

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
REDISTRICTING WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 10, 2022

CALL TO ORDER – A work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Crystal Vanuch, Chairman, at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 10, 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 5:06 p.m.*); Meg Bohmke; Thomas C. Coen; Darrell English; Monica Gary.

Also in attendance were Frederick J. Presley, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Cheryl Giles, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Supervisors; various staff members; and other interested parties.

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

DISCUSSION & CONSIDERATION OF PRECINCT MAP PROPOSALS

Mr. Jeff Harvey stated that the County is looking at creating precincts out of its election districts; there are currently 27 precincts in the County, and based on apportionment, they must increase the number so they can keep each precinct below 5,000 registered voters and above 100 registered voters. He said they were able to utilize the software to help with that endeavor, but unfortunately, they don't have numbers of registered voters by census block in the County, so they've looked at the population of persons 18 years of age and older.

Mr. Harvey reported that staff has generated three maps for discussion tonight: the first option for precincts, a second option where they saw that state lines and proposed A2 County district lines were creating some issues or conflicts, and staff recommendations for potential modifications to A2.

Mr. Harvey presented Map A and asked the Board to keep in mind that they had to have no split precincts without pursuing a waiver and tried to minimize those situations. He stated that the map has no split precincts and creates initial concerns for several areas. He said the map identifies a total of 40 precincts, and the state line creates a number of problems. Mr. Harvey said they created a precinct known as "Quantico" in the northern part of the County that is actually on the Marine Corps base—which is broken into two parts for purposes of the election districts as initially drawn

in A2. He noted that some of that area also falls along state lines, and in looking at the Quantico precinct, they established that it was too small to qualify as a precinct. He said the number of persons who were actually registered voters was about 40, so that area would have to be adjusted.

Mr. Harvey said they also developed the Mt. Ararat precinct as number 205, with 1,196 persons 18 years of age or older. He stated that the precinct beside that, Country Ridge, would move from Rock Hill to Griffis-Widewater under the proposed district map, and that would attempt to resolve the splitting of a neighborhood. He said that in looking at the state lines, they follow the existing election district boundary in that area, which creates a situation where it would have to be a precinct of its own—and that only has 413 persons aged 18 years of age or older, so that would be a very small precinct. He added that there is also not a polling place directly for that precinct, so they would have to use the nearby Barrett or Mt. Ararat polls for that if that precinct were to stay intact.

Ms. Yeung asked about the 40 voters he had mentioned, stating that people may need a driver's license to get to the polling place in Quantico, so that number may decrease.

Mr. Harvey responded that staff had that concern as well in looking at the map—not necessarily the access in and out of the base, because there would not be any polling places on the base; they would have to be within the County's jurisdiction where they have political jurisdiction. He said that another aspect is that a lot of the area is in the Ruby Precinct where people have to drive onto Onville Road, back up Garrisonville Road out to Ruby, which is a fairly long drive.

Ms. Vanuch asked why they couldn't just go to Mt. Ararat Baptist Church.

Mr. Harvey replied that where the current precincts are drawn, they are in Ruby Precinct, so that could be resolved with this map effort to make them into a closer precinct.

Ms. Yeung asked what the acceptable distance was for someone to get to a precinct and whether there were standard rules for that.

Mr. Anthony Toigo responded that according to state code, a polling location must be located within a precinct; however, if no suitable polling location exists within a precinct, it can be located up to a mile outside of it.

Ms. Bohmke asked if they could yield to someone in the audience who's on the Electoral Board.

Ms. Vanuch said yes.

Ms. Bohmke asked Ms. Chittum to respond to the limit of 20 minutes.

Ms. Gloria Chittum clarified that the state recommends for a voter to be 20 minutes or less from their home to their precinct. She said there was no definite time, but that was their recommendation.

Mr. Coen noted that they don't have the actual number of registered voters per census block, but he asked if it was safe to believe that everyone in the country has that same dilemma and is taking the same approach with 18 and above.

Mr. Toigo responded that it was an issue with the redistricting software, so it might just be with the state, not the nation. He said the number of registered voters over 18, those are the eligible individuals—so if anything, the actual registered voter numbers would be less than what staff is proposing here.

Mr. Harvey said that Route 1 is an area they had discussed previously where Aquia and Griffis-Widewater boundaries come together, and they had mapped all of Aquia Harbor into one district. He noted that where they have state lines coming in that area, it creates issues where based on the A2 map have two relatively small precincts: the North Aquia Precinct #306, with 1,100 people; and the Aquia Precinct #401, with 1,101 people. He said those could stand alone as precincts as an option, but they are relatively small, which creates more potential operational concerns for the registrar.

Mr. Harvey stated that heading further south and east, there is an area where there's a census block that is currently designated as being in the Aquia District; based on state lines, it would have to become its own precinct where the current election district lines are drawn. He noted that they are calling it "Unicorn" because it's along Brooke Road and there's a Unicorn Farm sign on the side of the property. He said there are six persons that reside there who are 18 years of age, and it doesn't qualify for a precinct so it will have to get absorbed into another precinct based on the state lines being Potomac Creek in that area. He added that it may best be moved into George Washington and be absorbed into the White Oak Precinct.

Mr. Coen noted that it had been that for 20 years.

Ms. Gary asked staff to explain what the issues are with the boot structure that goes down and scoops off of Route 1 into Aquia, and why it was back on the map.

Mr. Harvey explained that it was just an issue to be brought up for discussion because it was creating such small precincts. He said it can stand alone as precincts, and they keep the election

district boundary the same, but to the state line it creates a small size for a precinct. He confirmed that it can be done.

Mr. Toigo added that Virginia State Code requires that a single precinct be wholly contained within a local election district, state house district, state senate district, or federal election district. He said the border of the new House District 23 actually goes south of Garrisonville Road, down to Derrick Lane, and around the harbor. He said that staff was attempting to make that boundary contiguous with the HD23 boundary.

Ms. Gary noted that they are able to do it, but staff is recommending that they could do something different. She said that she would like to keep it the way it is and not move it, the rationale for which she presented at their last redistricting meeting.

Mr. Harvey said there is an area where the Rocky Run Precinct #107 is a small precinct of about 1,800 people 18 and older, which is a reflection of where the state boundary line is that splits through the Stafford Lakes neighborhood and goes through the reservoir. He said that is juxtaposed where they were drawing the George Washington/Hartwood border in the Celebrate Virginia area.

Mr. Harvey said he could highlight some of the potential fixes and/or issues to discuss on another map, which is the present map A adjusted. He explained that this proposal merges what is shown as the Quantico Precinct in the Rock Hill District and moves it from #206 into the Moncure Precinct #305 in Griffis-Widewater; that would result in changing the election district boundary for the whole area to place all of Quantico in Griffis-Widewater, allowing the precinct to have a combined population of 2,293 people. He noted that there is an unusual circumstance that results because of the state line, particularly an area on the north side of Garrisonville Road north of Aquia Creek. He said that based on the house and senate lines, it would have to go with the rest of the area on the base, so that would be part of that precinct. He said there was a census tract with 27 people associated with it, and that would have to be part of that.

Ms. Vanuch commented that no one lives there, and it was an empty piece of land.

Mr. Harvey responded that there is more than one parcel of land between the creek and where the parcel extends upward.

Ms. Vanuch said there aren't 27 people there—just one person who lives on the end—and she asked if they could ask the registrar to look into who was registered to vote on this census block.

Mr. Harvey said they could certainly ask the registrar for any information on that.

Ms. Vanuch clarified that its 1508 Garrisonville Road.

Mr. Harvey stated that there are one or two other houses in that area.

Ms. Vanuch said this was concerning, but to his point, that would have to go with Quantico.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that it would have to join the Moncure Precinct and vote in that elementary school; that area would go from Rock Hill to Griffis-Widewater.

Mr. Coen asked if they were to decide they didn't want to put that into another district for whatever reason, they would then have to write justification to the state to explain why they weren't putting that precinct into the state's district.

Mr. Harvey confirmed this and said the property would probably be part of the Ruby Precinct, which would make it a split precinct at the state level, so they would have to ask for a waiver.

He stated that the next potential area of concern was the Country Ridge area in Mt. Ararat Precinct, explaining that the existing election district boundaries between Rock Hill and Griffis-Widewater were shown and represented by a blue line where the state drew the house district lines. He said that the area of #273 and parts of this neighborhood would end up being its own precinct, so it may be best to incorporate it into Mt. Ararat and get rid of the proposal of Country Ridge—which helps with the Mt. Ararat population for that precinct. He noted that it would require a modification to Map A2 to shift that part of the proposed Griffis-Widewater District back to the Rock Hill District. He pointed out the current proposed district boundary line between Griffis-Widewater and Rock Hill, which is the state line, and the proposal is to move the area back into Rock Hill. He said that the two districts were basically doing a swap where part of Quantico would go to Griffis-Widewater. He noted that the streets involved are Raintree Boulevard, Debra Drive, Roxanne Road, Raines Court, Erin Drive, and Maria Court.

Ms. Vanuch asked what they were proposing for changes.

Mr. Harvey explained that the A2 map had the boundary between Rock Hill and Griffis-Widewater along Dun Rovin and Raines, so they basically just have to flip it back to the way it is now.

Ms. Allen asked if that would be a deviation.

Mr. Harvey responded that it still works.

He stated that with the Unicorn Farm area, the A2 map had a branch of Potomac Creek being the dividing line for the district rather than the creek itself; this would move the census block back into the George Washington District as part of the White Oak Precinct. He said the A2 map had it designated for the Aquia District.

Ms. Gary asked for clarification as to why it was moving again.

Mr. Harvey responded that they are moving it because of the state boundary line, so it would be essentially split if it stayed in Aquia; the precinct by itself would be too small. He said there were 10 total people, six of whom were 18 or older.

Ms. Yeung said that she was trying to eliminate the small sliver in terms of contiguousness, and her colleagues had mentioned going over I-95 as a barrier—but this was going over I-95, and so was Widewater. She asked why that was there, and also asked about the 55 at Celebrate, which had received a comment from the public.

Mr. Harvey explained that this was the election district map discussed at the last meeting, and he pointed out the area Ms. Yeung had mentioned as coming across I-95. He said that this was the current configuration in the election district, so that didn't change, and it had a boundary between Truslow Road and Falls Run Creek, and I-95 on the east forms the general boundary. He stated that on the south side of the creek is the George Washington District, which currently extends along the creek to Berea Church Road, on the north side of Route 17; this proposal extends it further south to the south side of Route 17.

Mr. Harvey stated that staff had not made any further adjustments to the A2 map but would be glad to follow further direction from the Board.

Ms. Yeung said that she would like to see what it would look like to combine the 55 at Celebrate with the 55 at Falls Run, since they are a community of interest.

Ms. Vanuch pointed out that they had already adopted the map they wanted to review, and what they were talking about today was the polling places and addressing where they needed to go within the map precinct boundaries. She said map alterations would need a separate agenda and another work session; they voted on the map at the last meeting, and today's meeting is to address the precinct locations. She commented that she didn't know if the staff and Board were prepared to go backwards to address the map at this point.

Ms. Bohmke asked if everything on the west side of the interstate was Griffis.

Ms. Allen confirmed that everything to the west of I-95 was Griffis, and everything on the other side was Widewater.

Mr. Harvey stated that if the Board were so inclined, they could combine two relatively small precincts North Aquia #306 and Aquia #401, and that could form a new precinct that is all contained within the state boundary; that would have 2,201 persons compared to 1,100 for both precincts under the other proposal. He said that both are viable options, with one keeping all the state line area in Griffis-Widewater.

Ms. Gary mentioned that if they scoop that out of there, it will significantly change the political makeup of the district because of the density in that area. She said that in addition, they were adding the same issue as with Andrew Chapel, as people would have to travel up and around through another district to get back in, since there's only one entrance back into the harbor. She emphasized that she really wanted to keep that in Aquia.

Mr. Harvey said that in the south part of the County where the Rocky Run Precinct is, staff did not see any viable alternatives to make an adjustment without having cascading effects with the other districts on how to handle this. He noted that in looking at Rocky Run's state line configuration, if they moved it to the west and made Stafford Lakes one precinct area, it would be a split precinct; moving further to the east, they would be taking up part of the George Washington District and force that to lose population elsewhere, as well as impact Hartwood. He said they were recommending that it stay as it is, even though it's a relatively small population at almost 1,900 people 18 and older.

Mr. Coen noted that there is a place for them to vote in there.

Ms. Allen asked if #306 would be reclassified on the Widewater side as part of what they were discussing about #401 and #306; she asked if #306 was the harbor or elementary school site.

Director of Elections Anna Hash explained that if they were to have an election under their current lines, #303 is the Griffis-Widewater section of the harbor. She clarified that Griffis-Widewater's numbers are not at all the same, and #301 is at the elementary school.

Ms. Allen said that if Griffis-Widewater took north of 610 out of Aquia in exchange for the harbor, all of the voters now have to go into the elementary school.

Ms. Vanuch clarified that there would be six polling places.

Mr. Harvey stated that the registrar would have to check if there were polling places that could potentially work; this map identifies one that's on the list, which he believes is St. William of York Church.

Ms. Hash stated that it is on the list and [is a public building], but some dioceses are open to having elections and some are not.

Mr. Toigo pointed out that this is the first look at potential polling locations prepared by the registrar's office, and it is based on the A2 adjusted map. He said these were possible scenarios, but she has not formally started the scouting yet and intends to work on that pending the Board's direction tonight.

Mr. Harvey said that based on their feedback, it looks like the adjustments they are proposing have just the exception of the area between Aquia and Griffis-Widewater in front of Aquia Harbor.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the implications of that would be and what they would have to do if they don't accept what is being proposed.

Mr. Harvey said that they ran the numbers with regard to the election districts to ensure there were no issues with the boundary adjustments proposed, and they all still comply. He said if they don't make those two potential precincts into one and put it in Griffis-Widewater, it still works.

Ms. Allen asked why they needed to split them.

Ms. Gary responded that they looked at that before and the numbers didn't work because they were trying to unite the harbor.

Staff confirmed this assessment.

Ms. Yeung asked staff to point out which area in #704 was moving—Poole/HH Poole—and who they were moving to North Stafford, as the Poole Precinct was always a precinct.

Mr. Harvey pointed out the middle school location and said there were changes to the boundaries regarding the location to the Hampton Precinct, and Hampton ended up extending further south down to Courthouse Road. He explained that they pulled in part of Austin Ridge, and a lot of Embrey Mill would be going into Poole; the Autumn Ridge neighborhoods would stay in Poole. He added that the Woodlands and Whitson precincts mostly stayed the same.

Ms. Yeung asked why they split Hampton, as it wasn't that big.

Mr. Harvey responded that they had made adjustments to try to balance everything out with regard to precinct size so they didn't have a precinct with potential for more than 5,000 people.

Ms. Yeung commented that now Woodlands was now larger than Whitson.

Mr. Toigo said that on the original staff-proposed A2 map, the number of precincts would increase from 27 to 40.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that this was the original plan, but with the new adjustments, it would now be 38.

Mr. Toigo stated that this would be an increase of 11, and the registrar has in her budget the ability to cover up to 12 new precincts, which is consistent with the original recommendation; if they adjust the Route 610 corridor, it would be 12 new precincts total.

Ms. Yeung asked if were possible to adjust 701 and 702, as one is 4,300 and one is 3,400.

Mr. Harvey responded that they could look at the census blocks to see if they can be adjusted, but they saw when they were doing this that they were all within range and didn't need to be adjusted if they didn't have to; making them more balanced is definitely an option.

Ms. Vanuch said that staff was trying to impact the least amount of people possible, they all have precincts that were affected and were 3,000 or more.

Ms. Yeung said she had a brand new one, so they were impacted anyway.

Ms. Vanuch said that was true, but only the people who were new, so some of them were able to stay in their current precincts.

Ms. Yeung stated that North Stafford was brand new, and they were moving 4,300 people; if they moved less and kept them in Whitson where they were, they would be moving fewer.

Ms. Allen asked if they would get a summation from staff as to the precincts they agreed to, or the ones that worked. She said that she was going through and crossing them off, but she wanted to be sure what they agreed to and had something visual they could keep up with.

Mr. Harvey stated that based on the feedback received tonight, staff would make a final precinct map to present back to the Board, which could be posted online for comment.

Ms. Bohmke said that in looking at the precinct for Eskimo Hill #505, which was new, she wanted to know where they would vote.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that Rowser would be a possibility.

Mr. Toigo said on the A2 adjusted map, the registrar would look to Rowser. He clarified that what staff needs from the Board today is direction on whether they want staff to proceed with the adjusted A2 map minus the split that Ms. Gary mentioned in the 610/Route 1 area.

Ms. Vanuch reiterated that to the Board and polled them for their approval of the proposal.

Mr. English approved.

Ms. Gary approved.

Ms. Yeung said she wanted to see the changes for the numbers as she'd mentioned.

Ms. Vanuch clarified that they were not voting or agreeing to any of the precinct locations or numbers today—they were just addressing how they were dividing up the map and the general locations that would be sent to each of the precincts.

Ms. Yeung commented that her district was affected by this proposal.

Ms. Vanuch said that everyone was affected and not a single person in the County would be unaffected.

Ms. Yeung indicated disapproval.

Ms. Bohmke approved. She said she was trying to understand Ms. Yeung's perspective, noting that her own precinct of Drew grew a tremendous amount, but that's just the way the precinct numbers are. She said she was trying to understand why they had to be balanced out.

Ms. Yeung commented about the 4,300.

Ms. Vanuch said that was under 5,000.

Ms. Yeung agreed but said they were being moved from their current precinct.

Mr. Harvey confirmed that in some cases, people were moving from one precinct to another; in preparing the maps, they tried to look at keeping neighborhoods in one precinct, but unfortunately, they could not make that work based upon the way the census blocks are and the number of people in them. He said that they have several situations where one neighborhood may be entirely in a certain election district but has people in two different precincts.

Ms. Bohmke stated that however it was impacting all of them was a result of the census blocks driving the location of precinct and their numbers; so even if she wanted to change hers around and make them more balanced, staff is saying they can't really do it. She asked if there were any flexibility there, or if Ms. Yeung's goal would be too challenging to accomplish.

Mr. Harvey explained that they may be able to make some adjustments, but it depends on the configuration of the census block and how many people are in it. He said that it also pertains to what makes the most sense for the community, as it may force them to break more subdivisions up into different precincts.

Ms. Bohmke expressed her approval.

Mr. Coen approved.

Ms. Allen approved. She asked staff to clarify that the only new precinct would be the #301 for Griffis, and they didn't know where they were putting it yet. She noted that they were taking out #304.

Ms. Hash said that #301 was new, as well as the Midway. She confirmed that they would be trying to find one along 610.

Mr. Harvey stated that they would also make adjustments to the A2 election district map based on this discussion.

Mr. Toigo stated that this was the last redistricting work session scheduled, and he asked if the Board wanted staff to bring these changes back at another work session, or just follow up with them as a group or in a regularly scheduled Board meeting. He said the next step would be to shore up the questions that were asked about the precincts, then go over the polling locations and give the registrar direction to start scouting. He noted that there was a conflict on February 16, but if the Board wanted a meeting next week, there was time February 17 in the afternoon because there was an event that evening.

Ms. Vanuch suggested that they come in after that event and hold a work session at 7:15 p.m.

Mr. Presley said that another possibility would be starting before the committee meetings on Tuesday, around 11 a.m. for about an hour.

Mr. Coen asked what staff was envisioning for the next meeting—just looking at the map with these changes, or if it was going to cover the different polling places. He said he would like to see the existing number of precincts and new population so they can do a comparison. He stated that he has been trying to configure whether there was something more definitive that made it clearer, as some areas like Falmouth look a bit confusing.

Ms. Vanuch stated that if the Board gives Ms. Hash direction to scout out new polling precincts, she will need longer than next Thursday.

Ms. Hash responded that all but one new location was a school, and that “phantom” location could be one of the seven schools, or they can look at the church. She said it was doable by Thursday.

Ms. Vanuch said she could follow up in an email regarding those locations, and it would also be helpful for each Supervisor to get a map with their new proposed precinct locations, so it would be easier for them to comprehend.

Mr. Toigo confirmed that staff could do this.

Ms. Vanuch said if they felt they needed to meet, they could meet on February 22; if they didn’t feel they needed to meet, she wanted to know what the next step was—whether they were done and sending it to public hearing.

Mr. Toigo responded that this would be the direction if the Board is okay with the precincts.

Ms. Vanuch suggested having one more committee meeting just in case.

Mr. Coen said they could do it on the same day as the February 22 budget work session, prior to that. He said that with the A2 adjusted map, the George Washington District has H5, which would be Hartwood, over in Celebrate Virginia, but that would be a George Washington Precinct and was mislabeled.

Ms. Bohmke reiterated that she would like to see the numbers for the prior existing precincts.

Mr. Toigo confirmed that they had this direction and would get that for the Board.

DISCUSS REDISTRICTING PUBLIC MEETINGS

Mr. Toigo reported that last year, the Board had approved R21-75, a redistricting communications plan outline, and in it there were three public meetings proposed: two to share the redistricting ordinance maps in the north and south ends of the County with residents; and a final meeting with the stakeholder group to brief them on what the final map proposal would look like. He said those were proposed to occur after the public hearing was advertised; this item is just to remind the Board of that direction and confirm that it still was. He said if they approved it, staff recommends holding those public meetings once the public advertised—between March 2 and March 14.

Ms. Yeung asked what they were doing for constituents if the Board was already having difficulty reading the maps.

Mr. Toigo responded that staff could discuss that and make large maps available. He said they had received good feedback from the public and Board that the 8.5 x 11" copies aren't necessarily the most readable, so they can look into using the ESRI software online in addition to larger maps.

Ms. Bohmke asked if they knew how many registered voters within the County would have a new polling place.

Mr. Toigo responded that staff could look into that and get that information.

Mr. Coen said that between March 2 and March 14, the Board has budget work sessions on the 8th and 10th, which would inhibit the schedule somewhat and could impact staff.

Mr. Toigo said they would look at the dates as they got closer to that timeframe, they were just seeking general direction on whether the Board would like to continue to hold the three proposed meetings.

Ms. Vanuch asked for the Board's input.

Mr. Coen said they at least need to give people the opportunity to come see it, and the stakeholder meeting shouldn't be too challenging either; most were involved and won't likely be surprised. He added that he didn't foresee a bevy of other public hearings on the 15th, which would be one of his concerns.

Mr. Toigo responded that staff was looking into that, and April 5 was the tentative date for the budget public hearing.

Ms. Vanuch agreed that they needed to spread these out.

Mr. Toigo noted that there were two land use public hearings already on March 15.

Ms. Bohmke recommended holding the redistricting public hearing first, in fairness to the public, as they never know how long they were going to last and it's frustrating for people to have to wait or have to leave early.

Ms. Vanuch said if it's not time-sensitive, she would like to hold those applicants off if possible.

Ms. Yeung asked if they could give people estimated times.

Ms. Vanuch said the only challenge with that was having a lot of public speakers show up, or none, and that affecting the timetable.

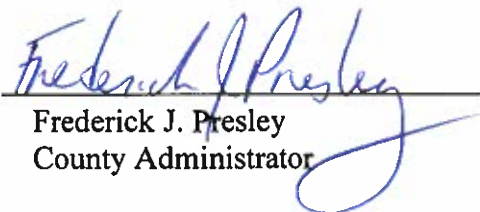
Mr. Toigo said that they have the capability and intend to record the meetings and keep them on the County website.

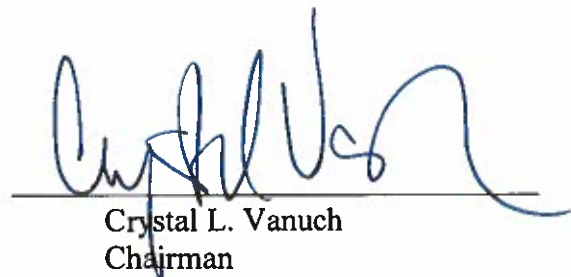
PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:07 p.m., Chairman Vanuch adjourned the February 10, 2022 Stafford County Board of Supervisors meeting.


Frederick J. Presley
County Administrator


Crystal L. Vanuch
Chairman