



Minutes

Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board
Peaks Conference Room at Falling Creek
1257 County Farm Rd. Bedford, VA 24523
Wednesday, November 5, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Present: Jeff Powers (*District 1; Chairman*), Joy Powers (*District 2*), Chuck Grove (*District 4*), Ethan Tanner (*District 5*), Melody Divers (*District 6*), Pete Fellers (*District 7*), Dorothy McIntyre (*At-Large*), Sam Gardner (*At-Large*), Matt Baumgardner (*At-Large*), Ken Newman (*At-Large*), Johnny Divers (*Guest*), Josh Powers (*Guest: arrived 7:15*), Mickey Johnson (*Guest: arrived at 7:11*), Courtney Gobezie (*Guest: arrived at 7:04*), Katelynn Trask (*Guest*)

Absent: Don Gardner (*District 3; Vice Chairman*), Lindsay Tomlinson (*At-Large*)

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. Sam Gardner, agenda approved.

Adopted unanimously by members present.

(3) APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – October 1, 2025

Chairman Powers called for a motion to approve the October 1, 2025, minutes. Mr. Matt Baumgardner moved to approve meeting minute, seconded by Mr. Sam Gardner.

Adopted unanimously by members present.

(4) ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Mr. Stauder reported that the Board of Supervisors will hold only one meeting in November and one meeting in December. At the scheduled November 18th Work Session there will be discussion regarding the preliminary Fire & Rescue Master Study results.

(5) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Mrs. Armstrong stated having recently attended the Governors Summit for Royal Prosperity in Hanover County where she learned about Virginia Farm Link. The program is designed to help farmers and landowners facing retirement who want to see their business continue and land stay in production. The program is open to all, whether a beginning or experienced farmer (<https://virginiafarmlink.org/>). There are upcoming events and workshops planned.

(6) COOPERATIVE EXTENSION REPORT

Mr. Baker reported that the Bedford County Beef Producers Association Directors met just prior to tonight's Ag Board meeting and finalized the plans for the January 20, 2026, Educational Program at Springlake Stockyard where the basic of estate planning will be presented.

The USDA is open. Due to the government shut down, there is some confusion regarding availability. They are open Monday-Friday with a very limited number of available services but are asking you to call in advance if needing to be seen.

November 6, 2025, is the last day to submit applications for the VDACS grant for farms that were impacted by hurricane Helene.

(7) BEDFORD COUNTY FARM BUREAU YOUNG FARMERS REPORT

No new Young Farmers report

At the most recent meeting new board members were elected. Taking Jim Turner's position is J.T. Byrne, Eric Morgan was re-elected.

The next annual meeting will be held in Williamsburg, December 2, 2025, highlighting the working lands committee.

(8) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Education & Events

i. Upcoming events

Bedford County Fair Report

No new fair report. 2026 fair meetings have not begun.

ii. School Ag Programs update

Local school FFA Chapters are gearing up for the upcoming fundraiser and fruit sales season.

b. Marketing & Production

i. Farmer's Market updates

Upcoming Winter Markets will be held November 22 with 60 confirmed vendors and December 13 with 55 confirmed vendors currently. Other vendors continue to inquire about dates for next season. Ms. McIntyre will continue updating the applications and dates for next season.

No new Production Report

c. Land Protection & Conservation

The discussion on the effects of data centers on agriculture continued. While largely unregulated, data centers are currently not an allowable use, like solar, but not directly defined in the zoning ordinance. Water resources are not available in some areas to allow usage that is required to operate some data centers. While Smith Mountain Lake is local, AEP would have to allow for a secondary withdrawal permit which would not be feasible. However, multiple other water sources could be potential targets of interest.

It was also discussed to present the information to the Board of Supervisors as an informational courtesy on behalf of the Bedford County Ag Board. Chairman Powers asked for a motion to present information as such, Mr. Grove motioned, seconded by Mr. Tanner.

d. Public Relations

Last month's podcast guest was Eric Layman where all things agritourism was discussed.

Facebook continues to grow with over 1,000 followers with a lot of page engagement.

In the last 28 days there have been 69,000 views, which is up 40% compared to this time last month.

(9) OTHER BUSINESS

a. Informational items

i. State of the Herd 2025 Deer Report

Mr. Baker presented a recap of the 2025 State of the Herd Deer Report, highlighting the current deer population, disease updates as well as the 2024-2025 deer harvest summary.

Hunters reported harvesting 205,759 deer in Virginia, down just 0.4% from the 206,586 deer taken during the same time frame the previous season. This year's total included 101,238 antlered bucks, 665 bucks that had shed their antlers, 13,019 button bucks, and 90,837 does. The 2024–25 deer harvest was up approximately 4% from the last ten-year average of 198,398. These data do not include deer taken on out-of-season, deer kill permits, or those deer hit and killed by vehicles. The special late antlerless seasons (including urban archery) added 2,613 antlerless deer to the total harvest, bringing the final total to 208,372.

The report can be found here: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/media/State-of-the-Herd-2025-Deer-Report.pdf>

The deer management programs within Bedford County continue to help with population control. 222 deer have been turned in this season, so far.

Also, The Peaks of Otter Water and Soil Conservation District currently has an open public bid for a 2012 Dodge Ram 1500 Crew Cab, 4X4, 65k. Sealed bids will be collected through November 14th.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

7:38 p.m.