

FINAL MINUTES

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

Thursday, March 26, 2026

The meeting of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Board) convened at approximately 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at the Patrick Henry Building. President Smith called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

The Board Secretary called the roll:

PRESENT

William Gwaltney
Raymond Keating
Brittany Jones
Cecil Shell
Margaret Ann Smith
Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott
Brantley Ivey
Tyler Wegmeyer
Renee Munasifi
Ginny Barnes
Dr. Mary Burrows

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
7th
9th
10th
11th
Pesticides – Commercial Agricultural
Representing Dr. Timothy D. Sands, President,
Virginia Tech

ABSENT

Keith Harris
VACANT
Charles Church
Dr. Jewel Bronaugh

1st
8th
Pesticides – Commercial Structural
Representing Dr. Makola Abdullah, President,
Virginia State University

STAFF PRESENT

Charles Green, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Kevin Schmidt, Secretary, Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Isaac Joseph, Policy Analyst, VDACS

SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY REMARKS

At the start of the meeting, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Frazier introduced herself and her staff to the Board and provided some remarks. Secretary Frazier explained the Spanberger Administration's overarching goals and plans for agriculture in the Commonwealth, focusing on the priorities of water quality and working lands preservation, market access and rural economic development, and agricultural education and workforce development.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ivey moved that the draft minutes of the December 11, 2025, meeting be approved. Mr. Gwaltney seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Green introduced himself to the Board in his new role and shared his background with the agency and the agriculture and forestry industry. Commissioner Green also highlighted his goals for VDACS moving forward.

Commissioner Green gave a brief report on VDACS's activities since the last Board meeting, which focused on some important items from the 2026 Session of the General Assembly, including recreational marijuana and gaming legislation that could have a significant impact on the agency. A copy of the written report was included in the Board meeting agenda and materials.

REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

After the Commissioner's report, President Smith invited the members of the Board to highlight important updates from their districts, universities, or industries.

Ginny Barnes

Ms. Barnes mentioned that soybean discoloration continues to be a big issue for the soybean industry and requested help from VDACS in addressing the issue. Ms. Barnes suggested connecting VDACS with the Virginia Soybean Association to come up with some solutions and methods for increasing awareness of the issue. Ms. Barnes also mentioned that the establishment of a new Lego manufacturing facility in her district is an important opportunity for the soybean industry, as soybeans have application in the production of Legos. Ms. Barnes asked if VDACS could help connect the soybean industry with representatives of Lego.

William Gwaltney

Mr. Gwaltney reported that the biggest concern in his district was the historically low price of commodities paired with high prices of production inputs, such as fertilizer and diesel fuel, which are the result of geopolitical events affecting the supply chain. Mr. Gwaltney noted that soybean and peanut production will become increasingly important as corn and cotton production become less viable.

Raymond Keating

Mr. Keating echoed Mr. Gwaltney's concerns about the increasing costs of inputs but noted that beans and corn are trading at somewhat higher prices in his district.

Brittany Jones

Ms. Jones reported that dairy prices are also on the decline. An issue that Ms. Jones noted has been affecting the dairy industry recently is that dairy cows have been bred to produce milk with higher butterfat content, but as consumer preferences shift, dairy farmers have been left with an excess of butterfat. Retail milk volume across the U.S. has shown a two percent increase.

Cecil Shell

Mr. Shell noted that his district has been experiencing an increase in grain prices but that the tobacco and timber industries have been experiencing a major cut in quotas from buyers.

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Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott

Dr. Weakley-Scott highlighted that this week is national agriculture literacy week and that the Governor was in her district to read the agriculture-in-the-classroom book of the year to children. Dr. Weakley-Scott reported that poultry producers in her area have shifted to Pittman Farms as their new integrator. She also noted that she was able to connect with VDACS to conduct an epidemiology test on milk from her district after reports of sour taste surfaced. Dr. Weakley-Scott reported that there is a new product use authorization for a treatment for new world screw worm in dairy cows.

Brantley Ivey

Mr. Ivey attended the National Cattleman's Beef Association Convention in February, where the first representative from Virginia was installed as president of the association. Mr. Ivey noted that the winter has been hard on farmers in his district.

Tyler Wegmeyer

Mr. Wegmeyer reported that his district is gearing up for strawberry season and that many strawberry producers have shifted their sourcing of plant material to Idaho and California from Canada because Canada has been having problems with diseases that affect its strawberry plants. Mr. Wegmeyer also reported that wineries in his district have been successful in recruiting volunteers to help get rid of spotted lanternfly egg sacks that are being laid on the grapes.

Renee Munasifi

Ms. Munasifi also echoed concerns about the increase in cost of production inputs due to recent geopolitical events and discussed the potential for legislation at the federal level to bring aid to farmers.

Dr. Mary Burrows

Dr. Burrows reported new faculty positions in agricultural economics, environmental science, food science, and entomology at Virginia Tech. Dr. Burrows noted that the university has seen an increase in applications and acceptances for its agricultural programs but there has been a decrease in funding due to allocation changes from federal funding agencies. Dr. Burrows also reported that the program's Tidewater field office is being temporarily rehoused due to the building no longer being structurally safe.

Margaret Ann Smith

Ms. Smith reported that prices for cattle have been very good for cattle and dairy farmers recently. She also reported that at least one processing plant has been temporarily halted due to a labor strike, which has had some effect on producers. Ms. Smith noted that there has been some concern among producers in her district about potential changes in the way that the Virginia Department of Taxation is analyzing agriculture tax exemptions. Ms. Smith reported that her district is also suffering from dry conditions.

PRELIMINARY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Kevin Schmidt, Director, Office of Policy, Planning, and Research, provided the Board with a preliminary report on legislation from the 2026 Session of the General Assembly, highlighting a few pieces of passed legislation pertinent to the Board.

MEETING RECESS

At 10:30 a.m., President Smith recessed the meeting and called to reconvene at 10:50 a.m.

AGRICULTURE STEWARDSHIP ACT OVERVIEW

Darrell Marshall, Agricultural Stewardship Program Manager, provided the Board with a presentation on the Agriculture Stewardship Act and the work of the program. Mr. Marshall explained how the program works with farmers on a cooperative and common-sense basis to adjust their agricultural and conservation practices to address water quality concerns stemming from agricultural operations.

DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

At the request of the Board members for more information about the ways in which the Commonwealth is addressing the management of deer populations, Justin Folks, Deer Project Leader, Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), gave a presentation on the ways in which DWR is managing the deer population throughout Virginia. Board members noted that deer population management has become a greater concern in recent years and is having major impacts on agriculture. Mr. Folks explained the techniques that DWR is implementing to control deer populations, with each county having different strategies and goals. Board members had the opportunity to express their own concerns and issues affecting their districts and to provide suggestions for other management techniques.

OPTIONS FOR FUTURE BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

President Smith requested feedback from the Board regarding the member reports and how the Board should collect and disseminate member reports in future meetings. The members generally agreed that it would be best to have the option of providing a detailed written report before the meeting or to provide a report orally at the meeting, but not both. Oral reports at Board meetings should be optional and brief and highlight only important information that members wish to present. The members also generally agreed that those written reports submitted to the Board Secretary in advance of the meeting should be provided in the draft Board materials so that members may review them before the meeting and then ask questions at the meeting. For the May meeting, Secretary Schmidt will ask for written submissions a few weeks before the meeting and will provide these to the Board as part of their draft materials for review. At the meeting, any Board member who is so inclined may choose to provide a brief highlight of key points

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business brought before the Board.

FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS

President Smith announced that the next Board meeting will be held on May 21 in Richmond. VDACS staff is currently working with Mr. Wegmeyer to host the summer meeting in his district, potentially in conjunction with the Virginia Agricultural Council annual meeting. The meeting is planned to take place at the end of July. The final meeting for 2026 will be December 10 in Richmond.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

President Smith invited public comment, though none was given.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Board adjourned at approximately 12:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Ann Smith
Board President



Kevin Schmidt
Board Secretary

