

Agricultural Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday January 12, 2026 – 7:00 pm

Department of Agriculture, Building 14

2449 Princess Anne Road, Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Present:

Agricultural Advisory Commissioners:

John Cromwell: Chairman

Ryan Horsley: Vice Chairman

Betsy Morris: Secretary

Jason Dawley: Commissioner

Ryan Dudley: Commissioner

Liaisons:

Council Member Barbara Henley, City Council Liaison

David Trimmer, Director of Agriculture, City Staff Liaison

Agriculture Staff:

Jenny McPherson, Rural Community Coordinator

Sarah Grimstead Cotten, ARP Coordinator

Cathy Rogers, Administrative Specialist II

Virginia Beach Cooperative Extension Staff:

Roy Flanagan, Agriculture Agent

Other Individuals Present:

Lucia Whitlow, Associate City Attorney

- I. **Welcome and Call to Order** Formal meeting called to order by Commissioner Cromwell, Chairman. The meeting was convened at 7:00 pm. **Secretary Betsy Morris** - conducted roll call and reported all Commissioners were present.
- II. **Approval of October 13, 2025, AAC minutes:** Commissioner John Cromwell called for a motion to approve the minutes from the Agricultural Advisory Commissioners meeting held on October 13, 2025. Ryan Horsley moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Jason Dawley and the motion was unanimously approved by Commission members.
- III. **Election of Officers for 2026:**
Nominations were made and seconded as follows:
 - John Cromwell for Chairman (nominated by Ryan Horsley, seconded by Betsy Morris)
 - Ryan Horsley for Vice-Chair (nominated by John Cromwell, seconded by Jason Dawley)
 - Betsy Morris for Secretary (nominated by Ryan Horsley, seconded by Jason Dawley)
 - No further nominations were made. The nominees were elected by unanimous vote.

IV. Staff Updates:

Sarah Grimstead Cotten: ARP Updates:

- Completed New Member Orientation 2nd day & Oracle Financial Training of COVB
 - Assisted daily with ARP inquiries, applications, and records as necessary
 - Updated pending applicants monthly on status of application process
 - Distributed ARP applications to landowners considering enrollment
 - New application process started: Rogers Burns
 - Processed final payment requests for:
 - #2000-ARP-55 - Robin Davenport - \$285,876.00**
 - #2000-ARP-57 - Robert Arnold - \$256,036.00**
- 3 registered holders: 1st Clearing LLC - \$75,000.00
Raymond James & Associates - \$81,036.00
Thomas Williams - \$100,000.00
- #2000-ARP-8 – Lillian Orr - \$127,908.00**
 - Drafted documents for two separate transfers of IPA for the following application: **Henley Family**

Status report for January: See attached report for further details.

- **Bright application: #2020-ARP-282 is pending, closing date 1/21**
- **Parsons application: #2024-ARP-308 – offer letter delivered and signed 1/12**
- **Kroll application: #2023-ARP-302 is pending closing date**
- **IGA – DOF (Dept. of Forestry) \$109,375 – matching funds pending CC approval on 1/20**

- Met with City of Chesapeake – IPA & Louisa County, VA about ARP pilot similar conservation programs
- Interest rates remain above 4.8% on average for the quarter, closing Friday at 4.923%
- Current quarter Jan – Mar (FY2025-2026) Final payments to process:
 - #2001-ARP-53 – Jenson Family – Holder: The AMA Trust - \$213,909.00**
 - #2001-ARP-52 – Mildred Furlough – Holder: Lois Keenan (passed 1/6) - \$318,903.00**
- Final quarter Apr - Jun (FY2025-2026) Final payments to process:
 - #2001-APR-52A – Mildred Furlough – Holder: Caroline Buffington - \$274,649.00**
- First quarter Jul - Sep (FY 2026-2027) Final payments to process:
 - #2001-ARP-64 – John & Elizabeth Cromwell - \$1,205,434.00**
- Second quarter Oct - Dec (FY 2026-2027) Final payments to process:
 - #2001- ARP- 47 – Charles Lewis – Holder: Jennifer Lewis - \$213,315.50**
 - Andrew Lewis - \$213,315.50**
 - #2001 - ARP- 63 – Nancy Wiliamson - \$678,528.00**

Other Agriculture Items:

- Assisted with events at the Farmers Market on 10/18 and 12/6
- Prepared ARP presentations for Civic League Academy

Jenny McPherson - ARP Updates:

- Working with Sarah to train her on all things ARP. Update application files and process final payouts, transfer and wiring requests. We have accomplished a lot in a few short months together and I appreciate her being a part of our team!

Farmers Market News:

- The third request for proposal, RFP, for the former Moosewood Creek spaces was reposted by Facilities Management and will close on February 2. Some interest has been received.
- Princess Anne County Grill opened in November, and they have been doing well.
- Finished up the fall events with Fall Festival on November 8 and Santa's Workshop on December 6.
- The 4-H Ham project will start on January 17 at the Farmers Market.
- A flea market will be held on February 28.
- Our first event for the spring will be Celebrate Agriculture on March 21. Friday Night Hoedowns will start again on April 3.
- The Farmers Market will celebrate 50 years this year with our Birthday Bash on April 18. Other events will be Strawberry Jamboree on May 16 and Honey Festival on June 13.
- Security work is being done in our office hallway to install locks to deter after-hours access.
- Repair work is still anticipated for some of the outside plywood on many shops. Upgrades to our center circle stage area should be made in the first two quarters of 2026.
- The Market continues to hold pop-up markets with crafters, sponsors, and food trucks. Usually the first Sunday of the month.
- Please check our Facebook page for details on these events and more:
www.Facebook.com/VBFarmersMarket

Other Agriculture Items:

- Participated in plan reviews as needed for site plans, subdivision requests, and Conditional Use Permits.
- Directional agricultural signs were changed for Christmas trees, and all icons were taken down for the season.
- Processed two agricultural burn permits.

Roy Flanagan – VCE Agriculture Agent

- 2026 Southeast VA Field Crop Conference
February 3, 2026 – Creeds Community Complex – 8:30 am – 3:30 pm
- 2026 Hampton Roads Fruit and Vegetable Workshop
February 13, 2026 – Central Library, Chesapeake, VA – 9:30 am – 4:00 pm.
- MASP (Mid Atlantic Strawberry Program)
March 2 & 3, 2026
- The Horticulture Master Gardeners training program will begin on January 13. A total of 22 new participants are enrolled in the 6–7-week course

- Delivered a presentation in Rapidan VA on December 18, 2025, titled “Land Preservation Options for Virginia Landowners,” with a focus on the purchase of development rights and insights drawn from personal family experience.
- The Ham project starts on Saturday, with 130 hams with three smokehouses.

Director David Trimmer:

- COVB Agriculture Dept. is fully staffed with Sarah joining the team.
- The Farmer’s Market achieved a record year for revenue.
- We managed our expenses without requiring additional funding, so there was no need to present our budget today to senior leadership. Our budget proposal was submitted in December and was approved.
- The City Council retreat is scheduled for January.
- The Civic League Academy presentation is scheduled for February 5th at the Convention Center. David, Jenny, and Roy will represent the Agriculture Department to area civic leaders.
- The Excellence in Agriculture banquet is scheduled for March 19, 2026.

Councilwoman Barbara Henley:

- The Comprehensive Plan is up for approval in a few weeks.
- There is a lot of support from the public about keeping the Green Line.

V: Adjournment:

Commissioner John Cromwell mentioned the next AAC meeting will be April 13, 2026, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.