



MINUTES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF BEDFORD, VA
Bedford County Administration Ground Floor Training Room
122 E Main Street
Bedford, VA 24523
May 7, 2026
5:30 p.m.

Economic Development Authority:

Present: David Wells (*District 1; Vice Chairman*), Wyatt Walton (*District 3*); Matthew Braud (*District 4*), Kristy Milton (*District 5*), Jimmy Robertson (*District 6*), Jim Messier (*District 7; Chairman*)

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong, *Economic Development Director*, Lauren Thurston, *Business Programs Coordinator*, Niki Feazell, *Economic Development Administrative Assistant*, Patrick Skelley, *County Attorney*, Robert Hiss, *County Administrator*, Whitney Greenway, *Assistant Finance Director*

Board of Supervisors Present: Charla Bansley, *Board of Supervisors, (District 3)*, Edgar Tuck, *Board of Supervisors, (District 2)*

Absent: Vicki Gardner (*District 2*), Mickey Johnson, *Board of Supervisors, (District 1)*

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Messier called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Messier asked for motion to approve agenda as presented. Mr. Braud moved, seconded by Mrs. Milton. *Adopted unanimously.*

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 5, 2026, and April 1, 2026

- Chairman Messier asked for motion to approve March 5, 2026, minutes as presented, Mr. Wells moved, seconded by Mr. Braud. *Adopted unanimously by all other members present.*
- Chairman Messier asked for motion to approve April 1, 2026, Special Called minutes as presented, Mr. Robertson moved, seconded by Mr. Wells. With two abstentions from Mr. Braud and Mr. Walton, due to not being present. *Adopted unanimously by all other members present.*

(4) PRESENTATIONS

A. Proclamation recognizing May 4 - May 8, 2026, as Economic Development Week

- The Bedford County EDA proclaimed May 4–8, 2026, as Economic Development Week in recognition of the vital role economic development plays in supporting job creation, economic growth, workforce opportunities, and quality of life throughout Bedford County. The proclamation also recognized the efforts of the Bedford County Office of Economic Development and the EDA for their work connecting residents, businesses, educators, elected officials, and regional partners to strengthen the local economy and expand opportunity

throughout the region. *Mr. Walton moved to accept presented proclamation, seconded by Mr. Braud. Adopted unanimously by all other members present.*

(5) CLOSED SESSION

Closed pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (29), Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body (specifically, regarding an economic development initiative.)

- At a regular meeting of the Economic Development Authority of the County of Bedford, Virginia held at the County Administration Building on the 4th day of March 2026, Chairman Messier asked for motion to enter closed session. Mr. Wells moved to enter pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (29), seconded by Mr. Walton.
- Mr. Braud made motion to move back into regular session; seconded by Mrs. Milton. Voting Yes: Mr. Wells, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Walton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier, and Mr. Braud.

(6) REPORTS

A. Economic Development Director's Report

- Pam Armstrong discussed follow-up items from the recent joint meeting with the Town EDA and Bedford Water Authority. Members were asked to consider whether a future joint meeting involving all three boards should: be held in addition to regular monthly meetings; or replace a regularly scheduled meeting. The EDA requested that members of the water authority staff and board make a presentation at a regular EDA meeting and that the Town EDA would be invited to attend.
- Staff also requested input regarding scheduling recurring meetings between staff and two EDA representatives, potentially on a mid-year or quarterly basis. Discussion included identifying EDA members interested in serving in that liaison role and determining these meetings should take place two times per year.
- Following discussions with Town representatives, staff met with representatives from Bedford Water and spoke with AEP regarding concerns related to utility rate increases and business impacts.
As a result:
 - Bedford Water and AEP agreed to participate in a business-focused information session. The session will address: Utility rate increases, factors driving rate changes, current infrastructure and operational challenges, common misconceptions, available assistance programs and grant opportunities for businesses, staff are currently exploring dates in September or October, with Amanda Stanley expected to serve as moderator. SEC will also be invited to participate.
 - Staff reported that the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) recently hosted an Export and Manufacturing Day event at the LRBA facility. Approximately six Bedford County businesses attended to learn more about tariffs, export opportunities, manufacturing best practices and available business resources. Participating organizations included SBA, VEDP, Virginia Manufacturers Association (VMA), Genedge. Participating Bedford County companies included: L3Harris, Moore & Giles, Belvac, Catalyst Communications, Surgical Tools, RA Tools.
 - Staff announced plans to partner with the SBDC to host a Cottage Industry Conference on June 3 at the Bedford Welcome Center. The conference will focus primarily on the food industry and cottage-based food businesses. Staff are also coordinating a cross-branding session designed to support the agricultural business community, specifically as it relates to marketing and promotion through farmers markets.

- Following the recent Career & Technical Education (CTE) Signing Day event, staff are working with the school system to organize a CTE and Workforce Readiness Roundtable scheduled for November 3. The roundtable is intended to strengthen workforce partnerships and improve alignment between education and industry needs. Staff reported they are conducting a workforce needs survey within the construction industry to gather information related to workforce shortages, training needs and skills development opportunities.
- Staff announced they will now regularly attend Technical Review Committee (TRC) meetings to provide additional support to businesses, assist companies navigating the planning and development process and improve coordination during project review stages.
- Staff provided an update regarding Air Filter Systems: site grading activities have begun; site plans are expected to be submitted for review within the next several weeks and the project should be ready for EDA review next month. The company has received its land disturbance permit; however, a building permit has not yet been issued.

B. Business Programs Report

- Staff reported continued success with the workforce and industry tour program with high school students, including recent tours of local companies, including Sentry and Belvac. Participating businesses provided on-site tours and presentations highlighting hiring processes, workforce expectations and career opportunities available within their industries. Career coaches provided highly positive feedback regarding this year's tour lineup. Staff noted that the hospital/Centra College tour, along with the most recent industry tour, were considered standout experiences by participants. Staff will soon meet with coaches to begin planning next year's tours. Discussion will include the possibility of offering more localized tours tailored to individual school regions, such as Forest-area business tours for Jefferson Forest students, etc.
- Staff reported strong progress for the upcoming Moneta Job Fair, with 26 businesses currently registered to participate. New Bedford County Business Brew Initiative Coffee will also participate in the event. Additionally: Virginia Career Works is partnering to help promote the fare; and a television advertisement promoting the event is scheduled to air the week prior to the job fair.
- Staff noted that the upcoming week would include several major events: The Business Appreciation Event at Zimmermans; and CTE Signing Day the following day. Members were encouraged to attend the Business Appreciation Event, and it was noted that Charla would be speaking during the CTE Signing Day program.
- Staff advised that additional updates would be forthcoming regarding County signage initiatives; and the childcare grant program.

C. Monthly Financial Report

- The EDA has received \$787,695.97 in VBRSP grant funds and \$489,325.89 in Tobacco Commission grant funds related to the active project.
- One outstanding grant reimbursement remains in the amount of \$196,355.25.
- Bedford County's contribution to date totals \$259,342.72. Additional county reimbursement requests are expected, and staff will wait until all submissions are completed before transferring additional county funds, as the contribution amount will increase.

- Once all project reimbursements are received and the project is finalized, staff anticipates transferring additional funds into the investment account. However, no transfer will occur until the project is fully completed and all reimbursements have been processed.
- Staff reported that preparations are underway for the preliminary audit, which is scheduled to begin during the last week of May. The final audit process will occur in August, consistent with the normal annual audit schedule.

D. Monthly Accounts Payable Report – (March and April bills that have been paid)

EDA	
EDA Mileage – (March/April) meeting	\$320.88
Bedford Center	
Town of Bedford Power – CVCC – (March/April)	\$11,034.59
Peaksview Landscaping – (March/April)	\$1,054.84
BRWA (March/April)	\$347.43
New London	
Southside Electric – (March/April)	\$1,321.32
Peaksview Landscaping – (March/April); lawn maint.)	\$3,205.65
Johnson Controls (April; 5 yr. Shell Building Inspection)	\$2,688.74
Washington Street	
Peaksview Landscaping (March/April); lawn maint.)	\$815.42
TOTAL:	\$20,788.87

(7) TOWN OF BEDFORD

- Staff reported that a prospect is currently evaluating two potential sites for development: Lot A at Bedford Center (37 acres) and the Little Otter site (50 acres). The prospect plans to retain an engineering firm to assess both properties and determine which site is best suited for the project.

(8) BEDFORD CENTER FOR BUSINESS

- No new business to report.

(9) MONTVALE CENTER FOR COMMERCE

A. Authorization of the sale of lot I-1 to AEP

- Staff reported that during a closed session in December 2025, the EDA approved the sale of parcel TM# 87A-1-15G/RPC# 90514440 (*Lot I-1*), approximately 9.87 acres located in Montvale Center, to Appalachian Power Company for \$395,000.
- The property is intended for the development of an electrical substation.
- An option agreement was executed on January 08, 2026, and Appalachian Power Company plans to close on the property in June 2026.

- Staff requested authorization for the Chairman to execute the deed and all related closing documents in accordance with the approved purchase agreement at the time of closing.

Chairman Messier asked for motion to authorize the sale of parcel TM# 87A-1-15G/RPC# 90514440 (Lot I-1), in Montvale to Appalachian Power Company. Motion was made by Mr. Braud, seconded by Mr. Walton. Voting Yes: Mr. Wells, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Walton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier, and Mr. Braud.

B. Consideration of a waiver for the covenants and restrictions for parcel TM# 87A-1-15G/RPC# 90514440 (Lot I-1)

- Staff clarified that the primary issue related to the Appalachian Power Company property sale was the consideration of a waiver to the existing covenants and restrictions for the Montvale Center property, as the proposed project does not involve construction of a traditional commercial building. Instead, the project consists of a utility substation. Discussion focused on how the EDA's existing covenants would apply to the proposed use. Staff explained that the current restrictions are relatively minimal and largely defer to the County's zoning ordinance requirements. Appalachian Power Company will still be required to obtain a Special Use Permit, and issues such as buffering, landscaping, screening, and other site requirements will be addressed through that process.

Mrs. Milton made motion to suspend the covenants solely for parcel TM# 87A-1-15G/RPC# 90514440 (Lot I-1), and notify via USPS, all adjacent landowners who were subject to the original covenants, seconded by Mr. Wells. Voting Yes: Mr. Wells, Mrs. Milton, Mr. Walton, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Messier, and Mr. Braud.

(10) NEW LONDON BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

- Haymes has begun site grading activities for Lot 15. Staff anticipates processing an additional reimbursement request to the TRRC and VEDP within the next few weeks.

(11) WASHINGTON STREET PROPERTY

- Elba will execute another lease extension through May 2027. This marks the third extension following the initial lease term. Under the current agreement, Elba may exercise up to two additional one-year extensions at the existing lease rate, for a total of five one-year extension options.

(12) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Childcare Grant Extension Request

- Blue Ridge Montessori School received a \$30,000 matching grant for construction of a playground project totaling approximately \$60,000. Although the project has been fully funded, construction will not be completed by the original May 1, 2026, deadline and is now expected to conclude by the end of June 2026.
- The school submitted a formal extension request and expressed appreciation for the EDA's support. Due to the revised timeline falling near the June 30 fiscal year-end, staff noted there may be a need to carry forward or reallocate funds based on financial requirements. Staff recommended approval of an extension through June 30, 2026, pending guidance from finance regarding proper fiscal year handling of the funds.

pricing differences and sign dimensions. It was noted that FastSigns proposed larger 12-foot signs, while K&K's proposal included 8-foot signs.

Mr. Walton made motion to proceed with FastSigns for all three signs based on the proposal presented, seconded by Mr. Braud. Members commented favorably on the pricing and overall proposal.

C. Budget Discussion

- \$75,000 has been budgeted for new signage projects.
- The budget includes funding for facilitated business roundtables and potential GenEdge sessions, as well as approximately \$3,500 for another strategic planning day with Amanda Stanley, within a total professional services allocation of \$7,000.
- A total of \$92,500 has been allocated for incentives, including a \$50,000 incentive goal and \$10,000 designated for the hotel project.
- Childcare initiatives an additional \$7,500 allocated to BRMS for a training incentive.
- No major or unusual expenditures are anticipated for Bedford Center, New London, or Washington Street projects.
- Staff expect the \$395,000 payment from Appalachian Power (AEP) to be reflected in next year's budget revenues.

Upcoming dates:

May 12 - Business Appreciation Event: 4 – 6 p.m. at Zimmerman's

May 13 - CTE Signing Day: 1:30 – 3 p.m. at Susie G. Gibson auditorium

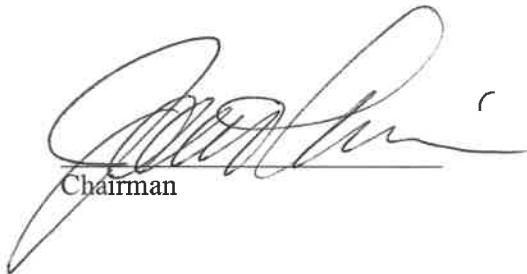
May 28 – Moneta Job Fair: 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Staunton River High School

June 4 – EDA meeting: 5:30 p.m.

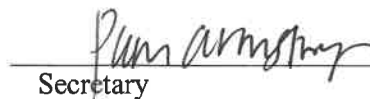
No July meeting.

Motion made to adjourn by Mr. Braud, seconded by Mr. Wells. Unanimous consent to adjourn.

Adjourned 7:37 p.m.



Chairman



Secretary