

## **Augusta County Agriculture Industry Board Minutes**

*Thursday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024; 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Augusta County Extension Office Basement Meeting Room*

Members in attendance: *Kevin Phillips, Brian Riddle, Jeremy Shiflett, John Benner*

*Members Absent: Cole Heizer (with notice), Andrew Crummett (with notice), Sonny Basley (with notice)*

John Benner opened the meeting at 6:00 pm. John stated that Sonny had a last-minute issue come up that prevented him from being able to attend the meeting.

### **Old Business**

John provided a review of the USDA Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and Pasture Range and Forage Insurance Educational Program Held with Farm Credit Knowledge Center at Blue Ridge Community College Plecker Center (BRCC). Attendance was fairly strong at the meeting and it seemed farmers in attendance did gain a greater understanding of both insurance programs. The partnership between the Augusta County Ag Industry Board, VCE, and Augusta FSA helped more people to be in attendance.

Kevin Phillips: Augusta Farm Service Agency (FSA) is seeing a lot more interest from different farms in signing up for the program for 2025. The deadline for NAP sign up is Feb. 15, 2025.

John Benner: As the Ag Industry Board agreed in the September meeting, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) would sign the rental contract and cover the cost of the rental to BRCC. The Augusta Ag Industry Board would reimburse VCE the rental expense. The cost of the rental for the meeting was \$245. John asked the board for approval to submit the forms for Extension to be reimbursed from the Ag Industry Board. The board approved. John stated that he would do so once VCE had processed payment to BRCC and received a receipt for payment.

John shared a thank you card with the board from the Augusta County 4-H Skill-a-thon team for sponsoring the team's trip to Louisville, KY for the National 4-H Skill-a-thon Contest at the North American Livestock Expo. The team was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the contest, behind Wisconsin and Illinois. The Ag Industry board had approved \$250 donation toward the skillathon team's travel expenses.

John also recapped with the board that in September, the board had approved a \$500 sponsorship of the Virginia Cattlemen's Association/Virginia State Dairymen's Association Legislative Steak Fry. The Legislative Steak Fry is set for Feb. 13. The board affirmed this decision.

### **New Business**

Comprehensive Plan: John briefly shared some background information on the 2025-2045 County Comprehensive Plan. The plan is currently in draft through February. To provide feedback and comments to the plan, John asked the Ag Industry Board to review the Agriculture and Natural Resources Sections of the 2014-2015 Comprehensive Plan update. The board reviewed the relevant sections of the document to provide recommendations for updates.

Solar Projects Guidance: The board briefly discussed the increase in interest by solar development companies in Augusta County and its potential impacts on agricultural land.

Hazard Mitigation Plan and Farm Listing: John stated that he working with County Emergency Management to update a listing of farms that are listed in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. John shared a listing of farms that are currently part of the plan. The Ag Industry Board reviewed the list. Kevin Phillips did state that there were several farms that were no longer in operation, or were being operated by another farm. John stated he would work with Emergency Management to update the listing.