STAFFORD COUNTY WETLANDS BOARD

Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 22, 2024 at 6:45 p.m.
Board Chambers | George L. Gordon Government Center

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:27 p.m. by Paul Santay

B. Roll Call

Members Present:	Sue Henderson (Chair), Mary Rust (Vice-Chair), Anthony Pineau, Dan Adams, and Benjamin Rudasill
Members Absent:	Robert Hayden, Zachary Martinez
Staff Present:	Paul Santay, Chief Director of Community Development; Joe Fiorello, Environmental Planner; and Savannah Wimbush, Development Services Administrative Manager

C. Determination of a Quorum

A quorum was established with 5 of the 7 members present.

D. Election of Officers

- Election of a Chairman

  Mr. Santay called for the election of officers, starting with the nomination for the chair position. Mr. Pineau nominated Ms. Henderson, which was seconded by Ms. Rust. Ms. Henderson was unanimously elected as the chair.

- Election of a Vice-Chairman

  Ms. Henderson called for nominations for the Vice Chair position. Mr. Rudasill nominated Ms. Rust, and Mr. Pineau seconded the nomination. Ms. Rust was elected as the Vice Chair unanimously.

E. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Rudasill made a motion to approve the January 30, 2023 Wetlands Board minutes. Mr. Pineau seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

F. New Business

None

G. Chairman’s Report

None

H. Staff Report

Mr. Santay sought permission to provide a brief staff report. He recalled Mr. Saunders mentioning a law enacted by the General Assembly in March, requiring an update to the County Wetlands ordinance effective January 1, 2024. Despite being past the deadline, Mr. Santay informed the Wetlands Board that the standard wetlands ordinance was up for consideration by the Board of Supervisors at their upcoming meeting.

He outlined the key changes in the new wetlands ordinance, noting that it maintains the tidal wetlands fund but removes certain sections related to reporting, monitoring, site inspections, and notice to comply. These changes aim to streamline enforcement procedures. The ordinance was set for a public hearing at the Board of Supervisors meeting on February 6.

Ms. Henderson requested Mr. Santay to send a link or a copy of the ordinance to the Wetlands Board for reference. She expressed uncertainty about being asked about it but emphasized the importance of being informed.

Mr. Santay assured Ms. Henderson that he would provide the requested information and clarified that while the Board of Supervisors might have seen the ordinance, it wouldn't be acted upon until the upcoming meeting.

Ms. Henderson inquired if there were any additional comments or reports from the board members.

Mr. Pineau brought up the possibility of upcoming projects for the Wetlands Board. Mr. Fiorello responded that there were no upcoming projects and mentioned that there were no applications for the month of February, resulting in the cancellation of those meetings.

Ms. Rust sought clarification regarding in-lieu fees and whether it would be appropriate to discuss potential projects with Ken Benson, their neighbor. She wondered if it would be suitable for him to present a project proposal to the board. Mr. Fiorello stated that it would be permissible for an entity to present a project proposal to the board at their request. Ms. Henderson added that ultimately, the Board of Supervisors decides whether to allocate funds for a project recommended by the Wetlands Board. Ms. Rust sought guidance on the process of proposing and approving a project. Mr. Santay suggested that the first step would be to identify a qualifying project, after which the information could be shared with him for further consultation with county staff. He emphasized the importance of understanding the ordinance's specifications regarding project eligibility. Mr. Fiorello elaborated on the definition of restoration and emphasized the necessity for a project to involve tidal wetlands to qualify for funding. Ms. Henderson clarified that the funds must be spent on projects within the county's jurisdiction and preferably on county-owned property. Ms. Rust referenced Prince William County's successful collaboration with state parks and expressed curiosity about similar possibilities in Stafford County.

Mr. Santay reiterated that while there may be backstory regarding fund utilization, the ordinance specifically mentions the locality, providing some flexibility in project selection. Mr. Fiorello acknowledged that he lacked comprehensive information and was relaying hearsay. Mr. Santay reiterated the flexibility provided by the ordinance's wording and mentioned similar rumors about county project preferences.

Ms. Henderson thanked everyone for their input, concluding the discussion on potential projects and the utilization of in-lieu fees.

I. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Rudasill made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Rust. The Wetlands Board meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.