

Promoting Agricultural Tourism and Green Space Preservation



Campbell County Department of
Economic Development

January 2013

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Executive Summary

Agriculture is an important component to Campbell County's overall economy, and has deep roots in the County's past. Whereas tobacco was once the dominant crop, modern farms have diversified to include a range of products including cattle and soybeans. In addition, niche crops have made inroads, including grapes/vineyards/wineries and even freshwater prawn. Open space, including both farms and green space, continues to dominate Campbell County despite increased residential and commercial growth in the northern and central sections of the County. Despite the fact that approximately 80% of Campbell County land parcels or approximately 86% of the land area are zoned "Agriculture" and is comprised of farms and green space, concern exists that a number of farms in agriculture areas are not profitable and that growth will swallow valuable farmland. With residential and commercial growth increasing in areas adjacent to Lynchburg and major highways, care must be given to make sure agriculture remains possible well into the future and that high density growth doesn't occur in areas where infrastructure is not available to support that growth.

Campbell County has, over the past 6 years, been the applicant and administrator for Tobacco Commission Agri-business grants where hundreds of thousands of dollars have been delivered on a cost share reimbursement basis to farmers to help them be more productive and profitable. A number of other initiatives are contained in the following sections that will highlight some steps that may be taken to continue to promote agriculture and green space preservation. Steps Campbell County presently take, such as zoning designations and land use programs, are detailed, along with tools that surrounding localities have at their disposal. Ideas that can help promote agriculture and green space preservation include better marketing land use and conservation easement programs, implementation of an agricultural advisory board, and/or the creation of an agricultural economic development position.

Significant hurdles exist into implementing new programs, the biggest of which is funding. With budgets forecast to be extremely tight well into the future, it will be difficult to acquire large sources of funding that some suggestions may require. Additionally, with the use of public funding to support agriculture activities in the form of incentives, there is expected to be a direct public return on investment from increased public revenue as received from industrial incentives. In discussions held during the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2012 Update meetings there were perceived notions by a majority of the committee members that the County already does an outstanding job at preserving open space and further steps are not necessary to support agriculture activities. Other concerns, such as duplication of existing services and competition between surrounding localities, are highlighted in the following sections.

Campbell County has retained its largely rural designation since its inception; however, future growth from Lynchburg and along the U.S. 29 and 460 corridors will challenge this designation. It is wise for the County to continue to promote agriculture and green space and promote responsible growth. This will reduce overall operating government costs in the future, as unchecked growth and sprawl create more service costs than are paid in taxes. Managed growth and green space preservation also have the added benefit of ensuring Campbell County's outstanding quality of life will remain well into the future. Given modern pressures more proactive approaches in land use controls is advisable to insure farm land is used for the production of crops and open green space is maintained.

Agriculture in the Community

Agriculture has always been an important component to Campbell County's economy. From the County's humble beginnings, rich soil has provided prosperity to generations of farmers who have worked this land. Tobacco was the primary cash crop for generations; however, in the past few decades production of tobacco has been significantly scaled back. This has given rise to several new crops replacing tobacco, including cattle farms, grain/soybeans, vineyards and farm wineries, and niche products such as prawn, a type of freshwater shrimp, and turf farms.

Presently statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Agriculture Census", which is conducted every five years, dates back to the 2007 census. Due to the timelines soft ha data we have chosen not to include it in this report. Data from the 2012 Agriculture Census will be collected during the first quarter of 2013, and will provide a better representation of current agriculture statistics in the County. We will provide the Board an update when this data is available which may not be until 2014. Below is the most recent but very dated information on farms in Campbell County. Agriculture employment is seasonal and according to Virginia Employment Commission statistics accounts for between 0.6% (1st Quarter of 2012, total of 97 employees) to 1.0% of total county employment.

While the data is not provided there are several interesting conclusions that can be drawn. The first is that between 2002 and 2007 there was a significant increase in the number of farms in Campbell County. The second is the amount of land being farmed in Campbell County increased, but slow rate, thus resulting in the average farm size decreasing by about 15 acres. This can be explained in part by several factors; increased retiree population moving into the area that establish small hobby farms, along with a prohibitive increase in start-up costs to acquire large land tracts for farming are two important factors. Estimated value of land and buildings increased substantially between 2002 and 2007, as well as total farm sales. Net farm income decreased significantly between 2002 and 2007, and was actually -\$459,000 in 2007. Data suggests this was due to a significant and historic drought in 2007 which resulted in significant crop losses, leaving farmers dependent on insurance payments to survive. From 1995 to 2011 Campbell County Farmers and land owners took advantage of \$15.2 million in federal farm programs. The breakdown is as follows: \$6.72 million in commodity subsidies, \$2.47 million in crop insurance subsidies, \$3.43 million in conservation easements subsidies, and \$2.56 million in disaster subsidies. In addiiton since the formation of the Virginia Tobacco Community Indemnification and Revitalization Commission \$5.5 million has been returned to tobacco farmers for the loss of ability to raise tobacco.



Agriculture Advisory Board

Surrounding counties, including Bedford, Pittsylvania, and Halifax, have created Agriculture Advisory Boards to promote agricultural development. Representatives from each locality express that an advisory board is a critical “first step” in the promotion of agriculture, increased marketing, and the development of agritourism programs. The title of this committee varies; some localities prefer the simplicity of “Agriculture Advisory Board”. Bedford County, which has the region’s most visible and proactive board, chose the name “Bedford County Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Board (AEDAB)”. The phrase “Economic Development” was included to demonstrate the board’s commitment to agricultural job creation.

Each agriculture board was created from a steering committee of local farmers and government representatives who helped determined its necessity. These initial steering committees worked out details and the mission of the agricultural board and determined the parameters in which it would operate, such as the composition of the board, budget, meeting times/places, and goals/objectives of the board. This steering committee also determined under which governing department the agriculture advisory board would fall. Bedford, Pittsylvania, and Halifax’s board of supervisors’ approved the creation of their respective agriculture advisory board.

The purpose of an Agriculture Advisory Board is to act as a liaison between farmers, local government workers/departments, and the Board of Supervisors. Similar to the structure of the Campbell County’s Economic Development Commission, an agriculture board acts to facilitate agriculture programs and advise on policy issues that promote/enhance agriculture within the locality. Additionally, this board may work with the local school board to facilitate agricultural education programs in schools. An agriculture position was created for the County’s Economic Development Commission. One option for consideration in developing an Agriculture Advisory Board is to structure it as a sub-committee of the Economic Development Commission.

Agriculture boards in the counties surveyed are comprised of 15-20 members made up of community stakeholders. The typical structure may include representatives from a variety of public and private organizations, such as:

- Board of Supervisors (1 or 2).
- County administrator’s office.
- Extension office.
- Economic development department.
- Chamber(s) of Commerce.
- Education sector (Agriculture teacher/professor).
- A representative from each election district.
- Several at-large representatives (2-5).
- Farm Bureau.
- Soil and Water.
- Department of Forestry.
- Farm lending organization.
- Farmers from each major agriculture component in a locality (vineyard, dairy, cattle, tobacco, goats, honeybees, shrimp, etc.).
- Agriculture-based business (Southern States, Tractor Supply, etc.).

While value may be seen in representatives from each aforementioned category, key representatives that must be included are farmers, board of supervisors, extension office, Farm Bureau, and representatives from each election district, as well as at-large. These categories offer a broad array of those who have significant investment in agriculture in the county, as well as those who have firsthand knowledge of agriculture issues and policies.

Costs involved in implementing an advisory board depend on the size and scope of the board. Several localities in the region, including Bedford County, utilize existing county staff support, in the form of the Economic Development Department, for administrative purposes. Other localities may task agricultural directors with the duty of administration. It is up to the locality to determine whether or not a stipend should be included. Campbell County typically offers a stipend to board and commission members, with most stipends either \$50 or \$85 per meeting. Initially, stipends will be the greatest single expense should they be offered. An example of an annual budget for stipends is shown on the table below:

Estimated Annual Stipend for an Agriculture Advisory Board

| | 10 Members | | 15 Members | | 20 Members | |
|---|------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|----------|
| Stipend | \$50 | \$85 | \$50 | \$85 | \$50 | \$85 |
| Total (quarterly meetings {4 meetings}) | \$2,000 | \$3,400 | \$3,000 | \$5,100 | \$4,000 | \$6,800 |
| Total (bi-monthly meeting {6 meetings}) | \$3,000 | \$5,100 | \$4,500 | \$7,650 | \$6,000 | \$10,200 |
| Total (monthly meetings{12 meetings}) | \$6,000 | \$10,200 | \$9,000 | \$15,300 | \$12,000 | \$20,400 |

The above table displays several scenarios for budgeting stipends, should this be agreed upon, based on the stipend amount, number of members on the board, and how often the board meets. Additionally, based on duties of surrounding agriculture advisory boards, it is advisable to budget an additional \$1,000-\$2,000 for promotion and marketing activities. For example, Bedford County’s board budgets \$1,500 annually for a farm tour; this includes money dedicated for portable toilets and marketing purposes. Additional administrative costs must also be considered, including office supplies, postage, and staff time for administrative processes related to the advisory board. An advisory board, therefore, could require a minimal annual budget anywhere from \$4,000 to \$25,000+, depending on what the Board of Supervisors and the agriculture steering committee determine. Should the county wish to not offer stipends, a smaller budget would still be required to cover costs associated with marketing/promotion, supplies, and other administrative processes.

It is also up to the advisory steering committee and the Board of Supervisors to determine how often the agriculture advisory board should meet. Options include holding meetings on a monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly basis. Neighboring counties indicated that the most effective meeting schedule is quarterly; anything more frequent results in lower meeting attendance. The agriculture steering committee must make this determination based on the goals and objectives of the Board of Supervisors; a more ambitious agenda will require more frequent meetings.

Agricultural Development Director

Some neighboring localities, including Halifax and Pittsylvania Counties, have gone the route of hiring a full time Agricultural Development Director (ADD) to further facilitate agritourism and agricultural marketing activities within their community. A primary function of this professional is to educate the Board of Supervisors, as well as the general public, on the importance of agriculture, and act as an advocate for agriculture issues between farmers and local officials. Other duties assigned to this position include:

- Work closely with the existing Agriculture Extension Office and agent.
- Provide support for community agricultural groups (goat farmers, vineyards, etc.).
- Organize site visits/trips to learn from best practices of farmers outside of the region.
- Coordinate farm tours/showcases for select farms within their locality.
- Researches, applies for, and administers grants from various sources.
- Organizes other farm-related programs as necessary, such as oversight of county-owned agriculture facilities, farmer's market programs, etc.

As a liaison between the Board of Supervisors and farmers, there exists a significant political aspect which requires someone with creative solutions to difficult problems. This position has had successes in neighboring counties; for example, in Pittsylvania County, the ADD has been responsible for spearheading the construction of the Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex near Chatham. Other successes include increased Board of Supervisors and agricultural interest work sessions, seminars, and educational opportunities on various agriculture related topics, primarily marketing. ADD's are often members of the Virginia Agricultural Development Officers, which is an umbrella of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This membership affords critical networking opportunities, as well as creates an environment where agriculture specialists discuss legislative issues, best practices, and other issues pertaining to agriculture.

Several differences exist between traditional extension agents and agricultural development directors in terms of how their roles are defined. An extension agent works more from an education standpoint with the agriculture community when promoting agricultural best practices throughout the county. ADD's typically work more from a networking and marketing standpoint in promoting best practices, as well as educating farmers on efficient means of promoting their products. Additionally, ADD's work closer on legislative issues, such as how agriculture impacts the county and how those in agriculture perceive local government. While extension agents deal more with the specificities of crop growth and livestock promotion, ADD's typically do not have this kind of specific training, and usually do not have access to the vast research and educational resources that extension agents have through Virginia Tech. ADD's in surrounding localities also advocate ways to formulate policy and incentives to promote agriculture and lure agriculture-related businesses into their locality. While other job duties between extension offices and agriculture development directors overlap, ADD's state that the two positions have separate responsibilities and are essential to develop a full agriculture program.

An effective full time agricultural development director will require a minimum budget between \$75,000 and \$100,000 annually, based on research conducted in neighboring localities. This funding comes from the general fund; State Code of Virginia requires that a position such as this cannot be funded by revenue generated above the 2% transient occupancy tax levied by a locality. When asked about a return on investment for this position it was reported that both Halifax and Pittsylvania Board of

Supervisors consider this position as an essential department head equal to others; therefore, because of the necessity of the position a return on investment was not viewed as a high priority. This position is largely a marketing position; however, as its tourism role is limited it does not fall under State guidelines of a tourism professional. Budgeting for an agriculture development director within Halifax and Pittsylvania counties includes a base salary of approximately \$50,000+, plus benefits, and expenses such as:

- Office supplies (paper, folders, etc.).
- Marketing/promotional materials (for farm tours, farmer's markets, seminars).
- Travel (considerable travel to farms throughout the county and regional trips).

Several local agricultural development directors have noted their budgets have been decreased since the beginning of the recession. For example, in Pittsylvania County, the budget for this department has been decreased by approximately \$20,000 to a total of \$80,000, dramatically reducing what goals and programs the ADD can accomplish and implement. Another ADD noted their budget has been slashed as well, and because of this the director cannot visit farmers and tourism assets as often as necessary.

It would be up to an agricultural advisory committee and/or the Board of Supervisors as to whether this position will be a department-head position or will report under an existing department. If this is a new department with one employee, this position will be responsible for all routine office work in addition to high-level administrative procedures, as is similar to Pittsylvania County. If a full-time administrative assistant is approved for the department, it will require additional significant funding for salary and benefits. Another idea would be to have this position created within an existing department under an existing department head, such as Economic Development. Since this person would not be considered a director, it allows for a lower salary/benefits package and requires a lower budget allocation. Another option would be to redefine/reclassify an existing position so that the duties would be to fill this role as a half time position. This would allow for the position to support the existing Extension Agriculture agent as well as give us the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of this position on the agriculture community/economy.

While there is benefit to creating an agriculture development director position, there is some perceived drawback. If an agriculture advisory committee or the Board of Supervisors determines this position is necessary and does not identify key goals, objectives, and duties of the job, the position may not be utilized to its maximum potential. This also can open the door to frustration with existing extension agents in a locality; as their office already offers numerous agriculture-related programs and services to the community, it is often seen by staff and farmers as a duplication of resources to have both positions in a locality. It is imperative that a clear set of goals and objectives are established for the ADD so as not to infringe on the job responsibilities of the Extension Office. Additionally, if a proper budget is not formulated, an ADD may not have financial resources to properly fund and market programs and events, as well as conduct farm visits, making the position inefficient. This leads to another issue that must be carefully considered; community reaction. The Board of Supervisors must carefully consider, during these lean budget times and significant decreased funding to the school division, the perceived reaction among Campbell County residents of hiring a full-time ADD while the County already has an active and well-received Extension Office. It is also essential that, should this position be created, careful consideration must be given to who will fill the position. One local community notes farmers are still cautious of the ADD department due to an ineffective and divisive previous leader.

Farmers Market

Campbell County attempted to host a farmers market in the village of Rustburg during the 2000's. The market, which was held one Saturday per month during summer, was to showcase the County's agriculture products and crafts. Attendance, both from customers and vendors, was limited, and the program was cancelled after one year. Despite the lack of success from this market, many in the agriculture community remained committed to the idea of a farmers market in the County.

Campbell County's Recreation Department approached the Board of Supervisors about establishing an annual one-day farmer's market in Rustburg; this idea was generated by feedback from the Heritage Festival to have another agriculture-related event during the summer. Around this time, the farming community approached the Extension Office about a more sustained market that would occur throughout the growing season. In early 2012, the Extension Office worked with County Administration to form a steering committee comprised of 15 members of the agriculture community with a target date of April 2012 to kick off the market. Goals of the steering committee included determining dates/times of the market, location, and by-laws. In order to raise funds for marketing and promotional materials, it was determined to charge vendors a small fee to set-up at the market. The fee structure is as follows:

| | |
|---------|----------|
| Season | \$150.00 |
| Monthly | \$60.00 |
| Daily | \$20.00 |

Vendors are required to complete an official application to sell products at the market, and they must adhere to all rules and regulations set forth by the committee. Debate occurred over where to establish the market; many preferred a centralized location near Rustburg/Yellowbranch Elementary School close to U.S. 29, while others preferred the more populated northern section of the County. The Committee, after discussions with Brookville High School, decided to host the market at the high school due to its proximity to densely populated areas and direct access to Timberlake Road and high traffic volume.

Beginning in April 2012, Campbell County, in partnership with the Virginia Tech Extension Office, began offering the weekly farmers market at Brookville High School. The market will operate every Saturday, April through October, from 7:00 am until 12:00 noon. Campbell County's Public Information staff work to market the program and oversee vendors to make sure they stay within compliance of regulations set forth by the steering committee. The Department of Economic Development acts as the fiscal agent, processing all registration fees. Marketing for the event has been handled through the Campbell County Administration office, along with the Extension Office, through various medium such as newsletters, print and digital media, and Facebook.



Nine vendors were in attendance
one was daily and one was a
Registration fees bought in \$1,240.00 for the day, and vendors estimated approximately \$1,193.00 in

opening day; seven were seasonal,
community service agency.

sales. As of June 1, total registration fees collected had increased to \$2,030, which was paid to the County. Attendance at the market has fluctuated weekly; it is highly driven by weather, as cool, rainy days are those with the least attendance. The steering committee hopes to utilize collected fees into increased marketing efforts. Combined, vendor sales at the market are estimated for the following months:

- April: \$3,395.00
- May: \$2,985.50
- June: N/A

Data and results are not available for the complete first season of the Campbell County Farmer's Market, but as of July 2012 attendance and revenue have fallen from the April data. Tentative June numbers from the committee are anticipating sales below May, which would be the second month of decrease. Also, vendor attendance has decreased; whereas the first few weeks averaged between 10-15 vendors as of July some weeks were averaging only 4-5 vendors. Increased competition with other farmer's markets in the area, along with farmers shifting personnel resources to the more popular markets, is a major factor in this decrease. Additionally, other factors such as location and prohibition of reselling items that are purchased outside of the County may also be inhibiting growth at the market.

The steering committee will evaluate the success of the market once the season comes to a close to determine whether or not to continue the market for another year. Members are realistic that, being the first year in operation, attendance will be low and it will take several years to grow the program. Members hope that an increased marketing budget, both through registration fees and potential grant funding, will increase attendance. Additionally, the committee will decide whether or not to continue offering the market at Brookville High School or relocate to Timbrooke Park. This site has the benefit of offering better amenities and the possibility of stalls/tables being constructed; however, it does not have the traffic volume of the Brookville site. As this was the first year of the market, a number of best practices have been identified, and the committee is prepared to overhaul their by-laws to adjust to the lessons learned from the inaugural season.

In regards to neighboring localities, Bedford County operates two farmer's markets; one in downtown Bedford and another at the Forest Library in Forest. Both markets specialize in local grown and produced produce, meats, honey, and crafts. The Bedford City market has faced struggles, but continues to hold its ground, while the Forest market has been very successful. Location helps explain the struggles of these markets; whereas the Bedford market is somewhat hidden from major highways, the Forest Market is adjacent to U.S. 221. The two markets also cater to different demographic segments; Bedford City's market is visited from a smaller population surrounded by farms, whereas the Forest market is frequented by professionals from nearby dense housing developments and residents new to the region who have no local farming connections.

The first year of the Forest Market was 2011; it was established due to increased demand from residents in the fast growing community who did not want to drive to the markets in Bedford and Lynchburg. The market was set-up in the parking lot of Forest Library and operates rent free; however, there are no utilities. It is estimated that approximately 15 vendors were on site weekly, and total sales in 2011 were estimated at \$250,000. The County has decided to host the market again in 2012, and should it continue to be successful it may consider installing electricity on site in the future.

Agriculture Complex

Several localities in the region, including Pittsylvania and Halifax counties, are home to agriculture complexes that serve as meeting and demonstration facilities for local agriculture providers. These types of facilities are multi-functional, as they can host a variety of events including small rodeos, livestock yards, educational seminars, and farmers markets. In addition, they can be constructed so as to benefit the entire community, offering amenities such as conference and classroom space.



The Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex (ODAC) was constructed near Chatham in 2011 to provide a “one-stop” facility for farm support. Chatham was selected as the site of construction due to its central location within the Old Dominion Agriculture Foundation, which is comprised of the counties of Bedford, Campbell, Franklin, Henry, Halifax, and Pittsylvania. Agencies such as Farm Bureau, the Extension Office, and the Agriculture Economic Development Specialist, among others, are all housed in the building. In addition to office space for various agriculture interests, a conference facility is available to the community for meetings and receptions, and an arena is under construction that will host a variety of events such as rodeos and dirt-bike competitions. A farmer’s market, which is operated three days a week throughout the summer, is located on the north side of the building. The ODAC facility is located adjacent to U.S. 29, and sits on 17 acres of land with ample parking for over 1,000 attendees.

Construction of the ODAC has cost approximately \$6.9 million to date, with an additional \$2.6 million required to purchase additional land, upgrade the existing building, and complete the arena. Of the money raised to date, approximately \$5.4 million came from various sources (including the Tobacco Commission and USDA), while \$1.5 million was allocated from the Old Dominion Agriculture Foundation. The Foundation is working closely with a number of entities, including the Tobacco Commission and Danville Regional Hospital Foundation, to acquire additional funding to complete the arena. Several minor modifications are also planned for the conference facility, including the installation of a catering kitchen, due to increased rental demand from the community.

It is difficult at this stage of development to measure a return on investment for the Old Dominion Agricultural Complex. In fact, the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors has not prioritized a return on investment based strictly on revenue generated; their vision is that this is an investment in the community, quality of life, and an income/resource generator for local farmers. This facility is viewed as yet another way to promote agriculture in the community, thus saving farmland and preventing scattered development and associated costs related to sprawl. The facility is generating money from the rental of conference and classroom facilities; for example, the cost to rent the entire banquet hall is \$500 per day, and as of July 2012 the hall is booked nearly every weekend for the remainder of the year.

Bedford County has begun studying the demand and cost for an agriculture complex. This idea is only in the planning phases, as the County has not yet identified all of the components necessary to bring the complex into fruition and make it successful. A partnership between the county's agriculture and equestrian communities is being discussed to study the demand for a facility to meet not only farming and community but also equestrian needs.

Farm Tours

In April 2012, Campbell County Extension Services worked with local farmer, Delvin Yoder, to hold a "Family Farm Day" on Mr. Yoder's farm near Rustburg. This partnership arose after Mr. Yoder successfully applied for, and received, a grant to help procure strawberry plants for his farm. While working with the Extension Office, the idea was born to create a family farm event to promote the strawberries and other assets of the Yoder Farm, including hydroponic tomatoes. County staff assisted with marketing and permitting efforts for the farm day, while the Extension Office assisted with organizing events, including educational booths, displays, etc. The goal of the event was to invite the public to Mr. Yoder's farm and learn about farming practices, pick ripe strawberries, and see the hydroponic tomato greenhouses. It was hoped that the event would draw around 300 people to the farm; while an exact count is not available, it is estimated that 500-1,000 people attended the half-day event, well exceeding expectation. Sales of produce were brisk, and Mr. Yoder was pleased enough to want to host additional Family Farm Days in the future.

This was an extremely beneficial partnership for the County and Mr. Yoder; recognition was brought to the importance of farming in the County, and one of our farmers increased revenue and his visibility in the area. Minimal staff time (fewer than 20 hours) and costs (less than \$40) went into promoting this successful event. This is a partnership that could easily be continued into the future with Mr. Yoder and any other farm that wanted to host one of these events. In fact, County staff is looking into helping Mr. Yoder promote a pumpkin patch and other farm activities in the fall of 2012. In the future, multiple events could be hosted throughout the year, bringing attention to agriculture on a year-round basis.

While many farmers are eager to open their properties to the public, some farmers have reservations about opening their farms. Farming is a dangerous occupation, and farms contain a number of hazards including animals, fencing, dangerous equipment, and uneven ground. Significant liability issues are present that some farmers do not wish to work around. Additionally, some farmers fear that large crowds could damage fencing, equipment, and trample crops.

Bedford County has been hosting farm tours since 1999, but their investment is significantly higher. The idea to do farm tours came from a desire to educate the non-farm public and voters on agricultural

issues affecting the County. A farm is selected based on diversity of products grown (such as alpacas, dairy, etc.), and in most years only one farm tour is planned. Tours usually last from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm and is hosted in an open-house style, similar to the method Mr. Yoder employed. Buses are not used to shuttle people around, as the events are planned to let people come and go as they please and not wait on buses for transportation. Bedford County only works with one farm for a tour; operating tours on multiple farms on the same day would require additional funding and staff time, and would limit attendance by the public.

The Bedford County Extension Office plans most of these farm tours. Their budget of \$1,500 is approved by the Board of Supervisors and goes towards marketing costs, such as brochures and advertising. Gifts and/or refreshments, if given out, are the responsibility of the farm. Planning the event usually takes a total of 2-3 days of staff time. Feedback from farmers has been overwhelmingly positive; each event brings 300+ people to a farm and offers farmers a tremendous market to showcase the products they grow and sell. Additionally, farmers are able to relay to the public challenges and rewards of farming, creating a great public relations event.

Other localities have had mixed interest and results in farm tours. Pittsylvania County has hosted limited farm tours in the past, usually of the Van Der Hyde Digester, which converts cow waste into electricity that is sold on the market. Halifax County annually brings together agricultural groups from the County (goat farmers, vineyards, etc.) and takes them on tours outside of the County to showcase other farmer's best practices. Lead Virginia is a program that annually brings approximately 50 executives from Northern Virginia into the region to showcase agriculture practices, and it has been proven to be popular.

Land Use

Campbell County takes great strides at protecting its rural environment while still promoting responsible growth in areas where it can be effectively handled. Agriculture zoned land is typically assessed at a lower fair market value than residential, business or industrial zoned land. Land in the southern end of Campbell County is typically assessed at a much lower rate than land in the northern end of the county. Additionally the County adopted a land use policy in 1982 that offers qualifying landowners the opportunity to have land assessed at a fair use value rather than fair market value; fair use value is usually a much lower rate. Land, along with assessment formulas created by the State and Commissioner of Revenue's Office, are reassessed every four years based on the amount of crops and/or livestock produced on the farm. The assessment rate for lands participating in land use is currently \$285/acre for agricultural land, \$500/acre for forest, and \$1,700 for open land. Assessment totals can be highly skewed due to weather; if a drought affects a farm near the reassessment period, production levels decrease and the farm will be assessed lower than previous years. A home site and corresponding land on a farm is not included in land use and is taxed based on the fair market value. New mapping software makes it much easier for the Commissioner of Revenue's Office to assess land as well, as the office can utilize the software to make accurate measurements of acreage and show detailed satellite photos of farms to make sure structures are properly accounted for and land is actually utilized for its reported purpose. In addition, the County does not levy tax on farm equipment or livestock, as this was abolished in 2004. The Commonwealth of Virginia does not levy taxes on farm equipment or livestock as well and there is also a sales tax exemption for equipment used only for farming.

Land use is a six-year program; at the end of the program a farmer must re-apply. The application fee is \$0.20 per acre of land being categorized under land use, with a minimum fee of \$20. If a property under land use is subdivided within the six-year window, the owner must pay the difference in the land use value versus the fair market value going back to the beginning of the six-year program. Approximately 20-35 property owners go through the subdivision process annually.

The County's land use policy has been well received by local farmers as well as other land owners. Many in the agriculture community state they could not make a comfortable living if their land was taxed at fair market value, resulting in more farms being sold and possibly developed into residential properties. With the ever-increasing costs associated with farm equipment, seed, fertilizers, etc. farmers appreciate a break in the tax rate. Land use is especially critical to small farms in the County, which account for approximately 50% of the total farms, as small farms do not produce goods in large enough quantities to make a living independently based on farming. Campbell County employees do not actively promote the land use policy as there is no need; the program has been so successful that information on this program continues to spread through the farming community via word-of-mouth. The Board of Supervisors has also been supportive of land use; a meeting held years ago to debate whether or not to keep the program brought strong support from the community, and the Board agreed to continue the program.

Land use is a tool that helps to preserve green space by keeping tax rates affordable for farmers to make a stable income; however, it directly reduces revenue for the County. The Commissioner of Revenue's office estimates that Campbell County annually misses out on \$1.15 million in revenue due to land use properties being valued at a lower rate. Additionally, while there is a minimum acreage that can be placed in land use, there is no maximum. This makes it possible for a land owner to buy thousands of acres of land and place it in land use, dramatically cutting down on the tax revenue that can be collected from the land. While this appears to be a substantial amount, there are indirect savings to the County using land use. With land being conserved for farming, it is not being developed into housing subdivisions, which require substantial taxpayer funded investments in utility construction and increased services such as police, fire, and schools.

Planning/Zoning

Campbell County has taken strides to protect farming and green space from a planning and zoning stance. Approximately 80% of the land parcels in County are zoned Agriculture; this zoning has the greatest variety of uses by right, from farming to residential to small business. This gives freedom to those living in the zone to run small farms and establish farm-related businesses with ease. In addition, a standard lot size in Agriculture is three acres, and allows for only one dwelling unit per lot. The property can be rezoned to place a second dwelling on site only if the dwelling is for an immediate family member; these lots cannot be subdivided and sold for development purposes. Large lot sizes prevent dense developments, such as subdivisions, townhomes, and apartments, from sprawling into farm communities where infrastructure cannot support the growth. While speaking with representatives of neighboring localities, such as Bedford County, this is a similar tactic utilized throughout the region to protect agricultural areas; requirements for large lot sizes and restrictions on dense developments have kept the entire area rural outside of urban areas and major highway corridors.

In the past, the Board of Supervisors has supported this broad zoning category to be sufficient in protecting agriculture, and has kept with broad categorical definitions of zoning so as not to micromanage land use. Community Development has presented Planning Commission recommendations on several occasions to have “Agriculture” divided into two separate categories; one category for rural residential, with smaller lots allowed, and a second category representing large-scale, active farms. To date, the Board has not felt these changes were necessary and has stuck with the existing zoning. The Board does follow zoning closely, especially in agriculture areas, to protect open land. Currently, there are no plans for significant changes to the County’s zoning guidelines regarding agriculture protection.

Another method of preserving farm land is the transfer of development rights. This is a process where designated development rights to build structures are transferred from one parcel to another parcel to allow for higher density uses on that property and the removal of development rights for the property that transferred. This provides a mechanism where open land can be maintained and value to the land owner comes in the form of selling the transferred development rights.

The County’s Comprehensive Plan guides future growth into areas where it can be accommodated with utilities and infrastructure; the plan is updated every five years to adjust to changes and trends in growth and infrastructure. During the last update, in 2009, the coverage area for rural designation was increased slightly. This “rural” designation, which occupies large parts of Campbell County, makes development and rezoning much more difficult. Rural designated areas largely lack the type of water/sewer infrastructure necessary for large scale and dense developments. As the Board strongly supports agriculture, it is unlikely that this infrastructure would be approved for construction in a rural zone. Costs associated with the instillation of infrastructure into agriculture areas are prohibitively expensive, running upwards of \$1 million per mile for water/sewer alone. This makes dense residential developments and subdivisions far too expensive to construct more than a few miles from existing infrastructure, thus adding another layer of protection to agriculture zoned land. In addition VDOT regulations have changed so that residential roads are no longer being accepted into the state highway system making the perpetual care the responsibility of the property owners. Other infrastructure needs such as broadband connectivity is not readily available in the rural areas of Campbell County.



Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are another method at utilizing protection for green space; this level of protection keeps land from being developed in perpetuity. Presently, Campbell County contains 22 easements designated in conservation easement, representing approximately 6,738.63 acres. Each conservation easement is automatically granted land use within the County, minus fees or registration processes to renew as it is in perpetuity. Conservation easements also have a different tax rate than land use, with this rate set by the Commonwealth of Virginia. As with land use, conservation easements reduce the amount of tax revenue that can be collected from participating parcels.

Fauquier County, located in Northern Virginia, is an excellent case study in promotion of conservation easements to protect green space. The county began heavily promoting easements when concern increased that Northern Virginia sprawl was beginning to spill over from nearby Prince William County. To date, Fauquier has the largest number of easements, 471, and the most acreage in easements, 68,976 acres, in Virginia, and also has the largest number of vineyards in any county in the State. The County has implemented a \$0.006 tax, added to the real estate tax rate, to promote and establish these easements and protect green space and agriculture. Fauquier also works to direct growth in service districts, where infrastructure and utilities are present, and maintains strict guidelines for any development in and adjacent to rural areas.

Regional Collaboration

While Campbell County can take strides at promoting agriculture, numerous people in surrounding agriculture offices who were interviewed for this report spoke of the need of regional collaboration to truly benefit the agriculture community. Selling produce to wholesalers is the best way for farms to maximize profit; however, oftentimes it is difficult for small farms to be able to supply the yield required by large wholesalers. Additionally, many farmers are dismayed by the lower price wholesalers will pay for produce, even though the volume required will generate more revenue for the farmer. A regional collaboration effort would be able to provide an education component for local producers, as well as assist in landing and filling wholesale contracts.

An example of a highly successful regional agriculture partnership is Appalachian Sustainable Development. Comprised of localities in Appalachian Virginia and Tennessee, the consortium works to educate farmers and non-farmers alike on agricultural practices, promotes sustainability and partnerships, and promotes markets for locally produced agricultural goods. The program is staffed by approximately 13 individuals broken up in components such as executive leadership, sustainability, health, and education. Farms who participate in the program presently sell locally raised produce to over 900 grocery stores in the Southeast; in addition, their products are sold at local farmer's markets throughout western Virginia. One drawback to the program is that it is heavily dependent on grant funding to operate, and to date has struggled to make a profit. The eventual goal is to become self supported through revenue generated from its participating farms.

Education

Increased agricultural education programs within the Campbell County school system is another key component to promoting agricultural interests. As has been mentioned, farm tours are excellent

methods for farmers to bring awareness to the non-farming community, especially the County's youth. By reaching out to children, good food and farming practices, as well as an appreciation for food production is instilled more concretely at an early age. Another way to reach out to the County's children is through increased educational awareness in the classrooms or having events such as Earth Science Field Day. More support through the local Cooperative Extension Departments, primarily in terms of funding, for agriculture programs such as the Future Farmer's of America and 4-H would assist in expanding programs available to educate students on agriculture practices. It is noted that William Campbell High School's agriculture program has recently been reenergized and is very active.

Additional interaction between agriculture programs in each school would be beneficial. This could come in the form of combined field trips to area farms or in friendly contests between the schools. More collaboration between the schools, the Extension Office, and other agricultural agencies would also increase and improve upon existing programs, especially in terms of cost. Campbell County's school system is operating on a very lean budget due to several years of dealing with severe budget reductions. With stiff competition for ever-shrinking resources, an identified funding source will have to be formed to grow and enhance agricultural programs in the County's schools. This funding source could come from a variety of creative means, such as more agriculture events and competitions, an expanded Heritage Festival/livestock show, or increase in funding from the general fund.

When speaking with several people for this report, there is a perspective that Campbell County may want to consider expanding its annual Heritage Festival in order to offer agricultural education events and create more of a county fair event. A number of agriculture shows and demonstrations, such as with cattle and sheep, could be offered on site. Additionally, specific agriculture contests between the County's schools can be initiated. An example could be having each school's Future Farmer's of America club construct a picnic table and have it judged by a committee. Not only will this help promote education principles and foster friendly competition, it will also increase attendance at the annual event as parents, friends, and family come to view the competitions. In order to increase attendance a more centralized location may be required, such as near the Yellowbranch area of the county in the Central Park Property when developed. This would provide an excellent location for a county fair type of event. It must also be noted that the County held an annual County Fair near the Yellowbranch Technical School for years. The fair did not expand its offerings and became stagnant, attendees lost interest and the fair ceased to exist.

While increased education in the schools is important, agriculture is a life-long learning experience. Government regulations, new varieties of crops, and new diseases are just a few of the items a farmer deals with that are in constant change. Additionally, new technology is constantly evolving, and with this technology comes new ways to market and sell goods. It is imperative that farmers be offered opportunities for continued educational opportunities. The Extension Office already offers programs and consultative services to local farmers. Virginia Tech, along with the Virginia Tourism Corporation, offers educational seminars throughout the state; these seminars cover a range of topics and can easily be offered in Campbell County for free. These seminars focus heavily on agritourism initiatives; benefits and drawbacks of opening farms to visitors, regulations, marketing, and a variety of other topics are covered. Campbell County could easily work with these offices, along with other agriculture partners, to offer one or more of these seminars in the County Government Complex several times per year. Depending on how long the event lasts, the only cost associated would be snacks and beverages, which would be in the \$50-\$200 range per event. Getting word to farmers throughout the County, and greater

region, about these events could easily be handled through our Extension Office along with assistance of our Public Information staff.

Impediments to Green Space Protection and Agriculture Promotion

Campbell County is unique to many localities in central/western Virginia in that there exist no national forests, greenways, blueways, or state parks. In addition, most protected areas in the County, such as conservation easements and parks, are scattered and do not offer large tracts of green space that is untouched. This is important because existing tracts of unspoiled and protected green space act as a major catalyst to for increased protection of rural space. A state park could be viewed as a catalyst for expanding green space in the County. Desire for a state park has been mentioned by the Board of Supervisors in planning sessions; however, a park is unlikely in the near future. While a blueway is proposed to follow the Staunton River throughout most of Southside Virginia, blueways are viewed more as tourist attractions than conservation resources as they involve the development of public launch points and camping locations/facilities.

Budget concerns are another obstruction to green space protection and agriculture promotion. As previously mentioned, Campbell County is presently not collecting approximately \$1.15 million in tax revenue annually due to conservation easements and land use. Additional acreage placed in either of these programs will further reduce the amount of tax revenue generated annually. Additionally, valuable land may be forever protected from development; land which would be conducive to large-scale industrial and/or commercial development that could potentially employ hundreds of residents and generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue yearly from direct and indirect sources.

In terms of agriculture promotion, many methods to promote farms, including utilizing existing county resources, are already in place, and to expand their efforts would require minimal funding. However, the creation of a new advisory board and/or creating of a new agriculture position within County government would come at considerable cost. This funding would likely have to come from the general fund; according to State Code, should the Transient Occupancy Tax be increased to 3% or higher, the additional revenue must be utilized for tourism and marketing purposes only. With numerous agriculture programs already in place, citizens of Campbell County would have to determine the justification of funding these positions, especially during the lean budget years that are forecast.

Another impediment to protecting green space in Campbell County is the perceived notion that it simply is not necessary. Areas in the northern section of the County adjacent to Lynchburg, along the U.S. 29 Corridor, and surrounding the Towns of Altavista and Brookneal continue to be centers for growth and development; however, with approximately 86% of the County's land mass designated as rural, substantial future high density growth is presently limited to only 14% of the County. Several people interviewed for this report as well as the 2012 CEDS Committee state that citizens leans more towards attracting and growing industrial and commercial ventures. While agriculture is valued by these citizens, many feel that agriculture and green space is well preserved within the County with measures already in place.

Additionally, in most circumstances it is cost prohibitive to construct subdivisions, shopping centers, and industrial parks/facilities in rural areas of the County. Outside of the U.S. 29, Rt. 460, and northern US

501 corridors, roads are not capable of handling the increased traffic that these projects would bring. Increasingly tight budgets from the State and strict highway regulations from VDOT make it more difficult than ever to prepare roadways for large-scale developments. Another factor in cost is the construction of supporting utilities, such as water and sewer. With water/sewer construction costs upwards of \$1 million per mile, it is cost prohibitive to run this infrastructure into rural areas of the County thereby limiting the density and desirability of rural residential subdivisions.

Conclusion

Agriculture and green space continue to be vital resources within Campbell County. With numerous reports stating that one of the County's greatest attributes being quality of life, it is imperative that agriculture be promoted and green space protected. Several threats exist to the agriculture community and green space protection, including urban growth and increased costs. Despite these threats, programs such as family farm days, farmer's markets, and agricultural advisory boards play pivotal roles in promoting and growing the agriculture base. Campbell County must continue to work with local, state, and regional partners, along with the farming community, to continue to ensure agriculture is a viable industry for years to come, and that green space will be saved for the enjoyment of future generations.

This cannot be accomplished without the addition of resources in both manpower and funding. Several options are included in this report to assist with revitalizing agriculture enterprises. As the Board weighs the options and the allocation of additional capital resources it should consider the return on investment of allocating capital resources. That can be either in the return of direct revenue to the county or the preservation of open space there by assisting to limit future demands for additional county services.