



Minutes

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, April 1, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (*District 1; Chairman*), Don Gardner (*District 3; Vice Chairman*), Doug Arthur (*District 4*), Pete Fellers (*District 7*), Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*), Ken Newman (*At-Large*), Joshua Leamy (*At-Large*)

Staff Present: Pam Armstrong (*Economic Development Director*), Scott Baker (*Extension Office Director*)

Guests: Bob Davis (*Board of Supervisors, District 6, Guest*), Josh Powers (*Guest*)

Absent: Matt Baumgardner (*District 2*), Ethan Tanner (*District 5*), Melody Divers (*District 6*), Chuck Grove (*At-large*), Sam Gardner (*At-Large*), Justin Stauder (*Deputy County Administrator*), Niki Feazell (*Administrative Assistant*), Mickey Johnson (*Board of Supervisors, District 1, Guest*), Johnny Divers (*Guest*)

(1) CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Powers called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

(2) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended due a date typo and to guest speaker no longer being able to make meeting. Ken Newman moved, seconded by Joshua Leamy, agenda approved as amended unanimously by members present.

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 4, 2026

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the March 04, 2026, minutes. Ken Newman moved to approve meeting minutes, seconded by Dr. Don Gardner. Minutes approved unanimously by members present.

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

- No official Administration report.
- Chairman Powers did provide an update on a committee discussion item from the March 04, 2026, meeting. \$5,000 approved by Board of Supervisors to support youth livestock program. Committee (Scott, Chuck, Chair) to determine fair distribution of funds, prioritizing Bedford County youth and potential future program support.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

- Director Pam Armstrong reported AFID grants due April 30. Potential applicant identified; possible retroactive request may be needed.
- Pam has been asked to speak with Virginia Tech students to discuss agriculture and the connection to economic development. Discussion on role of agriculture as a key industry and need for stronger integration into economic development efforts.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

- Scott Baker reported New USDA, with Virginia Tech managing, grant opportunities available (up to \$100 & \$300/acre for qualifying practices). Incentivizing farmers to

adopt conservation agricultural practices that can boost crop yields, support rural livelihoods, and build resilience against climate change.

- Emergency livestock response training scheduled (May 6, Spring Lake).
- Ongoing agricultural programming and upcoming events shared.
April Farm Tour & Social (April 20, Forest), Native Grass Seminar & Pasture Walk (June 17, Moneta)

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

- Nothing new to report.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

i. Upcoming Events

- Fair scheduled for August 21–23 at Liberty Lake Park, Livestock Show (August 29-30)
- Scholarship contest confirmed (May 12)
- Central Virginia Livestock Show (May 1-2)

ii. School Ag Programs update

- Josh Leamy reported officer elections completed at Staunton River. Liberty Middle School had a successful strawberry fundraiser.

iii. County Fair Report

- Equine and Livestock shows confirmed, competitions will include baking contests, along with arts and crafts. Location and dates confirmed.
- County Fair Facebook page currently has 10,400 followers.

b. Marketing & Production

i. Farmer's Market updates

- Bedford Market is coming up April 11.
- Montvale & Moneta Markets open for season in May.
- March Forest Market was a success. 28-30 vendors participated. Next market scheduled for April 11. Forest Market will open for the season on April 25.
- Active vendors (112) 51% of vendors are from Bedford County
- *No Production report.*

c. Land Protection & Conservation

- Discussion on data centers, tax incentives, and potential impacts on infrastructure and land use.

d. Public Relations

- March's podcast is rescheduled. (April 16) Which will feature Arden Jones discussing women in agriculture.
- Scott Baker will be featured on the April 9 podcast, along with Steve Jones, to discuss the history of the Central Virginia Livestock Show.
- Facebook growth continues.

(9) OTHER BUSINESS

i. Informational items

- A newly identified proposal from the Health & Human Services may introduce regulation and inspection requirements for large animal haul-in facilities. These facilities are commonly used for vaccinations, dehorning, and livestock handling, minor procedures and herd work. Historically, these facilities have not been subject to strict inspection standards, unlike small animal clinics.
- A grant application proposing a shared large animal facility prompted regulators to revisit definitions and oversight. No current regulatory definition exists for large animal haul-in facilities. Overregulation may discourage or eliminate existing services, long-standing, functional farm-based facilities may shut down rather than comply. This would reduce access to veterinary care, directly impacting livestock producers

- Public comment period ends April 8, leaving limited time for response. Many stakeholders (veterinarians, Farm Bureau, cattle/dairy associations) were unaware until recently.
 - Dr. Don Gardner made motion for Bedford County Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board to submit formal comments opposing regulations, seconded by Doug Arthur. Approved unanimously by members present.
 - Information to be distributed for coordinated response.
- ii. Committee discussion**
- No further discussion.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

- No additional business was brought forward. Chairman Powers declared meeting adjourned.

Adjourned
8:44 p.m.