



Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
7:00 p.m.**

Present: Jeff Powers (*District 1; Chairman*), Matt Baumgardner (*District 2*), Don Gardner (*District 3; Vice Chairman*), Doug Arthur (*District 4*), Ethan Tanner (*District 5*), Melody Divers (*District 6*), Pete Fellers (*District 7*), Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*), Sam Gardner (*At-Large*), Ken Newman (*At-Large*), Joshua Leamy (*At-Large*), Johnny Divers (*Guest*), Josh Powers (*Guest*), Mickey Johnson (*Guest*), Brandon Arthur (*Guest*), Grayson Long (*Guest*), Jim McIntyre (*Guest*)

Guest Speakers: Trent Boatwright & Matt Scott with Farm Credit of the Virginias

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong (*Economic Development Director*), Justin Stauder (*Deputy County Administrator*), Scott Baker (*Extension Office Director*), Niki Feazell (*Administrative Assistant*)

(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. Ken Newman moved, seconded by Mr. Matt Baumgardner, agenda approved unanimously by members present.

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – December 3, 2025

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the December 3, 2025, minutes. Mr. Matt Baumgardner moved to approve meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Mr. Ken Newman. Minutes approved unanimously by members present.

(4) GUEST - TRENT BOATWRIGHT & MATT SCOTT, FARM CREDIT OF THE VIRGINIAS

- Trent Boatwright has been with Farm Credit of the Virginias for 6, going on 7 years to date and is based in the Lexington Branch. Matt Scott has been with Farm Credit of the Virginias for 2 years and is based in the Bedford Branch. Both wanted to introduce themselves to the local ag community. Farm Credit of the Virginias' support of agriculture and the rural communities served extends the agricultural credit and financial services. Community engagement ranges from small-scale local efforts to greater regional aid. Also, Farm Credit of the Virginias offer two grant programs to support specific projects: the Charitable Contributions Fund (CCF) grant program and the Agricultural Career Enhancement (ACE) grant program.

(5) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- Current Chairman Powers opened the floor for nominations of 2026 Chairman. Mr. Newman nominated Mr. Jeff Powers to remain 2026 Chairman, seconded by Mr. Baumgardner. Approved unanimously by members present.
 - **Chairman** – Jeff Powers
 - **Vice Chairman** – Don Gardner
 - **Secretary** - Dorothy McIntyre

(6) ADOPTION OF 2026 MEETING CALENDAR

- Chairman Powers asked for motion of approval for 2026 Meeting Calendar as presented. Mr. Baumgardner moved, seconded by Mr. Sam Gardner. *Adopted Unanimously*

(7) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

- Mr. Stauder stated budget season is just about to be wrapped up at the staff level. Capital improvement plans will be taken to the Board of Supervisors and discussed either at the second February meeting or first of March meeting.
- A follow-up regarding the initial work session regarding the Fire & EMS held prior to recent holidays. Second work session is scheduled for next week on February 10th will hold second round of discussions related to planning and outlook for the Fire and EMS system

(8) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

- Mrs. Armstrong stated the next round of the AFID grants is available. The applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on April 30th. These are reimbursable grants up to \$50,000, primarily for capital projects at new and existing food hubs, farmers markets, commercial kitchens, and other value-added facilities used for processing and packaging Virginia-grown products. The county does have matching funds available.

(9) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

- Mr. Baker stated since last meeting, the Bedford Beef Producers Association held their winter educational program at Spring Lake Livestock Market with over 50 attendees. The presenter, Brian Parks with Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance, discussed estate planning and farm transition.
- Co-op Extension will be offering well water testing on April 15th for homeowners on private systems at a cost of \$70, through the water quality lab with Virginia Tech.
- Planning for the Central Virginia Livestock Show is underway, scheduled for May 1–2, 2026 at Lynchburg Livestock Market. Sponsorships and buyers are encouraged to support youth participation and livestock education.
- The Central Virginia Planning District Commission through the CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) program, has decided to study total economy in the 2000 region and wants to include agriculture in this. Region 2000 area consists of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell Co. and the City of Lynchburg. Mr. Baker will assist to help the commission better understand the ag economy within the region.

(10) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

- Nothing new to report for Young Farmers.
- Amy Johnson, Farm Bureau member, traveled to Anaheim California representing Bedford and the State of Virginia at the annual Farm Bureau Convention.
- The Farm Bureau has purchased a grain bin rescue kit.
- Young Farmers Chairman, Josh Leamy, stated membership is currently at 40 and are actively recruiting new members. Members must be 18-40 years old.
- February 26th-28th the Young Farmers Expo is being held in the Colonial Heights area. Events include going to the state legislature and the Virginia Farm Bureau's 100 Centennial Anniversary Celebration.

(11) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

i. Upcoming events

- National FFA Week begins February 21st and will go through the 28th.

ii. School Ag Programs update

- School FFA chapters remain active with Valentine activities and upcoming judging events, including livestock and meats.
- The 4-H program continues to grow, including renewed leadership in the Ag Club and strong participation in the 4-H Shooting Sports Team. Youth recently attended 4-H Day at the Capitol to learn about Virginia government.

iii. County Fair Report

- iv. The Ken Palmer Memorial Scholarship committee has secured May 12th to allow participants with the scholarship to present. The venue is secured, and the committee is working on getting the judges secured.

b. Marketing & Production

- There are no major updates from Marketing and Production; however, farmers interested in MAP Pay insurance should note the deadline is the 15th of this month. Payments related to cattle loss through federal programs have begun processing.

i. Farmer's Market updates

- Dorothy McIntyre will be teaching a multi-state class for market managers.
- The Moneta market season will run May 6 through August 26 with adjusted morning hours. The vendor meeting will be on April 14 at the library. The next Bedford market is February 14 from 9:00 a.m. to noon, vendor meeting is scheduled for March 7th at 6:00 p.m. The Forest December market hosted 48 vendors and more than 1,500 customers. January's market was canceled due to weather. The next market is February 14 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Vendor meeting will be on March 5th at the library 6:00 p.m.

c. Land Protection & Conservation

- Legislative activity regarding land use, solar projects, and preservation policies continues to be monitored. General sentiment indicates continued evaluation of new bills affecting land preservation.

d. Public Relations

- The Bedford County VA Agriculture social media presence has grown significantly, now exceeding 1,200 followers with approximately 68,000 page views in the last 28 days.
- The monthly podcast will resume February 12 featuring local farm, Huddleston Hog and Highland Homestead, where she'll be sharing the recovery story following a fire incident. Producers are encouraged to submit announcements for promotion.

(1) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

- Approximately 630 female deer were donated through the doe reduction program this year. Despite weather-related reductions, venison supply remains strong. The county cannery processed over 4,000 cans this year, with potential expansion to exceed 10,000 cans next year through partnerships with regional food pantries, including Lynchburg Food Pantry.

b. Committee discussion

- Chairman Powers discussed committee opportunities and stated those committees, and their members would be determined and discussed by the next meeting.

(2) ADJOURNMENT

- With no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ethan Tanner and seconded by Mr. Newman. The meeting was adjourned following approval.

Adjourned
7:52p.m.