



Minutes
Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, April 2, 2025
7:30 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*); Lindsay Tomlinson (*At-Large*; **arrived at 7:39**); Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*); Ken Newman (*At-Large*) Sam Gardner (*At-Large*)

Absent: Chuck Grove (*District 4*); Matt Baumgardner (*At-Large*); Pam Armstrong, Justin Stauder, Scott Baker

Staff Present: D.W. Lawhorne; Niki Feazell; Kent Robey

Guests: Mickey Johnson, Johnny Divers, Josh Powers (**arrived at 7:42**), Courtney Gobezie, Katelynn Trask; Soil & Water Conservation District Glen Witt (Chairman), Terri Bollinger (District Operations Mgr.), Sheri Barringer (Associate Director), Dalton Karnes (Conservation Tech.), Jaret Tuck (Conservation Tech.)

(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. Newman moved, seconded by Ms. Powers, to approve the agenda. Adopted Unanimously

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 5, 2025

- Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the March 5th, 2025. Mr. Tanner moved, seconded by Ken Newman, to approve meeting minutes as amended. Adopted Unanimously.

(4) SPECIAL PRESENTATION – Peaks of Otter Soil & Water Conservation District

- Dalton Karnes and Jaret Tuck spoke on behalf of the Soil and Water Conservation District. The Peaks of Otter Soil and Water conservation district is funded predominately through Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Agricultural Cost-share Program (VACS). The program allows Soil & Water to work with local farmers throughout Bedford County to get conservation on the ground.
- The state prioritizes the Stream Exclusion projects throughout the state and funds received through VACS during FY24 allowed Soil & Water to reimburse participants more than \$627,000.00 in cost share funds and issued VA tax credits totaling over \$1,200.00. Additional programs the Water & Soil Conservation District offer are Cover Crops along with a Federal Program the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. The Soil & Water Conservation District also offers community engagement programs such as Me at the Market and a Master Gardener Training opportunity, as well as public school engagement grades K-12 grade.

(5) APPLE BLOSSOM MONTH RESOLUTION

- The Board of Supervisors have previously voted and proclaimed April as Apple Blossom Month. Danny Johnson and Ronnie Gross were both invited to the April 14 Board of Supervisors meeting where the 2025 proclamation will be presented.

(6) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

- Assistant County Administrator D.W. Lawhorne provided an update regarding FY26 budget. A tax hearing will be held at the upcoming April 14 Board of Supervisors meeting stating there will be no tax increases for the upcoming fiscal year. Board Member Mickey Johnson provided an additional update stating how hard the Board along with staff worked to trim the budget and being successful in doing such, which allowed for no increases.
- Kent Robey provided updated stating he and Scott Baker have been working with the stock market to locate places to evacuate cattle, and livestock should there be a local emergency. The Virginia Dept of Emergency Management has stepped up and put Bedford in line to have access to large tractor trailers currently stationed in Richmond, which would allow the movement of heavy cattle. Mr. Robey is working with farmers within the county to establish a plan to move cattle if such an emergency arises. Additional waivers would need to be placed for the landowner and tags would be needed on any moved cattle.

(7) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

- Mr. Johnson provided an update regarding the Board of Supervisors voting not to fund the \$100k agreement with the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) going forward for FY26. The Board of Supervisors are very concerned regarding the potential mandate from Richmond regulating how Bedford County controls solar development. The \$100k will be moved to start a defense fund, along with neighboring counties Campbell County, Appomattox, Amherst and Franklin County.

(8) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

- Melody Divers provided a statement regarding the upcoming Thrive Outside Festival at Falling Creek Park. The Coop Extension will be present. Additionally, there have been public questions regarding mRNA vaccines in prior years and Mr. Baker worked with VA Tech Veterinary program along with the State Coop Extension to established graphics that can be shared with the public that provide current and up to date information on mRNA vaccines.

(9) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

- **No report currently.**

(10) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

i. Upcoming events

- Ms. Powers provided an update regarding the Bedford County Fair organization that has been successful in planning the upcoming fair details and it appears that the fair will be able to be held, but not at a singular location date and time.
- Partnership with Centerfest has been established.
- 2 new board members will be coming on board as well.

ii. School Ag Programs Update - Lindsay Tomlinson

- Ms. Thomlinson had a successful Food for America event bringing education to youth, peers and their entire communities by sharing the world of agriculture.
- Liberty and Staunton River FFA are both getting ready for the upcoming cow working competition. Several farmers have allowed the students to come work cattle on their farms.
- Beef Expo is approaching.
- Central Virginia Livestock show, and sale will be held in May. Nine students will be showing heifers, sheep, and goats. Bedford 4-H will be showing pigs.
- Liberty has three students attending the Leadership conference being held in Washington D.C. this upcoming summer. Liberty will also have their first ever team participating in Envirothon in July 2025.

- Sheri with Soil & Water Conservation District also provided information regarding scholarships available for rising college freshmen.

b. Marketing & Production

i. Farmer's Market updates

- Forest market meeting held in March; turnout was very well attended.
- Next Market, April 12.
- April 26, 15th season opening for Bedford Farmer's Market, 8 a.m. - noon. Acute Design will be offering Bedford Farmer's Market merchandise beginning this year.
- Moneta Market vendor meeting scheduled for the week of April 7. Moneta Market opens May 7, and goes through end of August, Wednesday's 3:00-6:00 p.m.
- Montvale Market will start having monthly farmers markets beginning on April 26 at 2:00 p.m., followed by live music at 6:00 p.m. Food and drinks will be available on site.

ii. Coyote Lottery

- Ended March 29. The total lottery for county was 100.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

- No report currently.

d. Public Relations

- Social media continues to grow.
- Podcast day April 4 will be the 9th episode.
- Society of St. Andrew was most recent guest highlighting their gleaning to end hunger program.
- The committee met with the Bedford County Public Library system. The goal is to visit each public library during 2025. May 12 2:00-3:00 p.m. Moneta Library scheduled event Intro to Ag Board. June 5, Montvale Library is hosting a children's farming event, food will be available on site, 11:30 a.m. – noon.
- Ms. Divers had conversation with leader of Cloverlea regarding Claytor Nature Center. Clovelea wants to be more involved in the community, participating with mission aligned projects that deal with environmental and sustainability being able to support the Ag Foundation. They do want a community present outside of the Nature Center.

(11) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

- Chairman Powers read letter from Board of Supervisors regarding Government Relations Committee. The Board does not plan to consider the requested bylaw amendment creating a Government Relations Committee until next year's 2026 Ag Board bylaw review.

(12) ADJOURNMENT

8:19 pm.