



Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, December 4, 2024
7:00 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); Sam Gardner (At-Large); Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large)

Absent: Ethan Tanner (District 5); Matt Baumgardner (At-Large); Ken Newman (At-Large); Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large)

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong, Justin Stauder, Scott Baker

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Johnny Divers, Carolyn Fellers, Josh Powers, Courtney Gobezie, Caitlyn Trask, Ethan Jackson

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES - November 6, 2024

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the November 6, 2024, meeting minutes, as corrected. Ms. Powers moved, seconded by Mr. Gardner to approve the meeting minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Construction of the Solid Waste Scale House began last week and is expected to be completed in ninety days.

A grant from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has been received to aid in litter control across the county. Litter kits include pickers, safety vests, gloves, trash bags, and hand sanitizer and are available for groups to use by contacting the main line at the landfill.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Governor Youngkin announced the Pre-Proposal and application dates for the Food Access Grant Program. The VFAIF program provides grants from \$10,000 up to \$50,000, to support business development, construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, or expansion. Eligible grant recipients include grocery stores, small food retailers, and innovative food retail projects in low-income communities that experience low access to fresh food.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

The farewell party for Mary Beth Martin is December 5, from 4-6 p.m.

The process of hauling hay bales to the Western region is ongoing. Funding through the Tobacco Commission will reimburse truckers and the possibility of independent trucking companies working with individual farms. Curt Martin is helping with donations and hauling tractor-trailers to the region.

The Cannery has processed approximately 1,000–1,100 quart cans of venison stew, with one additional batch being canned before the end of the year.

Teachers and students at New London Elementary were shown a demonstration of making applesauce, and many were newly familiarized with the Cannery.

Dr. Gardner talked about the costs associated with the cans used for packaging the stew, as well as an update on the Community Health Foundation's efforts to secure a grant for obtaining enough cans to pack the donated meat. Mr. Baker will follow up and provide an update next month.

Ronnie Gross can offer thousands of pounds of leftover apples and would like to see these processed at the Cannery.

Mr. Baker mentioned that the gleaning volunteers from the Society of St. Andrew are aging or have physical limitations, and youth groups or youth organizations could potentially take their place.

(6) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

Mr. Gardner did not have any updates to share.

(7) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

2. School Ag Programs Update

Ms. Tomlinson is currently attending the National Ag Teacher's Conference in Texas.

Two Chapters, approximately twenty students, attended advocacy training in preparation for meeting with legislators in February.

Fruit sales are currently underway, with delivery scheduled for next week. Poinsettias and hams are available for purchase through Ms. Tomlinson.

Liberty & Smith Mountain FFA both participated in Deer Drive 2024, with Liberty being featured on WFXR News.

3. County Fair Report

Ms. Powers thanked the County employees and representatives present for their support of the fair.

The Fair Board has been informed that the Board of Supervisors does not support using Falling Creek Park for the 2025 fair. This comes just a week after a positive meeting was held in County Administration. Additionally, they do not intend to pursue a relationship to host the county fair on county-owned land. It was noted that the 2024 fair was an outstanding success with no negative feedback; however, the BOS stated that they don't feel it's right anymore.

The Board of Supervisors held meetings with private landowners to discuss potential locations for the fair without consulting the fair board. These suggestions were then passed on to the Fair Board. Since the Fair Board is a separate 501(c)(3) organization, the Board of Supervisors does not have the authority to direct its work, nor have they taken an interest in its operations.

The Fair board remains dedicated to hosting a fair and is currently taking inquiries, but it may not be listed as the Bedford County Fair. They find it increasingly difficult to trust that their relationship with the Board of Supervisors will remain consistent or allow them to manage their resources effectively.

The Fair Board will attend the Board of Supervisors meeting on Monday. Since the Board of Supervisors has rejected the county fair's request to make a formal presentation, communication will be during public comments. Ms. Powers has asked anyone who has a relationship with a supervisor to discuss their decision and consider the opinions of the constituents.

b. Marketing & Production

Ms. McIntyre attended the Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference. Networking and useful resources were gained to improve each of the markets.

The Forest Farmer's Market hosted fifty vendors last month for a very successful day. On December 14, sixty vendors will be on-site, and the middle section will be utilized.

There is no update on the November 30 Holiday Market at Montvale. Communication has been ineffective.

The Bedford Market will host an evening Holiday Market on December 7, 5-9 p.m. to coincide with the tree lighting.

New applications are being completed and will be mailed next week.

Coyote Lottery: there is no update on the number of coyotes killed to date.

Doe Reduction:

2023 - September 2 to December 4, a total of 319 deer were harvested, resulting in 9,550 pounds of meat.

2024 - September 7 to December 4, a total of 666 deer were harvested, resulting in 19,009 pounds of meat.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

Dr. Gardner addressed the loss of prime farmland throughout the country, including Virginia, based on recent articles he has reviewed. He emphasized the importance of the Board promoting the preservation of this valuable resource. Dr. Gardner also discussed the concept of critical mass, explaining where a segment of any industry declines to a low level and the providers of services and supplies to that industry can no longer meet their income needs.

Dr. Gardner will provide Chairman Powers with the documentation, and a letter will be drafted and sent to all committee members before being forwarded to the Board of Supervisors. At the January meeting, a determination will be made if the letter is to be sent to other individuals.

Chairman Powers asked for a motion to move forward. Dr. Gardner moved, seconded by Ms. Powers.

Adopted Unanimously

Mr. Fellers mentioned a database published by UVA regarding solar energy. When a county is listed, all solar projects within that county populate.

Mr. Fellers mentioned signing a conservation agreement twenty years ago this month.

d. Public Relations

The committee met in November to plan the upcoming year, focusing on monthly podcasts with Media Squatch.

Their Facebook page, Bedford County Virginia Agriculture, highlighted National Cookie Day and emphasized sourcing cookie ingredients from local producers.

Please remember to like, share, and listen to the Podcasts as this allows recognition of agriculture in the County.

December's podcast guest is the Cannery.

(8) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

Chairman Powers addressed the pressure from Richmond to remove solar and renewable energy decision-making from the county. He will share a letter he received from Chairman Tuck, which has a differing viewpoint on solar energy. A visit to Richmond by Bedford County landowners to discuss this issue may be forthcoming.

Chairman Powers is celebrating the 25th anniversary of his cancer diagnosis as a survivor.

The Tanner family is welcoming their fourth child this month.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

7:59 pm