had a successful meeting on agricultural components and continues to receive positive feedback.

The Ken Palmer Memorial Scholarship Contest is available to young people in the community.

Youth Day for 4th graders at the fair is scheduled for Thursday and includes homeschool, private, and public schools.

Highlights of the fair include agricultural demonstrations, contests, local Bedford history components, vendors, concerts, a car show, fireworks, a community expo, and the Midway.

b. Marketing & Production

Reforestation through NRCS programs can greatly benefit farmers seeking to replace trees on hillside slopes.

1. Farmer's Market updates

Forest hosted 50 vendors, and the market has been visited by 1,600-1,800 patrons in the past two weeks. Currently, there is a waiting list for vendors.

Moneta is averaging thirteen vendors and 100-150 patrons, and the library has also seen an increase in patrons.

Montvale will hold a market this weekend.

Farm Bureau will pass out cheese and yogurt in recognition of Dairy Month.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Mr. Fellers has decided not to proceed with the forestry department regarding his acreage.

d. Public Relations

Ms. Armstrong explained the limitations of using Bedford Grown as the basis of the committee.

Potential ideas being considered are drone photography, a monthly agricultural podcast, a newsletter, and postcards.

Please share feedback with the committee and remember to share the contact information for Bedford Grown:

bedfordcountyag@gmail.com and utilize **#bedfordcountyVAag** when posting pictures.

(9) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

Chairman Powers contacted Joe Guthrie, Commissioner of Agriculture, regarding farm use tags. Mr. Guthrie agreed there was miscommunication between the parties, and he is working to provide clarification.

Chairman Powers shared his position on the Commissioner's Veterinary Advisory Board with the group. He was selected due to his role on the Ag Board and his knowledge of agriculture issues, concerns, and practices in our region. Chairman Powers brings a unique perspective to the table, representing the agricultural sector, unlike the animal science specialists.

Chairman Powers had the opportunity to represent the Ag Board in a conversation with Del. Erik Zehr, who visited Powers Tractor. His visit to the shop facilitated discussions on various governmental topics.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

8:43 pm