

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
Redistricting Work Session
February 02, 2022

CALL TO ORDER – A work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Crystal Vanuch, Chairman, at 5:02 p.m. on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, in Meeting Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Crystal Vanuch, Chairman; Pamela Yeung, Vice Chairman; Tinesha Allen (*arrived at 5:25 p.m.*); Meg Bohmke; Thomas C. Coen; Darrell English; Monica Gary.

Also in attendance were Frederick J. Presley, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Julia Homes, Assistant Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

Ms. Vanuch called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Holmes to call the roll. Ms. Holmes called the roll and noted that there was a quorum.

1. Discussion & Consideration of Draft Redistricting Proposals

Mr. Anthony Toigo stated that he had sent over the latest public comments to the Board, and those were received directly on the County's redistricting website. Mr. Toigo said that since their last meeting, the redistricting page has been updated to include proposed maps Option A and Option A-2, and staff has also updated this information in the County's news story.

Mr. Jeff Harvey stated that the previous week, they had a discussion about various options and narrowed it down to Option A and Option A-2, which would be on the County website for public comment. He said that there was also a request from Ms. Yeung to have another option considered—Option D modified—and staff has reviewed and prepared a map for that option. He noted that staff would be seeking direction from the Board as to how to proceed with that option, per their discussion at the last meeting.

Ms. Vanuch asked if any Board member wanted to consider Option D as a formal option, or if they felt they were in a good place with Option A and Option A-2.

Ms. Gary stated that she would like to stick with what they have been working with, and she would like to see what Ms. Yeung had to bring for her district from the other map option and what that would look like.

Ms. Bohmke commented that with Option A-2, when looking at the priorities identified at the very first meeting, the Board talked a lot about Aquia staying in Aquia, Falmouth staying in Falmouth, etc.—and not breaking up neighborhoods—so her only comment would be that

Leeland Station would be broken up between her and Mr. Coen. She said that a lot of her district would be across the interstate, which she was not really opposed to, and she finds it odd that Hartwood would be way over into the northern part of the existing Falmouth District all the way up. She commented that this was a non-starter for her, because it is not Hartwood and she finds it really odd.

Ms. Yeung commented that she felt the map shown was a good map, and she asked staff what was wrong with Option D. She said that it brings the rural communities of central Stafford, which is one of the things they are voting for: community of interest. She stated that it includes the low-density part of Hartwood, but that is the same type of rural area. She acknowledged that it goes across I-95, but so does Widewater. She said that it unites Warrenton Road corridor, mostly in the Falmouth District, and one of the comments made was that it creates a community of interest, which is the two 55+ communities: Falls Run and Celebrate Virginia. She stated that it keeps like areas together, and she asked staff what the issue was with the map.

Mr. Harvey responded that the map works and meets all the requirements for contiguity, compactness, etc.; staff has also provided demographic data for the overall populations. He said that it achieves the apportionment requirements, and the Leeland Station neighborhood would be divided between the Falmouth and George Washington districts; whereas, Leeland Road and Primer House Road would be the dividing line. He stated that the northern and eastern part of that neighborhood would be part of the George Washington District, while the western part remained in the Falmouth District.

Mr. Harvey stated that with Celebrate Virginia, there is a new community that's currently being reviewed by the Planning Commission, and it is a 99-lot retirement housing community that will have its own clubhouse. He said it would take advantage of the Celebrate Virginia zoning but would not be within the Falmouth District and would lie in Hartwood. He said that the retirement housing in the southern part of the County would be somewhat split up.

Mr. English said if they were going to go with Option D, he could take part of Embury Mill, and Garrisonville could pick up a bit of Aquia Harbor and get back the other part across Route 1 back to Aquia. He noted that at one time, Hartwood was in the Hampton Oaks area where Austin Ridge is.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that Hartwood had a U shape that went north in the western part of the County in what is now part of the Garrisonville District.

Ms. Yeung commented that this would no longer be "like" areas, as Hartwood's area was different than the Garrisonville area.

Mr. English agreed but said it would be easier to let Aquia have some of that and move up further.

Mr. Coen said that the existing George Washington District has both sides of Warrenton Road up to I-95, and A-2 still has that, so that part would still be together. He stated that it is disconcerting for Leeland to be split, as it is not a gated community such as Aquia Harbor, and to

split them up does not seem to fit logically if the whole point of moving the harbor into one district was to put a “same” community together. He also said that if it were like communities, he was not sure if Granville and the Estates of Potomac would be the same rural type of communities as the rest of Hartwood—so therefore, it is not similar. He emphasized that this is part of why he has great hesitation about the modified Option D map, as it seems different from what they were intending to accomplish, which was to make things more compact and bring communities together. He said that he feels A-2 does that, and while he understands the desire to put Celebrate Virginia with Falls Run, they are two different communities. He stated that it was problematic to him to strive to put two demographic groups together—because they most likely vote the same way, and therefore the County would be making a map based on politics.

Mr. Coen stated that he did not think that’s where they should be, and where they have been with A-2 is a community of the harbor; if they can put it together, how numbers-wise do they shift it to make it equitable; if Rock Hill was 1,042 down and wanted to be more similar to the other districts, how do they make that happen. He said there was also the one change they had discussed to make Brook Road the divider, which is one of their other criteria. He stated that A-2 meets the criteria the Board sets up as deciding factors, whereas he did not feel that Option D accomplished that.

Ms. Gary pointed out that Option D brings up the issue as Andrew Chapel being the only way to enter the southeastern part of the Aquia District, so constituents would have to drive out of her district and through another district to get back into it because of the way the roads are. She said that she would like to put Option D to bed and just go back to Option A-2.

Mr. English asked if he could make a motion to go with A-2, or if they still needed to discuss D.

Ms. Vanuch responded that D was not a formal option on the table, and they would need to make it an official option, and it sounded like the consensus of the Board was to continue on with their conversations using the maps before them, which are A and A-2. She added that if anyone felt differently, they could make a motion to change that direction. She stated that A-2 is the map the Board is most focused on and had provided feedback on.

Mr. Harvey said that he would walk through the changes that created A-2. He explained that there was some adjustment between the Hartwood and Rock Hill districts, and a desire to put Rock Hill back to its current configuration, as well as some adjustments in the area of Poplar Road and Tacketts Mill Road in the western part of the County. Heading further to the east, he said, they were able to accomplish having Aquia Harbor all within the Aquia District, and the neighborhoods of Hills of Aquia and Port Aquia placed within the Griffis-Widewater District.

Heading south, he said, there was discussion about the area on Courthouse Road and the boundary between Falmouth and Aquia. Mr. Harvey explained that the boundary would follow Courthouse Road to a certain extent through Falmouth, east of I-95, down Route 1 and back up Hospital Center Boulevard. He noted that the population numbers work, and there was some discussion as to how to handle the hospital and the area around the boulevard. He said that going further south, looking at the creek as the boundary line between the two districts and the area between George Washington and Falmouth, the section west of I-95 would be very similar to the

current configuration, with the exception of Carriage Hills neighborhood being in George Washington, which would also pick up parts of Celebrate Virginia.

Ms. Bohmke stated that she and Ms. Gary had been talking earlier that day but never finished their discussion, and one question they had was that it looked odd up by Hospital Center Boulevard—so perhaps they could look at that census block.

Mr. Harvey noted Hospital Center Boulevard and Route 1 on the map. He said that the numbers indicate that there are 27 people living in those two census blocks; one is the hospital, which has zero population; the other is an area north of the hospital between the hospital and Courthouse Road. He said that the 27 people there are primarily in the houses along Courthouse Road.

Ms. Bohmke noted her area on the other side of Route 1 and asked why all of that wouldn't be Ms. Gary.

Ms. Gary asked if they could bring the boundary down to where the creek was where the rest of the line was, following the creek out to Route 1, and making adjustments on the southern end as needed. She said that the issue was that the further south in the Brook area you go, the census blocks are larger, and perhaps they can make adjustments on the southern end.

Mr. Harvey responded that it changes the numbers significantly, and both the Aquia and Falmouth districts under the original A-2 were over 4% but under 5%; this would push Aquia to 6.37%, so they would have to adjust to accommodate for that.

Ms. Gary suggested that they go further south, noting that it would be less confusing for people, and stated that she was focusing on the bottom left of Aquia as shown. She stated that everything south of Eskimo Hill Road in the Brook area changes significantly, and the whole area is different, so it would be fine if they pulled from that area.

Ms. Bohmke said it seems they should go all the way over to Route 1 or I-95.

Ms. Gary responded that they went to Route 1 but not I-95, and they were already over in numbers. She said that she now had to give to Falmouth out of the southwestern area.

Staff demonstrated several reconfigurations on the map provided.

Ms. Gary said that if they do anything at all, it would need to be on the southern end, as it would get confusing for people if they cut over Andrew Chapel again.

Ms. Vanuch agreed, stating that Andrew Chapel cuts across and is the only way in and out.

Ms. Bohmke commented that that's Aquia, and that's what people think of as Aquia.

Ms. Gary asked what the numbers look like right now with what they have.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that this would put the district about 500 people over.

Ms. Gary noted that the further south they go, the population is less dense—so even if there are larger census blocks, there are less people. She stated that the way that the census block is established and the population, the reconfiguration is just not working.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Mr. English's district went over to I-95.

Mr. Harvey noted that Hartwood stopped at I-95, and he also pointed out where the area known as "Downtown Stafford" would be. He confirmed that the A-2 map was back to the original.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the next steps would be.

Mr. Harvey explained that staff would proceed with revising the precincts and polling places based on the boundaries and seek guidance if the Board wants them to do it for both options A and A-2, or for just A-2.

Ms. Gary motioned, seconded by Ms. Bohmke, to proceed with Option A-2.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Coen, English, Gary, Vanuch

Nay: (1) Yeung

Mr. Harvey clarified that after this meeting, staff would continue with listing Option A-2 on the website for public comment, as well as remove Option A. He stated that staff would proceed with modeling out the options for precinct boundaries and polling places.

Mr. Harvey clarified for Ms. Allen that he was asking if the Board desired for staff to modify the webpage to only show Option A-2 as an option for public comment.

2. Discuss Redistricting Ordinance Public Hearing & Future Work Sessions

Mr. Toigo explained that the Board was on track, if desired, to hold the public hearing on the redistricting ordinance on March 15, 2022; it would need to be advertised on March 1. He said they currently have a work session scheduled for February 10 to review the precincts and, potentially, polling locations—depending on how much time the registrar and her staff need to work on those. He said they could schedule additional work sessions if needed, and staff would take that direction as needed.

Ms. Vanuch said that the next step is to send this to public hearing, which is slated for March 15 and needs to be advertised by March 1. She said that one of the most important aspects of this beyond the boundary lines is where people would be going to vote, as options especially in the rural communities are very limited. She said that they needed to get on top of that as quickly as possible so the community could provide feedback there, and she would like for the public to have a lot of feedback as to where they feel it would be appropriate for them to go.

Ms. Vanuch noted that they needed to have the polling locations mapped out on the election district maps by the next work session, which is February 10. She asked if others agreed with that approach.

Ms. Bohmke agreed.

Mr. Toigo confirmed that it was scheduled for 5 p.m. on February 10 in the ABC Meeting Room.

Ms. Allen asked if there were any conflicts with the new Senate and House seats for these precincts.

Mr. Toigo responded that they would have to draw the precinct maps around those to make sure there were not conflicts.

Ms. Allen said if there were any new precincts needing to be created, if staff would be giving back the budgetary requirements for that—as she was not sure if the budget session would allow them the protocol to give them the money needed beforehand.

Mr. Toigo responded that staff could look into that and get back to the Board at the next meeting; last year, they took some action on election equipment.

Mr. Harvey reiterated that they did approve that funding last year based upon the original schedule they had and the census coming out when it was supposed to, with the additional polling locations. He said that was based on an estimate, but he felt it would cover what they would see here and could be adjusted if not.

Mr. Coen said that staff had provided information about how many new precincts were needed, but it would be interesting to see if that made a difference with adjustments such as a little chunk of Widewater that might necessitate an additional precinct. He said that would be interesting to know for planning purposes, and it might be helpful to share that with the new Supervisors.

Ms. Allen asked Mr. Toigo if they were going to compile the list based on accessibility, as well as those entities with which they had partnerships—such as churches and other places if people can't get to a school.

Mr. Toigo responded that his understanding of the state code is that other organizations such as civic centers, churches, etc. can be used in the event that a school can't be used.

Ms. Allen asked if there were a distance requirement before those became viable.

Mr. Toigo replied that he would have to look into that and get back to her.

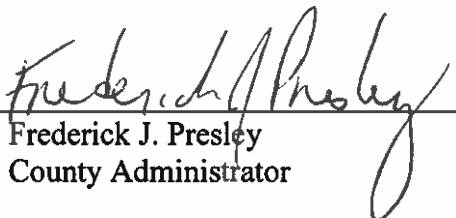
Mr. Coen said the Board had discussed trying to get MOUs ready to help with this in the future, and he asked if legal staff had already begun work on that.

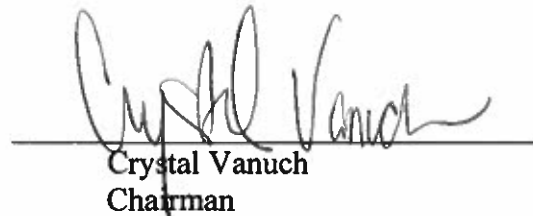
Mr. Toigo responded that the County Attorney's Office had worked on what those agreements would look like, and they would likely be specific to a polling location or multiple schools. He added that the Redistricting Committee had worked on a potential list of potential polling locations—County-owned, civic, and church locations—and the Registrar's Office had gone through that list and determined what met the requirements. He noted that it was already filtered and would be used going forward.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Diane Shay stated that she lives in the Celebrate Virginia community that is assumed to be voting a particular way, which she feels is inaccurate and unfair in assuming that a population that lives on one place would vote the same way because they are the same age, and the reason why they shouldn't be in the same district. She said they started the whole exercise with the assumption they would be looking at "communities of interest," and the area being discussed is still dividing an area that goes from just below US 17, up Plantation Drive where the library is—where everyone goes—would vote the same way and thus a reason not to give more attention to the proposal of Option D modified. She said it deserved more attention and effort made to keep together a community where people live, shop, go to the library, etc., and it is a community of interest. She stated that she is a bit disappointed that more time and attention wasn't given to the new proposed map.

Adjournment At 5:39 p.m., Chairman Vanuch adjourned the February 2, 2022 Stafford County Board of Supervisors Redistricting Work Session.


Frederick J. Presley
County Administrator


Crystal Vanuch
Chairman