



# Minutes

**Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board**  
**Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek**  
**1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523**  
**Wednesday, March 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*)

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

**Guests: (non-speakers):** Johnny Divers, Josh Powers, Trent Boatwright and Matt Scott with Farm Credit of the Virginias, Scott Adams

**Absent:** Mickey Johnson (*Board of Supervisors, District 1, Guest*)

**(1) CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the agenda as presented Matt Baumgardner moved, seconded by Sam Gardner, agenda approved unanimously by members present.

**(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 4, 2026**

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the February 4, 2026, minutes. Matt Baumgardner moved to approve meeting minutes as amended with committee discussion correction, seconded by Sam Gardner. Minutes approved unanimously by members present.

**(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

- Justin Stauder presented no report. However, he did have a reminder for early voting beginning Friday March 6, 2026, at the Parks & Rec Center for the April 21 vote.

**(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

- Pam Armstrong reported The CTE (Career and Technical Education) Expo will be held March 18 at Susie Gibson, providing 8th graders with hands-on exposure to career pathways as they select high school CTE courses. Agricultural participants will include Claytor Nature Center, Confident Equipment, Fables and Feathers Winery, and Wild Violet Herbs. Limited additional participation may still be available. All three high schools will attend on a rotating schedule.

**(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT**

- Scott Baker reported registration is now open for the water testing program. Information is available via flyer and online, including a QR code for registration.

**(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT**

- Josh Leamy reported interest has been expressed in organizing a Young Farmers meeting later this month. Attendance at the Winter Expo provided networking opportunities and ideas that may be implemented locally in the coming months.
- Matt Baumgardner reported the Bedford County Farm Bureau Policy Development Meeting is scheduled for March 16 to identify priorities for the coming year. Ag Literacy Week will take place March 23–27, during which the Women's Committee will coordinate community volunteers to read agricultural books (*Farm Boots*, 2026 selection) to elementary students. The Women's Leadership Conference is scheduled for April 10–12.

**(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Committee rosters were distributed with the minutes. Most committees remain unchanged. Ethan Tanner was named Chair of the Education and Events Committee, with Josh Leamy added as a member. Support was offered as needed.

**a. Education & Events**

**i. Upcoming events**

- Fair – August 21–23  
Ken Palmer Scholarship – May 12  
Farmers Market – March 14 (*Bedford and Forest*)
- Vendor Meetings: Upcoming (Forest & Moneta (*next month*))

**ii. School Ag Programs update**

- FFA activities recently concluded with Liberty High School conducting a strawberry sale (delivery scheduled for the following week). Recent contests included livestock judging, though Horse Weekend was canceled. Staunton River and SMLCA participated in events. The equine group is restarting under Kenzie Matter, with a request for donated farm magazines for student projects.
- 4-H clubs have resumed meetings. Efforts are underway to form a youth cattle working team for regional and state competitions. New volunteer leaders have joined, strengthening program support.

**iii. County Fair Report**

- Planning for the County Fair is progressing, with dates set for August 21–23 and a ride company secured, the location is the same this year at Liberty Lake Park. Additional rides and entertainment will expand this year as well with John Hayden helping to coordinate entertainment.
- The Ken Palmer Memorial Scholarship presentation is scheduled for May 12 at the Tribute Center. Coordination continues for the horse and livestock show.

**b. Marketing & Production**

- Nothing new to report. (*Production*)

**i. Farmer's Market updates**

- The February 14 Forest Farmers Market had strong attendance with approximately 25 vendors. The next market is scheduled for March 14. Vendor meetings are planned for Forest and Moneta, with Moneta showing increased full-season vendor participation. Efforts continue to improve market signage. Dorothy will attend the regional meeting next week, including Blacksburg, Salem and Vinton markets. A recent educational class, taught by Dorothy, was also reported as well attended.

**c. Land Protection & Conservation**

- The Piedmont Environmental Council, the land trust for counties north of Charlottesville, supporter Robert Duvall passed recently. His contributions to land conservation efforts, including preservation of historic battlefield property, will be missed.

**d. Public Relations**

- The Bedford County Agriculture Facebook page continues to grow, now exceeding 1,300 followers and reaching over 85,000 people in the past month. Efforts continue to recruit producers to the agricultural directory and promote local farms. The next agricultural podcast is scheduled for March 12, featuring Arden Jones from Great Day Gardens, and ongoing outreach includes promotion of the Ken Palmer Memorial Scholarship.

**(9) OTHER BUSINESS**

**a. Informational items**

- Dr. Don Gardner provided an informational report regarding livestock health risks associated with multi-species grazing practices, particularly the use of sheep for vegetation management at solar facilities within Rockbridge County. Concerns were raised about *malignant catarrhal fever*, a disease carried asymptotically by sheep and goats that is fatal to cattle and certain wildlife. It was noted there is currently no vaccine, testing can be costly and it does not transfer cow-to-cow. Members discussed potential regulatory considerations and the importance of producer awareness.
- Research updates were shared regarding biological controls being studied for spotted lanternfly and tree-of-heaven, including potential insects, mites, and fungi under review as control methods.

**b. Committee discussion**

- Discussion was held regarding a potential request to the Board of Supervisors for financial support of the Central Virginia Livestock Show. It was reported that several supervisors expressed preliminary support and suggested a formal request from the board. Consideration was given to how funds might be distributed, including use for premiums, awards, or general participant support. Concerns were raised about fairness among participating counties and ensuring equitable distribution of funds.
- *Chuck Grove made motion to submit a letter to the Board of Supervisors requesting \$5,000 in support of the Central Virginia Livestock Show. Motion seconded by Matt Baumgardner. Motion carried.*
- Additional discussion emphasized the importance of supporting youth agricultural participation, assisting with expenses incurred by participants, and encouraging continued program growth. Further discussion emphasized supporting Bedford County youth participants while encouraging financial participation from other counties. Consideration was given to equitable distribution of funds and long-term program sustainability. It was noted that final allocation details could be determined after funding decisions.
- Committee assignments were reviewed. Most remained unchanged with minor adjustments to membership. Members were asked to notify leadership if they wished to change committee assignments. Final approval of committee structure will occur at the next meeting if changes are requested
- **The 2026 Committee Appointments**

Chairman, *Jeff Powers*

Vice Chairman, *Don Gardner*

Secretary, *Dorothy McIntyre*

**Marketing and Production Committee**

*Matt Baumgardner, Chairman*

Ken Newman  
Sam Gardner  
Chuck Grove  
Dorothy McIntyre (Farmers Markets)

**Education and Events Committee**

*Ethan Tanner*, Chairman  
Josh Leamy

**Land Protection and Conservation Committee**

*Pete Fellers*, Chairman  
Doug Arthur

**Public Relations Committee**

*Melody Divers*, Chairman  
Dorothy McIntyre

**Advisors**

Pam Armstrong  
Scott Baker

The Chairman will serve as an *ex officio* of all committees, while the Vice Chairman will serve as an advisor to all committees upon request.

**(10) ADJOURNMENT**

No additional business was brought forward. A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Don Gardner, seconded by Matt Baumgardner.

Adjourned  
7:47 p.m.