



**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, March 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*); Lindsay Tomlinson (*At-Large*); Sam Gardner (*At-Large*: **arrived at 7:27pm**)

Absent: Chuck Grove (*District 4*); Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*); Ken Newman (*At-Large*)

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong, Justin Stauder, Scott Baker, Niki Feazell

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Johnny Divers, Josh Powers

(1) CALL TO ORDER

- Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 6th, 2025

- Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the March 6th, 2025, meeting minutes, indicated correction needed to change the meeting time to 7:00 p.m. via Pam Armstrong.
Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Ms. Powers to approve meeting minutes as amended. Adopted Unanimously.

(4) PROCLAMATION APPLE BLOSSOM MONTH

- No motion taken, as agenda item not discussed due to lack of available information at meeting. Item has been discussed by herself and staff to present a proclamation for Ag Board to review, then present to Board of Supervisors. This will be presented at the April 2 Ag Board meeting.

5) SPECIAL GUESTS RECOGNITION

- Though not on the agenda, Chairman Powers announced special guests who were present be recognized - members of the Smith Mountain Lake Christian Academy FFA Chapter. Chapter President Emma stated their high school Chapter is entering year three and additionally, the Middle School Chapter was added two years prior, increasing membership from 12 to 38 members. SMLCA FFA Chapter is one of three in Commonwealth of Virginia in its entirety for private Christian schools FFA. SMLCA FFA has been contacted by 13 additional private schools needing help to establish FFA chapters throughout the state since becoming an established Chapter. National Ag week begins March 18. SMLCA FFA will host its Ag Week events March 24-28.

(5) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

- Assistant County Administrator Justin Stauder followed up on the previous meeting's beekeeping ordinance discussion regarding residentially zoned properties. The Board of Supervisors sent an initiating resolution back to the Planning Commission to reconsider the ordinance with staff recommendations, to axe the lot size and hives requirements. Making the by-right accessory use to residential properties. Planning Commission voted (03/04/2025) 4-2 not to move forward with any proposed recommendations. The requested changes will go back to Board of Supervisors to see if they want to move forward or initiate their own

resolution to modify. The hope was that the Planning Commission would take care of it. Resolution should be on the Board of Supervisors agenda the first week of May.

- Chairman Powers stated additionally both the Ag Board and Board of Supervisors had the beekeepers come in previously; beekeepers did not attend planning commission meeting. Board had no other option but to send resolution back due to protocol. Justin will provide update once resolution comes back up on Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors agenda and if it will be a public hearing or can speak during public comments.
- Information regarding biosolids was presented to planning commission 03/04/2025, details were not available, but action did pass unanimously. Mr. Gardner then spoke on a letter that he wrote (*attached*) and presented to the Board of Directors of the Farm Bureau. Letter asked the Board of Directors to allow changing the designation from on-farm storage to routine storage at the direction of DEQ. Farm Bureau Board of Directors did vote to support storage change. Mr. Gardner then asked that the Ag Board endorse same concept that allows safe and efficient way to handle biosolids in an environmentally friendly way. *Motion to support moved by Mr. Baumgardner, seconded by Ms. Powers. Adopted Unanimously.*

(6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

- Economic Development is working on ad to be included in “This is Bedford” magazine due to be sent out with the Bedford Bulletin in late April. The ad will focus on FFA and growing our future for Bedford County.
- Pam addressed board stating company contacted her inquiring about possible cold storage available for beef tallow within the county for multiple pallets. Several local farmers were mentioned. Scott Baker stated he would contact Pam and provide additional information of possible options. Pam will follow up with the company and make connections for them.

(7) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

- Scott Baker presented updated information for current 4-H Agent job opening. Position is currently in internal transfer process. Position will be opened across state initially to internal applicants for possible transfer. Mr. Baker stated there is some internal interest currently. If that does not work out, position will be open to general application from the state. Due to current internal interest, Scott is hoping to have an update regarding the open position soon.
- Preparations for 4-H camp are underway. Teen interviews are currently being held. Volunteers are helping to keep process moving forward.
- Thrive Outside Festival will be held again this year on the first Saturday of April. Co-op Extension will be present.
- The Soil and Water Conservation District purchased a pull behind poultry litter spreader. The new spreader is having to be built, so Mr. Baker was unsure if district currently had spreader, or would soon have it once completed. Spreader will be available as a rental unit to those in district. Rental rates have been set as far as Mr. Baker knew but was unaware of those amounts at time of meeting. The district does have two no-till drills that are heavily utilized and currently available as well to those in the district.

(8) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

- No Young Farmer reports
- Farm Secession Tax Strategy meeting scheduled for April 29, 2025, 6:00 p.m. at Bedford Moose Lodge. Please RSVP to Farm Bureau at least a week prior as meal will be provided.
- April 4-6 Women’s Leadership conference being held in Short Pump.
- Farm Bureau will be forwarding letter of support for Mr. Gardner to Board of Supervisors regarding allowing change designation from on-farm storage to routine storage for biosolids.

(9) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

2. School Ag Programs Update - Lindsay Tomlinson

- **FFA Activities**

- Broken up FFA week activities due to weather. Most FFA Chapters within county were still able to participate during FFA Week February 15-22. Additional FFA week activities bumped to National Ag Week. Drive tractor to school day, along with teacher appreciation day will both be held during Ag week.
- Storm Leadership Conference at Graves Mountain Lodge, March 18-19.
- State Judging VAAE Officer Team, Virginia FFA Governing Board and Advisory Board, March 18-19.
- The Virginia Cooperative Council's (VCC) Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education (VICE), March 21-23.
- FFA contests rally being held March 12 at Old Dominion Ag Complex in Chatham, VA.
- Beef Expo coming up.
- Central VA Livestock Show may have new venue in 2026.

3. County Fair Report

- Traditional Fair not being held for 2025. Smaller fair events will be held throughout the year for 2025.
- Fair Committee has developed official partnership with Centerfest.
- Committee is hoping to be able to hold youth livestock show and equine event independently during 2025.

b. Marketing & Production

1. Farmer's Market updates

- Forest Market held March 8.
- New application process launching end of April 2025 for market vendors.
- Moneta Market vendor meeting to be held on April 10

2. Coyote Lottery: 81 have been recorded to date.

- Lottery runs through March 31.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

- Scott Baker referred county resident to Pete Fellers. Resident has 160 acres on southside of county and is currently overwhelmed with the upkeep. Mr. Fellers referred resident to correct contact for potential land easement agreement.
- Land Preservation event at Claytor Nature Center. Trish Cerulli, who created a non-profit, wants more Ag involvement at Claytor Nature Center. Claytor Nature Center is currently closed to public. Her non-profit is currently trying to save center as it is owned by University of Lynchburg.

d. Public Relations

- Meeting was held at Town Kitchen & Provisions. Podcast outline for 2025 is on track, with looking into 2026 as well. Goal of the podcast is to reach all aspects of Ag across the county.
- Upcoming podcast with the Bedford Urban Garden, along with Ms. Anne the beekeeper.
- Additionally, a customer spoke with the Divers and recommended getting the Ag Board and members connected to the Public Library system potentially having a panel established to get more of the local community involved with the Ag culture in the county. Looking for additional ideas that could help recommendation coming to fruition.

e. Government Policy & Relations

- General Assembly Session held, HB2438 failed 7-7-1. No majority was determined. General Assembly will continue to push HB2438 to pass.

- Bill moved forward through General Assembly stating CTE instructors are no longer required to have an education degree going forward. Law will open hiring standard that will help fill the current vacancies.
- On March 4 Bedford Chamber of Commerce held Legislator Breakfast. Delegate Tim Griffin and Senator Peake were both present. Virginia had another good year regarding the budget, just keep in mind that windfall will not last, and potential statewide budget cuts could begin to happen.
- Mr. Stauder asked if the Government and Land Protection committees were going to be combined or kept separate. By-laws changes are required in order to add a committee which requires approval by the Board of Supervisors. Government Policy and Relations committee can be added once approved by the Board of Supervisors.

(10) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

- The Farm Bureau Young Farmers Winter Expo was scheduled to be in Franklin County last month. Due to weather the event was canceled. Summer Expo will be held in Franklin County.
- Virginia Cooperative Extension summer paid internship program will be available again in 2025. Open to rising juniors and seniors in college.

(11) ADJOURNMENT

8:10 pm.

- *Motion moved by Mr. Don Gardner, seconded by Ms. Powers.*