

FINAL MINUTES

Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Courtyard by Marriott Historic District
Mary Washington Room
620 Caroline Street
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

Tuesday, August 5, 2025

The meeting of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Board) convened at approximately 1:17 p.m. on Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at the Courtyard by Marriott Historic District in Fredericksburg. President Smith called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL

The Board Secretary called the roll:

PRESENT

Keith Harris
William Gwaltney
Brittany Jones
Cecil Shell
Margaret Ann Smith
Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott
Brantley Ivey
Tyler Wegmeyer
Ginny Barnes
Dr. Mario Ferruzzi

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st
2nd
4th
5th
6th
7th
9th
10th
Pesticides – Commercial Agricultural
Representing Dr. Timothy D. Sands, President,
Virginia Tech

ABSENT

Raymond Keating
Kailee M. Tkacz Buller
Renee Munasifi
Charles Church
Dr. Jewel Bronaugh

3rd
8th
11th
Pesticides – Commercial Structural
Representing Dr. Makola Abdullah, President,
Virginia State University

STAFF PRESENT

Joseph Guthrie, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Kevin Schmidt, Secretary, Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Nicolas Robichaud, Policy Assistant, VDACS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Harris moved that the draft minutes of the May 22, 2025, meeting be approved. Mr. Shell seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

President Smith asked that the Board members add to their report impacts on their industry or in their districts that they are seeing.

Ginny Barnes

Ms. Barnes introduced herself and mentioned that the weather has been lovely this summer in her district. Ms. Barnes praised two VDACS employees that she interacted with recently, one focusing on seed quality and one focusing on pesticide recertification, citing them as very professional and model VDACS employees. Ms. Barnes stated that the dicamba label issue is something that has been a major topic of discussion in her industry and that industry would welcome if it could be addressed.

Keith Harris

Mr. Harris mentioned that he would like to see VDACS be more proactive on issues. He stated that Commissioner Guthrie has been very responsive and helpful to him and his district, but he would like to see VDACS address issues before they become a problem. He mentioned as an example the wheat industry and the fact that the Virginia Small Grains Association will be out of money in three years due to the loss of checkoff funding.

William Gwaltney

Mr. Gwaltney introduced himself and provided an overview of his farm operation in Isle of Wight County. He mentioned that they have had a great peanut season so far and that they buy peanuts and ship them all over the world. He indicated that the lack of peanut inspectors, testers, and graders is an issue in his area and provided an overview of the peanut industry and peanut market in Virginia.

Brittany Jones

Ms. Jones mentioned the recent appreciation that she heard regarding the VDACS pesticide collection program. She mentioned that her district did see some delays in planting and spraying due to the wet weather. Her district has had significant replants for soy and peanuts due to the weather, and only 75 to 80 percent of the intended areas for cotton was planted. Peanut growers were concerned that they may need to do a split planting due to the weather. Corn is expected to be pretty good, milk prices are expected to stabilize, and the replacement market for dairy heifers and dairy beef calves remains very high. She also provided an overview of her background and farm operation.

Cecil Shell

Mr. Shell introduced himself and provided an overview of his farm operation. He mentioned that the information from VDACS has been great, specifically highlighting a recent interaction with the agency. He suggested that providing regulatory information for the public would be helpful. He also indicated that timber producers are getting less now than they were 15 years ago. He stated that the crops are looking great in his area, but the prices are not.

Dr. Amanda Weakley-Scott

Dr. Weakley-Scott welcomed the Board to the 7th Congressional District. She mentioned that the biggest issue in her district is urbanization and the loss of rental ground, and she provided an overview of her background and her farming operation. She expressed excitement for the Virginia Agriculture Expo, which will be held in her district on August 7 at Brook Farms. She also stated that she received positive feedback on the application process for the new Large Animal Veterinary Grant Program administered by VDACS, and she mentioned that a former VDACS employee has retired and is now helping Central Virginia cattlemen with marketing.

Brantley Ivey

Mr. Ivey introduced himself and provided an overview of his farm operation in Grayson County. He mentioned that he has worked with VDACS over the last 20 years in various capacities and that he has been impressed that the agency can maintain continuity of talent through political cycles. He complimented Governor Youngkin, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Lohr, and Commissioner Guthrie on their responsiveness in the region after Hurricane Helene. Mr. Ivey stated that he was happy to be on the Board and that he looked forward to working with everyone.

Tyler Wegmeyer

Mr. Wegmeyer provided an overview of his farm operation, with six retail locations in two counties in his district. He mentioned that strawberries this spring were rough and down by 30 percent as a result of nine inches of rain and *Neopestalotiopsis*, a fungal disease, which hurt a lot of strawberry growers. He is hopeful that strawberry stock moving forward will be sourced from California or Idaho instead of Canada due to the fungus, which should result in better stock for Virginia growers. The heavy rain has caused vineyards and Christmas tree operations to spray continuously, and drone services are doing great due to the difficulty the rain has caused accessing these areas by tractor. He did say that tariff uncertainty for artificial Christmas trees coming into the U.S. and a potential manufacturing issue with a large supplier of artificial trees may make this a good year to buy a live Christmas tree, which would help producers.

Dr. Mario Ferruzi

Dr. Ferruzi mentioned the relationship between VDACS and Virginia Cooperative Extension and how well these two agencies worked together. He updated the Board on a few hires that are in process at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) at Virginia Tech and mentioned that the uncertainty at the federal level has resulted in some high-ranking candidates for these positions. He then introduced Dr. Tim Jarome, the Associate Director of the Office of Research and Innovation. Dr. Jarome provided funding, staffing, and research updates for the Agricultural Research and Extension Centers and CALS. Dr. Ferruzi also suggested that VDACS and Virginia Tech combine efforts to potentially address any programmatic gaps that may result from the restructuring of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Margaret Ann Smith

Ms. Smith introduced herself and provided an overview of her operations both in Rockbridge County and across the country. She expressed concern regarding the impacts of the New World screwworm on both agriculture and the public at large and mentioned that the U.S. no longer has access to many of the products that are effective in prevention and treatment. This is having an impact on cattle prices since the U.S. Department of Agriculture has stopped cattle imports at the southern U.S. border. She also expressed concern regarding *Theileria*, a blood-borne parasite transmitted by ticks, and stated that Virginia is doing a much better job monitoring for this and educating producers compared to other states. Ms. Smith also complimented VDACS staff on their work this summer at various county fairs and mentioned the importance of VDACS outreach to stakeholder groups.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

During Commissioner Guthrie's presentation of his report, he briefed the Board on recent events and other matters relating to VDACS. A copy of the written report on which his presentation was based was included in the Board meeting agenda and materials.

FINAL STAGE TO PROMULGATE 2 VAC 5-455 (REGULATIONS FOR TRADESPERSONS INSTALLING INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES)

President Smith called on David Gianino, Program Manager, Office of Plant Industry Services, to brief the Board on the final stage to promulgate 2 VAC 5-455.

Mr. Harris expressed concern regarding the lack of authority for the Commissioner to require that the landowner sign a notice that the landowner understands that invasive plant species are being planted or to require landowners to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

Mr. Shell moved that the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services adopt 2 VAC 5-455, Regulations for Tradespersons Installing Invasive Plant Species, as presented by staff today, and that the Board authorize staff to take any and all steps necessary to have this regulation become a final regulation of the Board. Mr. Gwaltney seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

PROPOSED STAGE TO AMEND 2 VAC 5-360 (REGULATIONS FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE VIRGINIA COMMERCIAL FEED ACT)

President Smith called on David Gianino, Program Manager, Office of Plant Industry Services, to brief the Board on the proposed stage to amend 2 VAC 5-360.

Mr. Harris moved that the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services amend 2 VAC 5-360, Regulations for the Enforcement of the Virginia Commercial Feed Act, as presented by staff today, and that the Board authorize staff to take any and all steps necessary to file this proposed regulation for public comment. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

EXPANSION OF THE REGULATED AREA OF 2 VAC 5-315 (VIRGINIA IMPORTED FIRE ANT QUARANTINE FOR ENFORCEMENT OF THE VIRGINIA PEST LAW)

President Smith called on David Gianino, Program Manager, Office of Plant Industry Services, to brief the Board on the expansion by the Commissioner of the Regulated Area of 2 VAC 5-315 pursuant to Va. Code § 3.2-703. No action was required by the Board.

Mr. Gianino also provided an update on Virginia's efforts regarding spotted lanternfly.

ANNUAL ELECTRONIC MEETING POLICY ADOPTION

President Smith called on Kevin Schmidt, Director, Office of Policy, Planning, and Research, who requested that the Board annually adopt its electronic meeting policy. There were no changes made to this policy.

Mr. Harris moved that Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services adopt the electronic meeting policy as presented by staff today, effective August 5, 2025. Mr. Shell seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Wegmeyer mentioned his concern regarding the problem with deer and deer damage and asked that the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) provide the Board with any information that may be useful. Commissioner Guthrie offered to reach out to DWR and to have a representative speak to the Board at the December meeting.

Mr. Harris mentioned that he is really worried about increased land values and the impact that this will have on the next generation of farmers.

FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS

President Smith announced that the last meeting of the year will be held December 11 in Richmond.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Trey Davis, Virginia Agribusiness Council, mentioned the open comment period with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the crop use of dicamba. He stated that he is putting together a comment letter for industry stakeholders and that he would be happy to circulate this to the Board once it is drafted. The comment period closes August 22. He also mentioned that January 15, 2026, is the VAC legislative appreciation banquet in Richmond.

Katie Hellebush, Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, thanked Commissioner Guthrie and the Office of Pesticide Services for attending their field day the previous week. She also mentioned that VNLA is working with David Gianino on webinars for VNLA members. She indicated that VNLA would support a legislative change to require that landowners sign the proposed notice provided by tradespersons installing invasive plant species. She also mentioned that VNLA is working on providing education materials for the pesticide certification program and exam in Spanish.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Board adjourned at approximately 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Ann Smith
Board President



Kevin Schmidt
Board Secretary