

Board of Agriculture and Consumer Service

May 21, 2026

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FINAL MINUTES

Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Patrick Henry Building
East Reading Room
1111 E. Broad St
Richmond, Virginia

Thursday, May 21, 2026

The meeting of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Board) convened at approximately 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 21, 2026, at the Patrick Henry Building. President Smith called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

The Board Secretary called the roll:

PRESENT

Keith Harris
William Gwaltney
Raymond Keating
Brittany Jones
Cecil Shell
Margaret Ann Smith
Amanda Weakley-Scott
Brantley Ivey
Renee Munasifi
Ginny Barnes
Lonnie Johnson

Jewel Bronaugh

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
9th
11th
Pesticides – Commercial Agricultural
Representing Dr. Timothy D. Sands, President,
Virginia Tech
Representing Dr. Makola Abdullah, President,
Virginia State University

ABSENT

VACANT
Tyler Wegmeyer
Charles Church

8th
10th
Pesticides – Commercial Structural

STAFF PRESENT

Charles Green, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Kevin Schmidt, Secretary, Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Erin Williams, Assistant Director, Office of Policy, Planning, and Research, VDACS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gwaltney moved that the draft minutes of the March 26, 2026, meeting be approved. Mr. Ivey seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion. Mr. Keating had not yet arrived to vote.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President Smith asked Commissioner Green to preside over the election of the President. Commissioner Green called for nominations for President from the Board. Mr. Harris nominated Margaret Ann Smith. There being no other nominations, Commissioner Green closed the nomination and called for a vote on the nominee. The Board elected Ms. Smith as President by a unanimous vote. Commissioner Green then asked President Smith to preside over the remaining elections.

President Smith opened the floor for nominations for Vice President. Secretary Schmidt reminded the Board that the current Vice President is Charles Church. Mr. Church could not attend this meeting. President Smith suggested maybe leaving this appointment open until the summer meeting. Mr. Harris nominated William Gwaltney. There being no other nominations, President Smith closed the nomination and called for a vote on the nominee. The Board elected Mr. Gwaltney as Vice President by a unanimous vote, with Mr. Gwaltney abstaining.

President Smith then called for nominations for Secretary. Renee Munasifi nominated Kevin Schmidt. There being no other nominations, President Smith closed the nomination and called for a vote on the nominee. The Board elected Mr. Schmidt as Secretary by a unanimous vote.

All three officer positions become effective July 1, 2026, and run through June 30, 2027.

REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

President Smith invited the members of the Board to highlight important updates from their districts, universities, or industries.

Lonnie Johnson

Mr. Johnson mentioned written reports from Dean Ferruzzi and others at Virginia Tech that he would send to Secretary Schmidt to distribute to the Board. He mentioned new leadership changes for the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, the Department of Food Science and Technology, and the Department of Entomology. He provided updates on the College of Agriculture and Life Science's strategic plan, applications, enrollment, graduation, and research expenditures. He also provided an update on the Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Agriculture grant led by Virginia Tech, an \$80 million grant covering four states. Of this amount, \$57 million is for direct payments to farmers to adopt practices. The Virginia application deadline is June 15, 2026. He also provided an update on Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), including a new reporting system for VCE data and the second phase of a pilot project for supervisors.

Dr. Jewel Bronaugh

Dr. Bronaugh mentioned that she has officially been named Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University (VSU). Dr. Bronaugh provided an update on enrollment, graduation, and the retention rate at VSU. She mentioned that the Hospitality Management Program has received accreditation and accolades and that the Small Farm Outreach Program just finished focus groups across the Commonwealth. Dr. Bronaugh also mentioned that VSU hosted Governor Spanberger and Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Frazier at Randolph Farms in February and that VSU and VT are beginning a joint beef cattle research project.

Renee Munasifi

Ms. Munasifi provided an update on the status of the federal Farm Bill and the year-round E15 legislation. She also mentioned the good news related to agriculture coming out of President Trump's recent visit with President Xi Jinping of China.

Brantley Ivey

Mr. Ivey provided an update on the extremely dry weather and the Virginia Farm Recovery Block Grants payments. He mentioned that the Virginia Beef Cattle University will be held in July.

Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott

Dr. Weakley-Scott mentioned that it is dry in her district as well, which is impacting production. She reminded Board members that the Department of Environmental Quality does have water withdrawal reporting requirements for those agricultural operations with pollution abatement permits. In her district, there is concern over the loss of working lands from both new transmission lines and substations.

Cecil Shell

Mr. Shell reiterated that the weather is extremely dry, making it difficult to plant. He mentioned that some tobacco companies have cut tobacco farmers' production quotas by 50 percent and others cut by 20 percent, which is quite a shock to the industry in his area. He is hoping that his area gets some rain soon.

Brittany Jones

Ms. Jones mentioned that the dry weather remains a concern in her district as well. She provided an update on milk prices and dairy cull and replacement prices. Ms. Jones also provided information regarding the Dairy Alliance Adopt-A-Cow Program. Richland Dairy is serving as a host for this program.

Raymond Keating

Mr. Keating provided updates regarding the Perdue Grain Terminal, stating that March, April, and May were all record months for exports over the past 25 years. He expects the China soybean market to be active after President Trump's visit to China and reiterated that the port is the best place to export from in the country.

William Gwaltney

Mr. Gwaltney provided an update on corn, soybean, and peanut planting and mentioned the same concerns regarding dry weather.

Keith Harris

Mr. Harris is also concerned regarding the dry weather and the impact on crop quality. In his area, they are also concerned about the increase in water salinity because of the dry weather and the negative impact this salinity has on oysters. However, he said the corn has looked really good so far, so a good rain will help things immediately.

Virginia Barnes

Ms. Barnes mentioned the impact that the situation in Iran has had on fertilizer prices, increasing the cost for many fertilizers. Agricultural chemicals have already been purchased by sellers for this year, so prices should remain flat for now. She mentioned the increase in the number of generic products on the market. This is good for farmers but makes it hard for sellers to figure out whom to work or what to stock. She also mentioned that the Virginia Ag Expo will be held indoors this year on July 30 at Meadow Event Park in Doswell.

Margaret Ann Smith

President Smith provided an update on the prices in the cattle market, which remains at historic highs. However, input and other costs, such as trucking and trucking insurance, are also quite high as well. Given the drought, she encouraged producers to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency now to complete acreage reports ahead of time. She also mentioned the ongoing challenge with Theileria in Virginia. While the Commonwealth has done a great job addressing this concern, buyers in other states may be hesitant to buy Virginia cattle because of Theileria concerns.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Green gave a brief report on VDACS's activities since the last Board meeting, including drought issues, the Virginia Farm Recovery Block Grants, and the March and April freeze impacts on fruit. Commissioner Green also introduced several new key VDACS staff. A copy of the written report for this and other information was included in the Board meeting agenda and materials.

VIRGINIA BEER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY BOARD APPOINTMENTS

President Smith called on Commissioner Green, who brought to the Board's attention the recommended nominees for the Virginia Beer Distribution Company board of directors. This request to the Board is made pursuant to subdivision (B)(3) of Va. Code § 3.2-102, which (i) requires the Commissioner to establish and operate a nonprofit, nonstock corporation to promote, develop, and sustain markets for Virginia breweries and limited breweries and (ii) authorizes the Board to appoint the four members to this board of directors who serve with the Commissioner.

Mr. Harris moved the following motion:

That the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services reappoint Aden Short, P.A. Short Distributing Co, to fill a term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2030, on the board of directors of the Virginia Beer Distribution Company as an owner or manager of a Virginia beer wholesale licensee;

That the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services appoint Chelsea Taglang, Blue Ridge Beverage Company, to fill Greg White's unexpired term through June 30, 2028, as an owner or manager of a Virginia beer wholesale licensee; and

That the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services reappoint Matt Mullett, RichBrau, to fill a term from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2030, on the board of directors of the Virginia Beer Distribution Company as an owner or manager of a brewery or limited brewery licensee.

Mr. Ivey seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

MEETING RECESS

At 10:07 a.m., President Smith recessed the meeting. The Board reconvened at 10:27 a.m.

OFFICE OF PESTICIDE SERVICES – CASE DECISION – BECK I, LLC, DBA LAWN DOCTOR OF STAFFORD (CASE # 74414)

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President Smith called on Emily Little, Office of Attorney General and legal counsel for the Board on this matter, to explain to the Board its roles and responsibilities pertaining to the Board's review of the case decision for Beck I, LLC, dba Lawn Doctor of Stafford, (Case # 74414) and the recommendation of the Hearing Officer for the formal hearing held in this case.

After Ms. Little advised the Board, President Smith provided both VDACS and a representative of Beck I, LLC up to 15 minutes each to present their positions regarding the case. President Smith explained that the presentations by VDACS and Beck I, LLC are not meant to provide new information about the case but, instead, to focus on what is provided in the case file.

President Smith first called for a representative of Beck I, LLC. Chris Bradford, owner of Beck I, LLC, spoke on behalf of the company. Mr. Bradford expressed his concerns and frustration regarding this case and VDACS's enforcement process.

Following Mr. Bradford's comments, President Smith called on Justin Bell, legal counsel for VDACS. Mr. Bell briefed the Board on this case decision concerning Beck I, LLC.

Several Board members directed questions to Mr. Bradford, Mr. Bell, and VDACS staff. These questions included clarification on pesticide testing, application, and certification requirements; training and assistance provided to Beck I, LLC, as a franchisee of Lawn Doctor; changes in the law and associated regulations since 2020; and VDACS registration processing and turnaround times.

After discussion, Dr. Weakley-Scott introduced a motion that the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services accept the Hearing Officer's recommendation in Office of Pesticide Services Case Number 74414 concerning Beck I, LLC to uphold VDACS's decision in full – its factual findings, cited legal standards, and penalties assessed – without modification. Mr. Shell seconded the motion. Mr. Harris asked to call the roll.

Aye (10): Mr. Harris, Mr. Gwaltney, Mr. Keating, Ms. Jones, Mr. Shell, Ms. Smith, Dr. Weakley-Scott, Ms. Barnes, Mr. Johnson, Dr. Bronaugh

Nay (2): Mr. Ivey, Ms. Munasifi

The motion passed by a vote of 10 to 2.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business brought before the Board.

FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS

President Smith asked Secretary Schmidt to provide an update regarding the next Board meeting, which will be held July 27 – 29 in Chantilly as part of the meeting and tours hosted by Mr. Wegmeyer and held in conjunction with the Virginia Agricultural Council. The final meeting for 2026 will be December 10 in Richmond.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

President Smith invited public comment. Joe Domino spoke to the Board on behalf of the Cannabis Small Business Association regarding the Board's support for hemp as part of the ongoing debates surrounding cannabis enforcement and the creation of Virginia's adult-use cannabis program.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Board adjourned at approximately 11:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Ann Smith
Board President



Kevin Schmidt
Board Secretary