



Minutes

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, June 4, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (*District 1; Chairman*); Joy Powers (*District 2*); Don Gardner (*District 3; Vice Chairman*); Chuck Grove (*District 4*); Melody Divers (*District 6*); Pete Fellers (*District 7*); Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*); Ken Newman (*At-Large*)

Absent: Ethan Tanner (*District 5*); Sam Gardner (*At-Large*); Lindsay Tomlinson (*At-Large*); Matt Baumgardner (*At-Large*); Mickey Johnson (*Guest*); Josh Powers (*Guest*)

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

Guests: Ben Breene – St. Andrews Education & Gleaning Programs; Katelynn Trask, Courtney Gobezie and Samantha Holdren, 4-H Club Leader

(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 – May 7, 2025

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the May 7, 2025, minutes. Mr. Newman moved to approve meeting minutes as amended due to a correction request by Mr. Baker, seconded by Mr. Grove.

Adopted Unanimously.

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Urban Beekeeping has made it through the planning commission and will return in front of the Board of Supervisors next week on the agenda, in addition to several other text amendments to the zoning ordinance. The proposed language going before the board eliminates the total hives capacity that was an issue with the first revision as well as defaults to the state code, regarding maintenance and upkeep of the hives in residential zones.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Director Armstrong updated having provided the PR Committee with a few items they've needed and have been working on.

Mrs. Armstrong also stated having been in discussion with Mr. Baker regarding getting together with the Young Farmers, possibly as a focus group session but that is still in the discussion process.

The recent Moneta Job Fair held at Staunton River High School was a great success. Nearly 30 employers participated on site and 58 job seekers attended.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Seasonal field work is going well, and recent rain amounts have had a positive impact on the hay industry. However, other seasonal crops are being affected negatively due to recent drought conditions.

This year's livestock show has concluded. The Awards Banquet was held two weeks ago and preparations for next year's show will begin the week of June 18th.

(7) GUEST SPEAKERS:

i. GRACE NELLER – MEAT PROCESSING FACILITY BUSINESS CONCEPT

- Ms. Neller was unable to attend due to an unexpected illness.

ii. BEN BREENE, PROGRAMS COORDINATOR, ST. ANDREWS EDUCATION & GLEANING PROGRAMS

- Society of St. Andrews is a national gleaning food rescue origination founded in 1979 by two Methodist Ministers in Big Island (Bedford County) Virginia where the national office remains today. Initially the organization started out by moving semi-truck loads of left over potatoes from local and other farms across the United States. Since then, 11 regional offices have opened across 11 different states, mostly in the southern region of the United States, allowing Society of St. Andrews to move fresh produce across all 48 contiguous states.
- The USDA estimates that more than 40% of the food grown in the US is never made available for people to eat—much of it is left in fields after the harvest. Much more is deemed excess or unmarketable because it is not pretty enough. It is plowed over or dumped into landfills, creating harmful greenhouse gases. And after the remaining food is delivered to supermarkets and restaurants, another 133 billion pounds of food is thrown away every year.
- The hunger relief work of the Society of St. Andrew could not be accomplished without the support of many contributors. Numerous foundations, corporations, and organizations.
- Locally, the Bedford, Moneta, Lynchburg, and Forest farmer's markets have participated, with the Forest Farmer's Market participating as far back as 2015. This participation allows local vendors to donate any leftover produce at the end of market days and once a certain pound amount of produce is donated, this allows a tax credit for the local vendor. Since 2015, at least 60,000 lbs. of local produce have been donated to Society of St. Andrews.

(8) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

- The Women's Farm Bureau Committee sponsored Samantha Holdren, 4-H Leader, to attend a livestock judging conference recently held in Harrisonburg, VA.
- Young Farmers Summer Expo, being held in Franklin County. Ms. Powers will attend to represent the Ag Board and how the Ag Board is connected to local government.
- Mrs. Divers shared during the month of June the Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Program participates in the Peanut Butter and Jelly drive. Donations can be collected at local farm bureau's to be donated to local food pantries and summer school programs.

(9) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

1. Upcoming events

i. Bedford County Fair Report

- The Fair Board has been busy working on the event lineup and working alongside Centerfest and other local community groups to allow for more Ag awareness throughout the county.
- The Horse and Livestock shows will be a standalone event at this year's fair, August 30 - 31, at Tom's farm. Local feedback from the community has been great so far.

- The Competition Hall and Expo will be at Centerfest as well, located at the warming center, across from the farmers' market. Caroline calculated between 1,200-1,500 classes within the contest book, which opens a lot of options and potential participation in this year's expo and competition. The fair board is happy to partner with the Central Virginia Business Coalition for expo.

2. School Ag Programs Update

- Lindsay Tomlinson has accepted the Executive Director position at Claytor Nature Center and will no longer be teaching Ag. With her vacancy, three of the four Ag programs within Bedford Public Schools now have vacancies - four of five including SMLCA private school. Interviews are currently being held for Lindsay's position. If the position at Staunton River Middle School is not filled, the program will be eliminated.
- Mr. Baker added along with 4-H camp approaching, so is 4-H Congress in 2-3 weeks. This is for new 4-H members to attend a one-week program at Virginia Tech teaching local teens in a college environment, leadership development as well as life skills. Four local teens will be attending the program this year.
- Samantha Holdren stated they will be partnering with the 4-H club to discuss fair opportunities and put emphasis behind this year's competitions and categories. The meeting is being held on June 16, with the hopes of getting more youth involved.

b. Marketing & Production

- Nothing new to report on marketing.
 - i. Farmer's Market updates**
 - The Moneta Market had great turn out at the June 4 market. 155 customers attended with 13 vendors participating, compared to the 80 customers the previous week.
 - The Forest Market turnout remains great; 1,600 customers attended last week.
 - Women's Committee will be participating in the dairy month and will be handing out yogurt and cheese sticks at local vendors.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

- Mr. Fellers provided an update on the new AEP powerline that is going to be running parallel to the existing line near the Moose Lodge. Mr. Fellers was informed the construction on that line will be delayed. No further information was available.

d. Public Relations

- Mrs. Divers stated the May 8 Podcast featured guest Ethan Tanner, along with Ellis Farms during beef month, focusing on farming with family and leaving a legacy.
- The first Ag Road Show was held at Moneta Public Library on May 12. Rack card ideas are currently in discussion for future road shows to focus on ag marketing and services. Next road show will be held on June 5 at the Montvale Public Library at 10:30 a.m.
- June 9 – 10:00am Mrs. Divers and Brian Martin have been invited to the SML Newcomers Club at Fables & Feathers Winery.
- June 19 - Podcast; interview with the Bedford Urban Garden.
- Facebook page continues to have a good impact, 45,000 views within last 28 days.

(10) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

- No July meeting

(11) ADJOURNMENT

8:20 p.m.