



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

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); Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large); Matt Baumgardner (At-Large); Sam Gardner (At-Large); Ken Newman (At-Large); Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large)

Absent:

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

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Josh Powers, Johnny Divers, Carolyn Fellers

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

(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. June 5, 2024

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the June 5, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Mr. Newman to approve the meeting minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

FY 23-24 has been closed out and the County will begin the budget process this Fall.

Hurricane Debby is expected to bring heavy rain, averaging 4-7 inches and the County has response preparation in place.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The TEVA building in Forest has been sold to a solar manufacturer, who is expected to bring about 104 jobs.

Well Farm Meats has withdrawn its grant application with the Tobacco Commission due to insurmountable timing conflicts between the requirements and the project's practical needs.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker reiterated that the heaviest rainfalls have shifted, and our area is to expect 4-6 inches of rain.

Several counties received the designation of the Drought Declaration requested from The Board of Supervisors.

The Sunbelt Ag Expo is scheduled for October 15-17, 2024, and the County winner this year is Bass Sod Farm.

Becoming a 4-H All-Star is an intensive process and Samantha Akenhead was chosen as one of Virginia's newest All-Stars.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

There will be a meeting tomorrow evening at 7 p.m. at Cilantro's restaurant in Moneta. The meeting will discuss a tour at 5 Pillar Meats in Farmville on August 31st at 3 p.m. Due to the weather, this meeting may be canceled. Mr. Gardner will email information on the tour.

The Farm Bureau warehouse is now available online and offers direct shipping to your location. Farm Bureau is currently seeking resolutions. Please bring ideas for discussion at the September Ag Board meeting. These will be presented at the Farm Bureau meeting the first week of October. Mr. Baumgardner spoke of a farm being buzzed by a drone, which sent 150 steers into the road at New London, causing damage to the fence and property. This incident, along with the increasing deer population, would make beneficial topics for a resolution.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

The Blue Ridge Bee Festival will take place on September 14th from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Falling Creek Park, and admission is free.

2. School Ag Programs update

The National FFA Organization has reached a significant milestone with 1 million members, making it the largest youth organization worldwide.

FFA Camp was an impactful week for Liberty and Staunton River students.

SMLCA FFA had a successful showing and was very active at the FFA State Convention, despite being a new program.

Staunton River will have a new FFA teacher this Fall.

All FFA & 4-H Clubs have been active in planning and site preparation for the County Fair.

3. County Fair Report

Posters are available for placement in local businesses to promote the fair. Ms. Powers highlighted some of the fair sponsors and their investment in the fair. The Ken Palmer scholarship will be awarded.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer's Market updates

The Forest Market currently attracts 1,600-2,200 patrons per week. All booth spaces are taken; therefore, attending the Moneta Market is suggested.

Moneta currently serves 150-200 customers at the market, but more produce is still needed.

Signs and posters have been removed from the area and cannot be found anywhere.

There are no updates to share on the Montvale and Bedford Market.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Halifax County Board of Supervisors were asked to halt solar development. The supervisors decided to place a moratorium on applications for solar projects until further studies could be conducted.

d. Public Relations

Media Squach is working to create a logo for the website and podcast to showcase Bedford County Agriculture. The first podcast will be on August 15, and it will highlight the Bedford County Fair.

(9) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

Due to a phone call from a BOS member, Dr. Gardner questioned if the Agricultural Board had a stance on commercial solar generation facilities. It was discovered that a letter had been written a couple of years ago, and Mr. Baker will send a copy of the letter to Dr. Gardner. Chairman Powers drafted a letter to the State, and Ms. Powers will forward it to Dr. Gardner, who will then pass it on to the Board.

Bedford Get Together will dedicate the Centertown Mural project on August 18th at 5 p.m. in Centertown Park. A Vietnam Memorial will be constructed in Bedford in front of the courthouse to honor the 12 men who lost their lives.

ADJOURNMENT

8:27 pm