



Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, February 5, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (District 1); Joy Powers (District 2); Don Gardner (District 3); Ethan Tanner (District 5); Melody Divers (District 6); Pete Fellers (District 7); Matt Baumgardner (At-Large); Ken Newman (At-Large); Lindsay Tomlinson (At-Large); Dorothy McIntyre (At-Large)

Absent: Chuck Grove (District 4); Sam Gardner (At-Large); Scott Baker

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong, Justin Stauder

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

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 – December 4, 2024

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the December 4, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Mr. Newman to approve the meeting minutes.

Adopted Unanimously

(4) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Baumgardner made a motion to keep current officers in place: Chairman Powers, Dr. Gardner, and Mrs. McIntyre. Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Mr. Tanner.

Adopted Unanimously

Education & Events Committee:

Joy Powers, Chairman

Melody Divers

Lindsay Tomlinson

Marketing & Production Committee:

Matt Baumgardner, Co-Chairman

Ken Newman, Co-Chairman

Sam Gardner

Dorothy McIntyre (Farmer's Markets)

Chuck Grove

Land Protection & Conservation Committee:

Pete Fellers, Chairman

Ethan Tanner

Public Relations Committee:

Melody Divers, Chairman

Dorothy McIntyre

Joy Powers

Government Policy & Relations Committee:

Chuck Grove, Chairman

Ethan Tanner

Joy Powers

(5) ADOPTION OF 2025 MEETING CALENDAR

Chairman Powers called for a motion to accept the meeting calendar as submitted. Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Ms. Powers.

Adopted Unanimously

(6) GUEST SPEAKER – Thomas Harris, Peaks of Otter Beekeepers

(7) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Mr. Stauder discussed the land use program to confirm that the program is not going away. He shared the Commissioner of Revenue's paperwork and process and the timeline for notices and how agriculture is defined by her office.

He also discussed the new urban beekeeping ordinance and how that come to be. Before the ordinance, urban beekeeping was not allowed in urban areas of the County. This new ordinance came about following a neighbor's complaint which then led to the adoption of an ordinance to allow beekeeping in residential areas, but with specific parameters. Discussion then turned to beekeeping practices and concerns that the parameters are too narrow, and the Board then asked for staff to re-evaluate the ordinance and potentially expand the parameters to allow for more hives on residentially zoned property.

(8) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

There is currently no information to share.

(9) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

We have been able to send some hay to farmers affected in SW VA. Wright Brothers Farm sent three tractor trailer loads in late December and Steve Wilkerson has sent one or two loads in the past month. While the need has decreased, there may still be an opportunity if folks want to donate. They can touch base with Mr. Baker to help coordinate.

A concern was expressed to Mr. Baker regarding structures on farms that are in a residential zone. What this person shared was that if there are no structures on a farm that is zoned residential and that farm wants to construct a building, they are unable to use the ag exemption for permitting and must follow the same rules as a non-farm entity putting up a building or other structure. He said he believes that if there already was a structure on the farm, the county would allow some exemption if they wanted to increase the size of that building. The producer asked that Mr. Baker bring this to the board's attention in case the Board wanted to discuss this.

(10) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

April 29th - Estate Planning Informational Meeting - location and details to be announced.

Bedford County Farm Bureau is teaming up with Botetourt County to host an informational meeting on the effects of solar on agricultural land. Details are forthcoming.

The local Farm County Bureau visited legislators in Richmond on Monday, February 3rd.

FB President, Amy Johnson, recently represented Bedford County in San Antonio, TX

Scott Sink from Franklin County is the new president of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation and Robert Mills from Pittsylvania County is the new Vice President.

Bill HB2438-Mandate Statewide Standards for Solar Facilities - currently in the Senate. Chairman Powers will follow up by sending a letter to each of the senators.

Ms. Powers and Ms. Divers will attend the Bureau Young Farmers Winter Expo on February 22nd. The panel will discuss working with local government and the Board of Supervisors.

The FB Women's State meeting is upcoming, and details will follow.

(11) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

2. School Ag Programs Update

Two Chapters, approximately 20 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.

Ms. Tomlinson mentioned all FFA students in Bedford County will be attending the Board of Supervisors meeting on Monday, February 10th for FFA Proclamation.

FFA students have been preparing for contests in the Falling Creek conference room and are benefiting from the agricultural education provided.

Students participated in FFA & 4-H Day at the Capitol, where they had the opportunity to speak with delegates and senators, sparking enthusiasm among several students.

FFA students in the Floral Design classes are assisting the Night to Shine pageant by making 140 boutonnieres and corsages for the event.

Middle Schoolers are selling strawberries.

FB Women are sponsoring books for Ag Literacy Week in March.

Ms. Tomlinson serves as the Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators President and has traveled for conferences. She will host the 2026 Virginia Association of Ag Educators Conference in Bedford.

3. County Fair Report

The Fair Board is currently examining possible locations for the 2025 fair and once a site is located, programming and fundraising will progress.

The Virginia Association of Fairs was attended and two students from the County won 5th place in the scholarship contest and one student represented well with the Ms. VAF pageant.

b. Marketing & Production

Forest Farmers Market – the scheduled market in January was canceled due to weather.

An organizational meeting is being held on the 2nd Wednesday in March.

Thirty vendors are currently registered for the upcoming season.

Moneta Farmers Market - an organizational meeting will be held in April.

Six vendors are currently registered for the upcoming season.

Montvale Market – markets will be held once a month in connection with a concert series on the 4th Saturday of each month from April through October.

Bedford Farmers Market – no updates are available currently.

Campbell County is considering starting a market on Highway 29.

Ms. McIntyre is teaching a class on Friday on how to start and budget a market. She is attending a regional meeting the following week with discussions and updates on markets.

Coyote Lottery: 52 have been recorded to date.

Dr. Gardner provided a hand-out discussing the need for farmers to have irreplaceable prime farmland. It was emphasized that attending the Board of Supervisors meeting to express gratitude to the supervisors for the ongoing efforts to protect Bedford County land from solar farms would be beneficial.

Pennsylvania farmers are experiencing crop damage from deer. Policies are being pursued to offer grants to companies that process meat.

Four Counties in Maryland started a doe reduction program offering \$3,000 in prizes and 300 deer were killed.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

A bill in Richmond to raise tax credit money was tabled.

Blue Ridge Land Conservatory workshop - February 18th at the Peaks room of the Bedford Central Library

d. Public Relations

Please remember to follow Bedford County Agriculture.

A total of 33,000 views was noted for the past twenty-eight days.

Dr. Gardner's story was posted on the FB page.

The podcasts present opportunities, and the crew is thankful for Media Squatch and their continued service.

(12) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

Mr. Newman received a call from VDACS and learned that Darling Ingredients is closing operations in Harrisonburg.

The Newmans are the proud owners of the former Gunnoe Sausage plant.

Mr. Baumgardner mentioned that the sign-up for hay insurance can be purchased through February 14th.

Chairman Powers suggested to form a Legislative Committee that will work with local and state representatives on issues.

Chairman Powers asked for a motion to form a Legislative Committee. Ms. Powers moved, seconded by Mr. Tanner

Adopted Unanimously

(13) ADJOURNMENT

8:38 pm