BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 19, 2024

**CALL TO ORDER** – A regular meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Meg Bohmke, Chairman, at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 19, 2024 in Board Chambers, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

**ROLL CALL** – The following members were present: Meg Bohmke, Chairman; Tinesha O. Allen, Vice-Chair; Deuntay Diggs; Darrell E. English; Monica L. Gary; Crystal L. Vanuch; Dr. Pamela Yeung

Also in attendance were William Ashton, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Julia Holmes, Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

**INVOCATION**

Mr. Diggs led the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ms. Allen led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**CHAIR REMARKS**

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to extend her gratitude to everyone who participated in the Veterans Day celebrations by lighting up their homes with green lights and sharing their appreciation on social media. She said that as a reminder, they had recently launched a new webpage dedicated to veteran services in Stafford County, which could be accessed at www.staffordcountyva.gov/veteransupport. She said that this webpage was part of their ongoing efforts to better serve their veterans. She said that she would like to invite everyone to the Stafford County Tree Lighting event on Friday, December 6, 2024, here at the Government Center. She said that the event would begin at 6:00 p.m. and would feature holiday musical performances, artisans and crafters, family-friendly activities, food vendors, and visits from Santa and possibly the Grinch. She said that she encouraged everyone to bring their families and friends to celebrate an evening of festive holiday cheer. She said that for more details, please visit www.StaffordCountyTreeLighting.com.

Ms. Bohmke said that on their webpage, the front page featured a story about the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's (VDHCD) Line Extension Customer Assistance Program. She said that if one had an existing cable on their street but lived more than 200 feet off the road, they were asked to contribute the cost of running cable or internet to their home, as per their franchise agreement. She said that this program paid for that cost if one made less than $170,340.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was also pleased to announce that the Lake Arrowhead and Lake Carroll communities had received grants to help subsidize their construction costs for dam safety improvements. She said that the Board had approved the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Safety, Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund grants. She said that Lake Arrowhead would receive $500,000, and Lake Carroll in the George Washington District would receive $750,000. She said that she would like to thank Ms. Vanuch and Mr. Diggs for their dedication to helping the community secure this assistance.

Ms. Bohmke said that on behalf of the Board, she would like to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. She said that she would like to remind residents that their offices would be closed on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for the holidays. She said that she encouraged everyone to shop at Stafford Businesses on Small Business Saturday, which was November 30, 2024. She said that it meant a great deal to their friends and neighbors whose livelihoods depended on their business. She said that the Board would not meet on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, as it was their annual Boards, Authorities, Committees, and Commissions event, where they recognized all of their volunteers who served on these Boards and Committees. She said that the Board would meet again on Tuesday, December 17, 2024.

## PRESENTATIONS

### 2023 VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (VACO) ACHIEVEMENT AWARD PRESENTATION, PRESENTED BY JEREMY BENNETT, VACO DIRECTOR OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Bohmke said that this evening, they had a special presentation. She said that she would like to welcome the Virginia Association of Counties Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Jeremy Bennett. She said that she was here to present the VACo Awards to Stafford County. She said that they were pleased to have won two awards this year, one for a compost outreach program by the R-Board, and the other for Utilities, specifically for developing a superhero named Captain Clog who aimed to educate the public about maintaining their pipes. She said that this evening, they had Phil Hathcock, the landfill superintendent, Francesca Johnson, and Hope Mickelson from the R-Board, as well as Chris Edwards, their Chief Operations Officer, and staff members, Lenore Rodriguez-Guevara and John Brindle.

Jeremy Bennett, VACo Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, said that it was always a pleasure to be back in Stafford County, especially during the holiday season when the holiday lights are outside. He said that he was glad to be here. He said that it was his distinct privilege to present two achievement awards to Stafford County this evening.

Mr. Bennett said that he would like to briefly explain the purpose of VACo. He said that it was founded in 1934, and their organization existed to support local government officials by providing advocacy, educational programs, member services, and communication efforts. He said that they had a long history with Stafford County, and he was pleased to note that Ms. Bohmke was the

VACo President last year. He said that additionally, it was his six-year anniversary with VACo, and he was reminded that he previously served as the Chair of the Education Steering Committee. He said that time seemed to have passed quickly.

Mr. Bennett said that in 2003, they established the Achievement Award Program to recognize counties that had adopted innovative approaches to providing public services and identifying programs that could serve as models for other counties. He said that he was proud to present them with two achievement awards this evening. He said that they should note that this program was highly competitive, with 145 entries received this year, and only 45 winners selected from 32 counties. He said that this represented a 31% selection rate, which was truly impressive.

Mr. Bennett said that Stafford County had a remarkable record, having won 14 achievement awards, tying them for ninth place all-time among counties. He said that they had won in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, a testament to their competitive edge. He said that although the process was competitive, he had high hopes that this trend would continue in the future. He said that he wanted to express their gratitude for their participation in the program and recognition of their award. He said that if he may, he would like to unbox the award and take a photo to commemorate the occasion.

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that he thanked everyone involved. He said that this had been a truly collaborative effort, involving the Utilities Department and Community Engagement, who put together the entire Captain Clog program, including the outreach program. He said that he appreciated the hard work and dedication that had gone into making Captain Clog successful. He said that a new video featuring Captain Clog was scheduled to be released this week, and he encouraged everyone to visit their Facebook page to check it out.

Francesca Johnson, Recycling Manager, said that she would like to extend her gratitude to everyone and to the R-Board and its members for their support. She said that they had truly appreciated working with their Master Gardener, Jonathan Stevens, and had been able to educate the public on the importance of composting food scraps and yard waste that would otherwise end up in the landfill. She said that this program had been a great success, and she would like to thank everyone again.

Ms. Bohmke said that she thanked everyone for continuing to win awards. She said that she had spoken with staff about reviewing the awards other counties were receiving, as they could learn from their ideas and avoid reinventing the wheel. She said that they were pioneers, but they could adopt best practices from other communities. She said that she would like to take a moment to acknowledge Mr. Bennett's contributions to VACo and express their appreciation for his work in carrying forward their legislative platform to the General Assembly this year. She said that she thanked him, and she appreciated everyone being here this evening.

## **ADDITIONS – DELETIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR AGENDA**

Ms. Bohmke asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Mr. Ashton said that there were none since his email to the Chair last week.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to adopt the agenda as presented.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

**WORK SESSION ITEMS**

ITEM 1. FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN; UTILITIES

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that when they presented their three-year financial plan and spending plan, prior to the FY24 budget, they highlighted three major hurdles facing the Utilities Department. He said that they had a need for significant 3R investments in their aging infrastructure. He said that their capital improvement plan (CIP), which they completed a couple of years ago, included a set number of projects to ensure they could meet future growth demands.

Mr. Edwards said that they were also focused on maintaining a skilled workforce, with a 2% increase in staff to keep pace with growth in accounts and infrastructure. He said that moving forward, they were in the third year of their rate increase, and for FY27, they would be developing a new three-year financial model and rate model for FY27 through FY29. He said that this year, they planned to include reuse rates, as their new reuse system came online.

Mr. Edwards said that they anticipated significant upgrades to address evolving PFAS regulations, which the EPA recently set forth. He said that these upgrades would require substantial costs. He said that they had engaged with two separate consultants, one for federal and one for state, to help them with grant funding. He said that unfortunately, there were likely tens of thousands of other utilities applying for grant funding, so the amount they received was likely to be relatively small.

Mr. Edwards said that as a result, this mandate would probably come from and be supported by water and sewer user fees. He said that to provide more context, this was the second slide and it was a summary of their 3R program, which had been one of their major initiatives. He said that they were working to ensure that their older infrastructure was renewed and that they could continue to serve their residents. He said that the major project in this area had been their neighborhood and transmission water main replacements.

Mr. Edwards said that this was the first one they had worked on, which had been a three- to four-year project replacing approximately five miles of water line within the Ferry Farm subdivision. He said that they were almost complete, with only a small section along Ferry Road expected to be finished in the summer of 2025. He said that they hoped to move on to the next subdivision, Chatham Heights, which was approximately 50 to 70 years old. He said that in Ferry Farm, they were experiencing frequent main breaks, averaging 20 to 25 per year, which put a significant burden on residents and staff.

Mr. Edwards said that since they had been able to replace the line, they had seen a decrease in main breaks, with only one occurring recently due to a contractor's mistake. He said that another major initiative was their water and wastewater plant upgrades. He said that it was likely that only two significant projects would be undertaken over the next 12 to 18 months. He said that these projects were indeed very costly and would be addressed in FY26.

Mr. Edwards said that their capital program was divided into two categories: County-funded projects, which were denoted as blue, and projects that would be supported by data centers, marked as red. He said that one of the projects that appeared on both lists was the Lake Mooney to North Stafford distribution mains. He said that as previously described, the County had invested heavily in the water resources for the County, including the Lake Mooney Reservoir and Water Treatment Plant. He said that their goal was to ensure that the water from the far southwest corner of the County could be distributed to North Stafford, as far as Quantico, to alleviate pressure on the Smith Lake Water Plant and Reservoir. He said that this was necessary because their largest demand center was located in North Stafford, but their water resources were concentrated in the southwest corner.

Mr. Edwards said that they were anticipating water plant regulatory upgrades, including PFAS upgrades, which would impact their water and wastewater plants, increasing costs in the long term. He said that they were also planning to expand their Utilities Department facility, as their air department had outgrown its current space. He said that they had been working to acquire land for a new facility and planned to move to a new location within the County. He said that they aimed to maintain pace with the growth of their system by addressing personnel needs.

Mr. Edwards said that normally, he would not prioritize a part-time position, but it was actually timely given the VACo awards. He said that last year, their VACo award was for their internship program. He said that as a result, they would like to explore the possibility of hiring a civil engineering intern on a part-time basis. He said that currently, they had two civil engineering interns who were commuter students. He said that by the time the budget was approved, they would be about a year away from graduating. He said that their goal was to convert these part-time positions to full-time positions, allowing them to support their interns as employees when they completed their degrees.

Mr. Edwards said that he had identified two areas that required additional staffing: the procurement specialist and lab technician positions. He said that these roles had significant workloads, and they currently only had two lab technicians, which was not sufficient to ensure consistent coverage. He said that they also planned to request additional employees to manage the reuse system in future years, which would be tied to reuse rates rather than water and sewer rates. He said that this would not impact their customers who relied on water and sewer services.

Ms. Gary asked if they had all considered the requirements that would be necessary if Buc-ee's were to be approved, She said that she was aware that Buc-ee's was a popular destination for travelers seeking clean facilities, and with a significant number of cars, employees, and travelers using their system, she wondered what the impact would be on their infrastructure.

Mr. Edwards said that they had begun to examine the demands, and in fact, they were currently completing their master plan, and he believed it would be best to address these demands in the next three to four months, when they finalized their master plan. He said that they had already considered demands from other Buc-ee's locations, and they had incorporated them into their model. He said that when they returned to this topic in the spring, he would be able to provide more information regarding the master plan.

Dr. Yeung said that she wanted to inquire about the current pricing structure for commercial versus residential properties. She asked if they could only raise the rate for commercial without affecting the residential rate.

Mr. Edwards said that they had separate commercial and residential rates. He said that he would need to investigate whether they could only address commercial or residential rates.

Dr. Yeung said that the subject may be applied to State Code §56-585.

Ms. Bohmke asked if staff could notate on the slides that the last two items in red related to data centers.

Mr. Edwards said that yes, they could do that.

## PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS BY DEPARTMENTS

ITEM 2. BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT; R24-347; CONSIDER BUDGETING AND APPROPRIATING ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR THE DREW MIDDLE SCHOOL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Andrea Light, Chief Financial Officer, said that she was present to discuss the schools' request for a budget appropriation. She said that the schools are seeking funding for the purchase of land for Drew Middle School, which is not currently included in the capital improvement plan. She said that this represents new funding set aside by the Board for land acquisition.

Ms. Light said that the schools are also requesting advance in budget appropriation for design, which is typically done at the beginning of a contract. She said that this design contract is anticipated to last at least two years. She said that the schools are also seeking budget and appropriation of contingency funds. She said that Jason Towery from the schools will be available to answer any questions the Board may have regarding their specific needs.

Dr. Yeung asked if the Board could have a review of the current usage of the funding and budget. She said that she was not certain if that had been addressed during the three-on-three meeting.

Ms. Bohmke said that it had not been addressed.

Dr. Yeung said that this was something she was interested in, and she was sure the rest of the Board agreed that it was a good idea. She said that her first question, based on the information, was as follows: On March 21, 2023, the CIP for FY 2024-2033 allocated $89 million for Drew allocation, which added 450 more seats to the existing 650. She said that in contrast, today's CIP for 2024 listed Drew conceptual at a staggering $131 million. She said that she had a footnote regarding cost avoidance, they had $38,286. She asked if Mr. Towery could explain the overage.

Jason Towery, Chief Facilities Officer for Stafford County Public Schools, said that he did not have the $89 million number in front of him, but he did have the $93 million. He said that there was an increase in the budget from last year. He said that the total project cost that was approved last year was $96,542,000, which the Boards had agreed upon in the budget. He said that this year, they were at $113,131,000, which was a delta of $16,589,000.

Mr. Towery said that the majority of this increase was due to two main factors. He said that in the CIP request last year, the schools had requested that the Drew Middle School site and the Rising Star facilities be reconstructed at the same time, which would have swapped sites. He said that however, this was not the way the CIP was ultimately approved, and as a result, they had to conduct a land search, which cost approximately $2.5 million.

Mr. Towery said that this amount was part of the request before them today for the appropriation of $2.5 million for the piece of land that the Joint Land Committee recommended they pursue. He said that additionally, they had incurred significant off-site infrastructure improvements, totaling about $5.5 million. He said that these improvements included VDOT upgrades and water and sewer enhancements, particularly a mile-long line to get under the CSX tracks to access the nearby sewage system.

Mr. Towery said that this amounted to approximately $8 million of the total increase. He said that furthermore, they had increased the contingency from 5% to 10% due to ongoing questions regarding potential cultural resources and other factors at this site. He said that he was hopeful that they would be able to revisit this number in three to six months and scale it back. He said that at this time, he was unable to commit to that reduction due to the potential unknowns that they were currently facing.

Dr. Yeung said that in March 2024, it was stated that they had design work completed, but currently part of the request included design funding. She said that the School Board stated they would be going with an 1100-seat school rather than 1500. She asked if the increase was for 1100 or 1500.

Mr. Towery said that it would be for 1100 students. He said that one of the considerations was whether it made sense to design the school with a core capacity of 1100 students, including hallway sizes and cafeteria space. He said that this would allow for flexibility in the future if the school were to be expanded to 1500 seats. He said that looking ahead 10 to 15 years, this design would provide maximum flexibility. He said that for now, the school would have 1100 seats in place for opening day.

Dr. Yeung asked if there were any savings from the construction of elementary schools #18 and #19 that could be used for this middle school funding. She said that the schools had autonomy, but the Board of Supervisors had the fiduciary responsibility. She said that it was not matching up for her.

Mr. Towery said that currently, they were projecting between $18 and $19 million in savings over the next two years, based on the bids and current projections. He said that this amount was sufficient to cover their rainy day fund. He said that assuming no significant changes in direction, this would be a high point for their current projections, and it would provide more than enough to accommodate the potential increase.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed Mr. Towery was saying that the savings from the construction bids were not additional funds that could be applied to the new Drew Middle School.

Mr. Towery said that in terms of overall capital savings, those funds would need to be reallocated and re-budgeted by the Board.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to clarify that information regarding the school division's plans for the site they were considering purchasing. She said that, according to her conversation with Dr. Chase, her colleague on the School Board, she indicated that nothing had been released from the school division as it relates to the site they would be purchasing or hoped to be purchasing.

Mr. Towery said that nothing was official at this point, but they had signed the purchase agreement documents for the piece of land they were considering. He said that this marked the beginning of a 90-day feasibility study, during which time they expected to gather more information. He said that they anticipated that this information would become available within the next few days or weeks as they began to investigate the site more thoroughly. He said that once they moved forward with the site, they planned to submit a comprehensive plan compliance review to the Planning Commission and the County for consideration.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to clarify a few points. She said that initially, what his team had proposed, before the additional $16 million cost, was based on a site swap that was planned. She said that they had designed and engineered the project based on that assumption. She said that her question then was why all that work went into designing and engineering the project if the school was going to switch to a different location.

Ms. Allen said that they were going through land acquisition and retrofitting a piece of property with utilities and transportation infrastructure to meet the requirements. She said that the design of the capacity would not be changing, but it had to fit into a space it was not intended for, which was why they required $16 million to offset that. She said that her question was why the school switched and why they went through the design phase if they were going to swap sites.

Mr. Towery said that in terms of the preliminary design that led to the CIP numbers a year ago, it was primarily high-level scoping studies. He said that they spent a few thousand dollars with an architect and an engineer to conduct basic programmatic layouts on the site, determining if the school could fit and what that would look like. He said that they also did cost estimates based on general land development costs, site improvement costs, and demolition costs for the existing facility. He said that however, when the Melchers complex and the Rising Star program were not approved to reopen and build until 2030 or 2031, it became clear that they could not operate the two schools on the same site at that time. He said that the decision was largely based on the need to jointly construct the schools and swap sites.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to ask a follow-up question regarding the potential costs. She said that if this project was estimated to cost $16 million in excess, and considering Melchers' costs, she was curious to know if they might be better off revisiting the original plan of swapping them. She said that perhaps they could also discuss moving Melcher up, as she would like to know the final cost of Melcher.

Ms. Allen said that for instance, if Drew's costs were estimated at $16 to $20 million, and Melcher's costs were $10 to $15 million, that would add up to approximately $37 million in additional expenses. She said that if they were to move Rising Star to match Drew's current costs, she wondered if they would still be facing an extra $37 million in costs from acquiring two separate properties instead of swapping them as originally intended. She asked if the issue was that the CIP did not have capacity for that.

Ms. Light said that that was correct. She said that Drew Middle School was a renovation project until two years ago, in 2023, when it became a rebuild of the building. She said that in the 2023 and 2024 Capital Improvement Plans, they were unable to align the Gary Melchers and Drew Middle School projects with the School Board's request due to capacity and debt constraints.

Ms. Allen said that they were essentially spreading out the purchases to make them more affordable.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to bring to her colleagues' attention that this was a $16 million CIP request increase, which translated to an $0.08 tax increase for residents. She said that given the significant financial impact, she believed it was essential to understand the brevity of the situation and the reasoning behind the site selection. She said that although the site selection was not publicly disclosed, she would like to inquire about the potential cost implications.

Ms. Vanuch said that if the site selection was expected to drive up the tax rate by $0.03, resulting in a $5.5 million increase, perhaps alternative locations should be explored or the Cliff Farm property, which the school already owned, could be utilized to mitigate the costs and offset the burden on taxpayers. She asked what the schools had done to ensure the Board of Supervisors that they had taken all necessary steps to ensure that this was the only viable location, and that no other options had been exhausted to minimize the financial impact on residents.

Mr. Towery said that he wanted to address the site selection process. He said that approximately nine months ago, they had met with the Joint Land Acquisition Team and had begun evaluating potential sites in the southern half of the County, primarily due to the current location of Drew Middle School. He said that they had presented a few concepts to the School Board, taking into consideration the need to maintain the historical boundaries of the Drew Middle School attendance zone, which was essential for addressing the area's specific needs and ensuring fairness to the population that had been waiting for a new school.

Mr. Towery said that they had narrowed their focus to the Falmouth district area, which naturally limited their options. He said that they had ultimately identified three to four potential sites. He said that however, issues had arisen with some sites due to competing interests from large land acquisition groups, such as data centers, which were also interested in those sites. He said that given the tight timeline to meet their 2028 opening day, they had decided not to engage in lengthy legal battles to challenge the other groups.

Mr. Towery said that they had also considered the Cliff Farm site, which was owned by the schools, and it boiled down to the two remaining sites. He said that from the school's perspective, as the Board was aware, the site in front of Cliff Farm had the potential to become an enabling site for future construction, which would ultimately benefit the schools and the County. He said that the potential for future school sites or County facilities in that area was a significant benefit. He said that when they had analyzed the cost to extend infrastructure to the Cliff Farm site, the cost-benefit analysis had pointed towards purchasing the land near the front.

Mr. Towery said that this direction had been pursued by the School Board about three to four months ago. He said that they had spent considerable time working on this, and he was confident that they would be working closely with the site owners to better understand the situation. He said that the Joint Land Acquisition Committee had thoroughly evaluated the options and, given the direction they had received and the constraints of the urban service area, they were convinced that these sites were the best choice.

Ms. Vanuch said that some of the parameters might need to be adjusted, as this had severe implications for their CIP outside of the budget process. She said that this put their Board back at the drawing board. She said that a $16 million school increase request was substantial. She said that she allowed some of her colleagues to discuss this further, but she was concerned about how they could move forward with this project without a thorough understanding of the budget implications throughout the entire CIP and what they were essentially committing to.

Mr. Towery said that their primary goal today was to continue moving forward with planning and design over the next two to three months. He said that the design process and feasibility period would be crucial in determining the viability of the site. He said that they believed it had many strengths, which was why they were at this point. He said that if they were to stop in three months and decide the desired site was not suitable, the preliminary layouts and overall program they planned to develop during that time could be conveyed to another site.

Ms. Vanuch asked what he estimated expenses would be for the next couple of months.

Mr. Towery said that it would be hundreds of thousands, but not millions. He said that it was work that would carry through regardless of where the building ultimately ended up.

Ms. Vanuch said that that was interesting because she recalled when he visited them discussing the Brook Road facility. She said that at the time, he mentioned that those plans would not be transferable to another site selection process when they explored moving the school into Embrey Mill. She said that the School Board had invested significant time and resources into investigating that property. She said that now, it seems that he was asking them to follow a similar process. She said that however, if this did not work out, he was now able to reevaluate and potentially adjust the plan, which seemed to be a different approach than initially stated.

Dr. Yeung said that Embrey Mill just came up, and she said that she would like to discuss the school location. She said that when they initially decided on a location and did not put it in that area, despite having existing infrastructure, they changed their mind. She said that now, they were stating that they would review the area to determine if it was suitable for the school.

Dr. Yeung said that her question was whether they need additional support with this process. She said that she knew that the two staff groups had met, but they no longer had a technical review team. She said that in the past, this team would provide valuable information and criteria. She said that currently, the process was blind, and she was concerned that decisions were being made without a thorough assessment. She said that for example, when they decided on a location, she would like to provide an example of how a needs assessment, including transportation, could be conducted.

Dr. Yeung said that she was worried that not having this assessment had resulted in wasted resources, as VDOT was now requesting one. She asked if anyone was tracking the costs associated with not having this assessment, and how much money is being lost due to the delay. She said that her point was whether they needed more support in making informed decisions about school locations, transportation, and overall planning. She said that it seemed like they were often getting information after the fact, rather than having a thorough process in place from the start.

Mr. Towery said that he assumed that Dr. Yeung was referring to the traffic impact analysis for Elementary School #19, which had been completed the previous December. He said that it had been coordinated and discussed with the County and VDOT a year prior.

Dr. Yeung said that she thought they had gotten a waiver for it.

Mr. Towery said that they had completed the process and the document was now publicly available. He said that it was expected to be posted on the website.

Dr. Yeung asked why they had not received a permit for it yet.

Mr. Towery said that VDOT had signed the plans, so the necessary approvals had been obtained.

Dr. Yeung said that she understood. She said that she was bringing this up because it was an example of having issues when choosing a location that should be unpacked first.

Mr. Towery said that they had already had a handful of meetings with VDOT and County staff to look specifically at this site to ensure they understood the infrastructure impacts of roads, water, and sewer. He said that this site was unique in that it was near the Leeland Bridge project, so there was already some coordination with VDRA about the need to put a sewer line under the tracks there. He said that there had been a lot of coordination thus far, and they began traffic counts last week on this particular site, as well as some due diligence regarding nearby wetlands and other similar items.

Mr. Towery said that they had had a lot of collaboration so far between their groups, working closely with Capital Construction, Transportation, VDOT, and Utilities. He said that this was part of how they arrived at the numbers presented today. He said that they wanted to ensure what all needed to be covered, working it out as best as they possibly can. He said that there was not a question about whether they would need to purchase the land, assuming they did not revisit the Melchers option. He said that at this site, the estimated cost was $2.5 million.

Mr. Towery said that there was not a question of whether or not they needed off-site infrastructure, which would add an additional $5.5 million. He said that the remaining question was whether they were holding a 10% contingency. He said that typically, they aimed for a 5% contingency, which was more in line with their standard practice. He said that he believed they could revisit this 10% contingency and aim for the more typical 5%. He said that he did not believe that the $16,589,000 figure would ultimately stick. He said that while he was not 100% certain, he had a feeling that it would be revisited.

Dr. Yeung said that Mr. Towery had previously stated that the schools had $10.8 million of unfunded items, including mechanical life, safety, paving, and building envelope concerns. She said that considering the additional $16 million needed, she suggested that they reevaluate the $89 million and allocate funds to the items that are likely to break, rather than focusing solely on the total amount. She said that what kept her up at night was the possibility that a school, such as those that Ms. Gary's and Ms. Allen's children attended, may be impacted by a serious incident, and she feared that if they did not provide sufficient funds, the Board of Supervisors may be held accountable for not ensuring the schools' safety.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was not just the location of the new middle school near Ms. Gary's and Ms. Allen's children, but rather the entire school division. She said that there appeared to be some remaining questions from her colleagues. She asked Mr. Towery if it would be possible for the Board to defer this item until their December meeting. She asked what the effect would be on the schools. She said that perhaps they could get some of these concerns fleshed out between now and then so that it could be a unanimous vote; there should not be a split vote on an item as important as the location of a new middle school.

Mr. Towery said that he believed that schools could continue to move forward and execute a partial contract to get the architect and engineering moving. He said that his main concern was time. He said that they would lose approximately a month at that point. He said that given the current constrained timeline, meeting the 2028 opening date was a challenge. He said that they had already invested around $130,000 to $150,000 in due diligence work on the site. He said that ideally, they would be able to cut the full contract with the architect and engineers, avoiding the loss of time.

Ms. Bohmke said that if they were looking to conduct due diligence on the property for 90 or 120 days, that process would not require that level of architectural and engineering work. She said that instead, it would focus on soil samples and other aspects of due diligence. She said that given that they were primarily conducting an inspection on the property, she wondered why they were requiring all of that engineering right now.

Mr. Towery said that the design process involved multiple stages, starting with preliminary design, or PD, and design development. He said that this stage involved working closely with the architect to ensure the facility's size, layout, and programming were accurate. He said that the first two to three months of this process were highly replicable across different sites, focusing on building and program requirements. He said that given their tight timeline, they were overlapping this period with their due diligence phase.

Mr. Towery said that this meant that they were combining the preliminary design and design development phases with their due diligence period, in order to expedite the process and ultimately reach construction documents. He said that it was during this stage that they began to consider the site plan, soil conditions, and other factors that would shape the final design, marking the beginning of the year-long design process that they were all familiar with.

Ms. Gary said that they were all aware of the Rodney Thompson incident, specifically the issues with the HVAC system, in which there was a burst of 165 degree-water, and the damage it caused, including peeling the wax off the floors. She said that thankfully, no children were present. She said that given that situation, it was clear that they did not want to experience a similar incident. She said that there were also safety concerns at play.

Ms. Gary said that she was aware that Mr. Towery had previously mentioned that the HVAC system would need to be replaced, estimating a cost of around $20 million, with a timeline of four to five years. She said that he had mentioned that timeline last year, and now they were looking at a revised timeline of three to four years. She asked if Mr. Towery could provide an update on the current costs associated with delaying projects like this, as it was a concern for her as well.

Mr. Towery said that the estimate they had discussed a year ago indicated that the HVAC replacement for Drew would cost around $20 million. He said that this was a comprehensive renovation of the HVAC system, involving the removal of old units and the installation of new controls and everything else. He said that if they were to extend the life of the facility by a few more years, they would likely avoid a full replacement, but instead see targeted replacements worth hundreds of thousands to a few million dollars. He said that for example, they had recently replaced the unit above the library last summer for $250,000 in one-time costs.

Ms. Gary said that he had been a wealth of information, and she appreciated how quickly he could provide accurate answers, which was wonderful and helpful. She said that her other question was regarding the sewage issues that were occurring at that location. She said that she believed that sewage had been flowing from that location to the Heather Enfield Day School playground.

Mr. Towery said that yes, that occurred about a year ago. He said that a sewage main from a large portion of the school failed and collapsed in the courtyard of the school, resulting in significant backup issues. He said that the children from the day school were largely affected by this incident.

Ms. Gary asked what student population attended the day school.

Mr. Towery said that the day school served children with intensive special needs, including individualized education programs (IEPs).

Ms. Allen said that Ms. Gary had previously mentioned that Drew must be replaced; it was not safe for students. She said that the significant investment required to make Drew functional over the next three to four years was likely to exceed $16 million. She said that Ms. Vanuch had expressed concerns about the tax implications, but she believed it was worth considering the long-term costs. She said that if they were already planning to spend $20 million or more in four years to address issues with the current school, there was no reason not to invest $16 million upfront to build a new school, eliminating the need for future repairs and land acquisition.

Ms. Vanuch said that to ensure she understood the request, she would like clarification from Ms. Light on what was being asked of the Board regarding the decision on the Drew rebuild. She asked if they were being asked to accept a $16 million increase to the CIP outside of the budget cycle.

Ms. Light said that there was an increase of $2.5 million for land, as well as a $1 million contingency fund. She said that there was also an advancement in the design process. She said that the original design was planned for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026. She said that this change allowed the appropriation to be moved forward, enabling the design contract to be completed all at once and then paid over the course of a couple of years.

Ms. Vanuch said that she noticed that the School Board had recently adopted a new CIP, which increased the cost of Drew by $16 million. She said that as a result, they were essentially allowing the project to move forward with an additional $16 million of cost outside of the current budget cycle.

Ms. Light said that at least $3.5 million in new costs are being requested for what they are being asked to budget and appropriate today. She said that the land, valued at $2.5 million, was not included in the CIP, and there is also an increase to the contingency fund. She said that the Board was being requested to budget $7,092,000 today. She said that this amount includes the land, which was not requested to be budgeted and appropriated until FY 26, so it was just changing the timeline. She said there is an additional $1 million requested for contingency.

Ms. Vanuch asked if they were up-fronting the design.

Ms. Light said that that was correct.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was $4.5 million.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to know when they would address the $16 million increase from what was allocated in the CIP for the school.

Ms. Light said that when they returned to the Board with the updated CIP, they would examine how the $16 million, or a portion of it, would be balanced out with the remaining funds in the CIP.

Ms. Vanuch said that it would require taking items out of the CIP or raising taxes.

Ms. Bohmke said that the CIP is a guideline document, not a rigid framework. She said that it is only applicable for one year.

Ms. Vanuch said that they were being asked to upfront $3.5 million. She said that that amount of money would likely be spent if this site did not pan out, as they were front-loading the design fees.

She said that she was wondering if there was a recommendation from Ms. Light to protect the taxpayer by allowing them to move forward with the feasibility study, while also not committing all that money too quickly. She said that this would give them time through the budget cycle to determine their options for the CIP and balance out the $16 million, ensuring that they made the most of their budget.

Ms. Light said that if the Board was not comfortable with the request that was submitted, and there was funding necessary for the schools to move forward, then the Board could allocate a lower amount, and then revisit the issue in December or January, allowing for further discussion and consideration.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the Board would be amenable to splitting the difference to ensure they were not upfronting too much too quickly. She said that the taxpayers should have constant updates on this because she did not want them to get out of control with spending.

Dr. Yeung said that she had been supportive of building a new Drew Middle School since her tenure on the School Board seven years ago. She said that she was well aware of the leaks, sewage issues, and roaches, as well as the lack of heat. She said that she appreciated that everyone was supportive of the construction now. She said that the issue now was making sure they had the right decision for the right location and at the best price.

Ms. Gary asked Mr. Towery if the savings realized from the construction of the two recently approved elementary schools had impacted their current situation.

Mr. Towery said that they were assuming that those funds were available to the taxpayer. He said that therefore, those funds were not being held by the School Board for other purposes at this time. He said that they wanted to move forward with the construction project. He said that however, they had a contingency fund beyond that $10 million, so with the $20 million, he was confident that they would be able to return the excess funds to the County. He said that at this point, they were ahead by approximately $3 million to $4 million.

Ms. Light said that when they had created the five-year plan and analyzed the debt service, they had accounted for $18 million being removed from the school's debt service, assuming they had some savings. She said that as a result, the five-year plan did show significant increases in debt service. She said that they had been aware of this due to the high school, two elementary schools, and a middle school. She said that they had anticipated this and factored some of that savings into their debt projections. She said that however, they had not yet run this through their new CIP model.

Ms. Gary asked if Ms. Light had anticipated that the schools would save $10 million on each of the elementary school builds.

Ms. Light said that it was anticipated to be $18 million in total. She said that the construction bids had already come in with savings for those projects.

Mr. English said that he did not have anything against what they were doing, but he wanted to discuss the details with Ms. Light further.

Mr. English motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to defer the matter until the Board of Supervisors' December meeting.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to recommend that they not defer this discussion. She said that she would like to ask Mr. Towery, although this is not part of this motion, if they could consider a compromise on the design cost, splitting the difference between $3,592,000 and $1,796,000. She said that they could approve $1,796,000 at this meeting and then revisit the design cost in January or February, with an update on the progress, and approve the remaining amount if everything met the Board's satisfaction.

Mr. Towery said that he would like to revisit the total request for budget and appropriation that they had made today. He said that the original request consisted of $2.5 million for land, $3.6 million for design, and $1 million for contingency. He said that given the concerns that had been discussed today, he would recommend that they at least agree to the design funds, which was $3.6 million. He said that by doing so, they could pause the land and contingency funding, allowing them to move forward with the design contract and continue the process.

Ms. Bohmke asked if it was Mr. Towery's opinion that the design work was the most important aspect of the $7,092,000 request at this time.

Mr. Towery said that in terms of the timeline, yes, because it was unlikely that they would execute a contract for the land until presumably sometime in the spring.

Ms. Bohmke asked if they already had an agreement in place with the architect.

Mr. Towery said that yes, but it was contingent on appropriation from the Board.

Ms. Vanuch asked how long the design would take.

Mr. Towery said that executing the contract today, they estimated they were looking beyond the street at early 2026.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to ensure that they did not end up in the same situation as before, as the School Board had mentioned that they had already spent a million dollars on design, which would increase the cost of the school if they moved it now because they had already paid for design. She said that this was what she was trying to alleviate. She asked if they could build the contract to include a provision that, if the feasibility study did not come back by February, they could minimize their costs with the contractor.

Ms. Bohmke said that she did not believe that would happen unless an agreement was initiated with the contractor.

Ms. Vanuch said that they could make it contingent upon the land being vetted through the process.

Ms. Bohmke said that Mr. Towery had affirmed that the design work could be undertaken regardless of the site chosen.

Ms. Vanuch said that a few months ago, they stated they could not take a design built for one particular school because it was so dependent on the fluctuating design capacity of the land and the way it was. She said that they had invested in the design for the Aquia project and could not move it to Embrey Mill. She said that she was trying to understand whether they were being truthful to them now or if they had been dishonest with them previously.

Mr. Towery said that he could confidently say that they had never presented the Board of Supervisors with knowingly dishonest information. He said that the prototype school for the elementary had been designed to be rebuilt in multiple locations. He said that he did not recall the specifics, but they had created layouts, and he preferred not to elaborate on that point right now.

Mr. Towery said that to achieve a 2028 opening date for the new Drew Middle School, they had a design timeline built into that schedule. He said that as part of that timeline, they needed to conduct due diligence on the site, as well as preliminary and design development. He said that over the first three months of this project's life, they would need to move quickly to reach a point where they could put pen to paper on the site, including the site layout design and site civil design. He said that the total site civil design portion of the $5.5 million contract was approximately $1 to $1.5 million.

Mr. Towery said that they would not spend the entire amount within the next two to three months, but it was feasible that they could spend a few hundred thousand dollars on feasibility study work and other site layout work, which would require the site civil engineer's involvement. He said that this work would be unique to the site. He said that in contrast, much of the other work, such as planning and programming the school, would be replicable and useful if they were to select another site at a later time. He said that one thing he wanted to emphasize was that the overall timeline on this project was tight. He said that he was simply being upfront and honest about that.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed it was essential for the Board to acknowledge that they were initially planning to renovate Drew Middle School, but they had since shifted to a rebuild. She said that given the limited time built into the schedule, they needed to be mindful of the timeline. She said that Mr. Towery’s statement was accurate, and it was possible that they may end up saving money once the project was bid, similar to what they had experienced with Elementary Schools 18 and 19. She said that however, they did not yet know the final costs.

Mr. English said that he believed everything Mr. Towery said. He said that he was not disputing anything. He said that as he had mentioned earlier, according to what he had read, the note memo had been received by the County Administrator on November 13, and it was now dated November 19. He said that he would like to discuss this matter further with Ms. Light, which is why he was requesting a deferral to next month.

Ms. Allen made a substitute motion, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to approve proposed Resolution R24-347, with the appropriation limited to $3,592,000, deleting the contingency and the additional funding for the land.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (1) English

ITEM 3. SHERIFF; R24-344; CONSIDER APPROVING THE APPLICATION BY THE STAFFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES RECOGNIZING STAFFORD COUNTY AS A CERTIFIED CIME PREVENTION COMMUNITY

Major Jason Dembowski said that the proposed Resolution R24-344 was requesting the Board's permission to apply to the Department of Criminal Justice Services to recognize Stafford County as a Certified Crime Prevention Community. He said that the program had a certification process, and he could assure the Board that they were already meeting and exceeding the requirements.

Major Dembowski said that for instance, they were conducting site plan reviews, school safety audits, neighborhood watch programs, and they had a certified crime prevention specialist, Sergeant Curtis from their crime prevention unit, who did excellent work. He said that they were also exceeding the optional requirements, including their worship watch program, hosting National Night Out, their McGruff program, and their school resource officer program.

Major Dembowski said that the primary benefit to Stafford County was demonstrating their commitment to having a safe community and being certified as such. He said that this certification would also provide the locality with preference in the Commonwealth of Virginia grant process, allow them to market their County with certified signage, potentially attract visitors and residents, and enable residents to seek lower premiums on their homeowners insurance.

Major Dembowski said that if approved, they would be the 13th locality in the Commonwealth with this designation, and he believed it would demonstrate their commitment to public safety. He said that Sergeant Curtis was present for any questions.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve proposed Resolution R24-344.

Dr. Yeung asked if there were any unfunded mandates that would be required to implement once they accepted the regulations.

Major Dembowski said that there were no additional costs associated with this application process or certification process. He said that everything they were doing was already factoring in the costs they incurred on a daily basis for their business operations.

Dr. Yeung asked if any additional medical staff were needed.

Major Dembowski said that no, they were not required.

Ms. Bohmke called the vote on approval of proposed Resolution R24-344.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch to authorize closed session.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to utilize this opportunity for discussion. She said that she had recently spoken with the County Attorney, as they had a strict 6:30 p.m. deadline for public comments, which meant they could not conduct the closed session. She said that she believed their recommendation should be to add one final item to the agenda, proceed with public comments, and then conduct the closed session on this item after the public comments and before public hearings. She said that if the motion could be withdrawn, they could move forward with the revised agenda.

Ms. Allen withdrew her motion to authorize closed session.

ITEM 4. PLANNING AND ZONING; R24-357; CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO FACILITATE THE COMPLETION OF THE PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS APPLICATIONS AFFECTED BY THE TRANSFEER OF THE OFFICE OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Kathy Baker, Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning, said that this was simply a transfer of a matching fund grant program from one state agency to another. She said that as a result, the County Administrator would be authorized to sign any necessary documents or agreements to accept the transfer of that program.

Mr. English motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve proposed Resolution R24-357.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)
Absent: (1) Allen

ITEM 5. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; CONSIDER ENDORSING A LETTER TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (BDHDS) REGARDING REGULATIONS FOR THE APPROVAL OF MOBILE MEDICATION AND ASSISTED TREATMENT SERVICES

Anthony Toigo, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, said that in 2021, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued a final rule allowing registered providers of opioid treatments to add a mobile component to their existing services. He said that if a provider was currently a brick and mortar operation, they could now add a mobile component under DEA regulations. He said that the state was seeking to incorporate these regulations into state law to address any legal ambiguities.

Mr. Toigo said that he had collaborated with VACo and County staff to draft comments for the Board to consider, which would be sent to the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services (DBHDS). He said that these comments encouraged DBHDS to ensure effective communication with localities if any sites were selected, with public safety officials if any facilities were built, and to inform localities and the public in a timely manner to allow for comments.

Ms. Bohmke said that the Board appreciated the work Mr. Toigo had done on this letter, and it served as a means of communication and security for those using the medication van. She said that the letter also aimed to inform the community about the vans' locations and activities, ensuring they were secure and protected.

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Ms. Allen, to endorse the letter to the DBHDS regarding regulations for the approval of mobile medication and assisted treatment facilities.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

ITEM 6. VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2024 STAND ALONE ISSUANCE UPDATE AND ARBITRAGE REBATE

Ms. Light said that staff had provided the schedule to the Board for the Virginia Public School Authority's stand-alone issuance, which included $50 million in proceeds for elementary schools 18, 19, 3R projects and continuing with high school number 6. She said that at the time of presentation, they were uncertain about the schedule. She said that the presidential election caused market fluctuations, prompting their financial advisors to recommend waiting.

Ms. Light said that they were able to proceed with the bond sale today, with 14 bidders competing for the opportunity. She said that the spread among the bids was only four basis points, resulting in a very competitive bid. She said that Raymond James Financial was the lowest bidder, offering a true interest cost of 3.52%. She said that in comparison, their 2023 standalone issuance had a true interest cost of 3.51%, demonstrating a remarkably similar outcome.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the bond was for 20 years or 30 years.

Ms. Light said that it was for 20 years.

Ms. Light said that it was good news and they were pleased with the outcome. She said that she would like to discuss arbitrage. She said that for the benefit of the public, she would like to explain how they issue bonds and keep this brief, as they were running low on time. She said that local governments can issue tax-exempt bonds, which means the buyer does not have to pay taxes on the interest earned. She said that this makes it an attractive addition to investment portfolios for governments, as they can issue debt at a lower rate.

Ms. Light said that according to Moody's, reported on November 15, corporate AAA bonds were at 5.21%. She said that they could see that they had an advantage by selling their tax-exempt bonds today at 3.52%. She said that they had observed that RVPSA earnings had been around 5.73% on their 2023 issuance. She said that on the flip side, the IRS wanted to discourage governments from earning interest above the issuance rate.

Ms. Light said that looking at long-term treasury rates in 2024, they were at 4.5%, whereas in 202, they were at 2.2%  She said that in essence, they were able to sell those bonds at a low rate and earn great interest on them. She said that Stafford was not alone; their external auditors and consultants were seeing this nationwide, which was a consequence of market conditions. She said that this was all good news. She said that they would have an arbitrage rebate for Stafford County Public Schools for the issuances that were on the right of the slide.

Ms. Light said that this rebate was not funded by tax dollars, and they had earned interest of about $7 million in the VPSA 2023 borrow, and $3.2 million would have to go to the IRS. She said that they had earned every penny they absolutely could, which was positive news. She said that moving forward, when this was put together, they stated that they would issue the VPSA stand-alone in the future, timing it with the market. She said that however, that was now, so as a result, they would be requesting the Board to budget for excess interest earnings to be sent to the IRS, which they would bring back in January as part of their mid-year discussion.

Ms. Bohmke said that to clarify for the public, the arbitrage is only related to the issuance of bonds. She said that when they got their $20 million in bond funds, they could not spend it all at once because the project did not occur on the first day. She said that during the construction time period, they invested these funds in a higher earning instrument to make a little bit of money, which is referred to as arbitrage. She said that she wanted to ensure the public understood that Stafford County was not investing in arbitrage like Orange County, California did 30 years ago, which resulted in extreme financial difficulties.

**RECESS**

The Board recessed at 6:28 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m.

**PRESENTATIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

1. Molly Denham, Hartwood District, said that last week, she was dismayed but not surprised when the Board approved and amended the bylaws and rules of procedure. She said that she understood and supported the changes to the way Board meetings and schedules were being set up. She said that however, she had a problem with the decision made at the last minute to remove all standing committees. She said that this was not discussed with the public at large during regular Board meetings when other changes were being considered. She said that removing all standing committees was only briefly mentioned during a work session.

Ms. Denham said that their vote last week effectively eliminated the only resource the County had dedicated to evaluating and improving affordable workforce housing. She said that according to the County comprehensive plan, nearly half of all renters in the County were considered Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed individuals or ALICE. She said that these individuals made enough money to not be classified as poor, but not enough to afford essentials such as childcare, healthcare, and housing.

Ms. Denham said that she had asked various Board members since the meeting what this Board was doing to address or improve the situation. She said that the general consensus was that they tried to ask developers to help, which was not a plan and was a sad response. She said that during the meeting, a couple of ideas were proposed by some Board members, but the rest of the Board summarily ignored them and even became hostile at times, talking over any potential discussion. She said that furthermore, reviewing the County comprehensive plan, the section on affordable housing was inadequate at best.

Ms. Denham said that it provided no substantial guidance or plan on how the County intended to address the known problem. She said that the general approach, according to the comprehensive plan, was to hope for the best, but not take any concrete action to make a positive change. She said that the County currently had no plans to help those who needed it most, and she would like to know what the Board intended to do about it going forward. She said that as a member of the public who was personally affected by the lack of affordable housing, she would like to know what her elected officials planned to do about it, beyond simply acknowledging the problem and shrug their shoulders.

2. Al Watkins, George Washington District, said that as the Board members were aware, both he and many residents in the Southern Gateway region of their County were keenly interested in the future of local transportation. He said that tomorrow evening, the consultants hired by Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) to study a new bridge and parkway over the Rappahannock would be presenting their analysis between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at the Fredericksburg Nationals Stadium. He said that he encouraged everyone to attend.

   Mr. Watkins said that the consultants had made a preliminary presentation at last night's FAMPO meeting. He said that he was surprised that their presentation and conclusions did not include some available information that should have been impactful. He said that on the other hand, they had included some findings that were given greater weight and preference than might have been warranted. He said that that was why he hoped to meet with each and every one of the supervisors to provide information that he believed would be important and helpful in ultimately making a decision.

   Mr. Watkins said that some information that was not presented at last evening's consultant presentation was that, according to traffic modeling in the year 2050, adding a bridge, such as the option B2 bridge, would result in an increase of over 25,000 more trips than if no bridge were ever built. He said that however, despite this increase, it was presented that all the trips utilizing a bridge would be much quicker. He said that this was particularly welcome news for those who lived in the Celebrate Virginia neighborhoods. He said that in some projections, for example, travel time from the Celebrate community to the Spotsylvania Town Center would decrease from 30 minutes to just 11 minutes, a decrease in travel time of 63%. He said that this was indeed wonderful.

Mr. Watkins said that there was one caveat, however, that was not being recognized regarding travel in their region, and he believed that a new river crossing would only exacerbate the problem. He said that data from the river crossing research report indicated that the majority of trips made in their region originated from Stafford to the Central Park and Spotsy Town Center regions. He said that overall, the data revealed that there were 6,000 more trips per day from Stafford to Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania, compared to trips from those areas traveling north into Stafford.

Mr. Watkins said that it was likely that many of the trips originating south of the river and returning to Stafford were from Stafford residents who had traveled south for the day. He said that according to Bill Freeling, a government official in the City of Fredericksburg, the new road was likely to have a positive impact on economic development and tax revenue generation in the City of Fredericksburg, to the extent that it made it easier for traffic to access developments south of the river. He said that he was enthusiastic about the new river crossing. He said that he would be even more enthusiastic if they had some revitalization on Route 17, which would encourage people from the south to visit and spend money in Stafford County.

3. Darla Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said that she would like to address the value of Stafford. She said that to illustrate her point, she would like to share a parable of the water bottle. She said that this was a parable that served as a reminder to consider one's surroundings when they feel undervalued or overlooked. She said that the parable goes like this: at Costco, a bottle of water costs $0.25. She said that in a local supermarket, it's $0.50. She said that in a bar, suddenly that same bottle costs $2. She said that in a fancy restaurant or hotel, it would be $3. She said that at an airport or on a plane, it may be $5. She said that the bottle and its brand remain constant, but the location determines its perceived value. She said that she would explain how this concept applies to Stafford.

   Ms. Stencavage said that in February of this year, a former Economic Development Director, Kyle Alwine, stated that if a common project benefits the County and is opposed, it sends a message to businesses. She said that sometimes it was not about tax revenue, but about showing that they were open for business. She said that however, she believed that Mr. Alwine's statement and similar comments from Stafford County officials, which suggested that they were open for business at any cost, were sending the wrong message. She said that they were portraying Stafford as a bottle of water in a Costco, rather than a place of value that values its residents.

   Ms. Stencavage said that when projects like Buc-ee's or other convenience stores were approved without bringing extra value to the County and its residents, they were perpetuating the problem. She said that it was no wonder that stores like Trader Joe's, which were considered high-end, declined to locate in Stafford because it did not fit their target model. She said that despite being one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, they were often undervalued and overlooked. She said that they needed to demonstrate their value and worth. She said that she urged the Board to reject proposals like Buc-ee's and the Stafford Parks project that would be discussed tonight.

4. Peter Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said that he was sitting in a parking lot the other day, and he noticed a car with small dents and dings on it, which made him think about how people typically care for their new vehicles. He said that they took care of them, parked them away from other cars to avoid dents and scratches, and as time passed, the importance of parking in a safe location became less significant with the more dents and scratches the car accumulated.

   Mr. Stencavage said that this was similar to the broken window effect in sociology, which suggested that when physical signs of disorder, such as graffiti, litter, or abandoned buildings, were left unrepaired, it could lead to social disorder, higher crime rates, and decreased safety. He said that this theory could be applied to a street, neighborhood, or community, including Stafford County. He said that he believed that they could all agree that they would like their fellow citizens and neighbors to be able to live in an area without graffiti, litter, and higher crime. He asked to what extent they were willing to put their money where their mouth was.

   Mr. Stencavage said that they could discuss issues like traffic congestion, pollution, and higher crime, but if it was just talk, he wondered if that really helped their neighbors. He said that the broken window effect could slowly bleed into other districts of Stafford County, not just Garrisonville. He said that in essence, they should not be in this alone. He said that they owed it to all their neighbors to make better choices for the future of Stafford County. He said that one unrepaired broken window or 120 gas pump Buc-ee’s in one part of Stafford County sent a signal that no one cared, so breaking more windows in the rest of Stafford County meant nothing.

5. Daniel Cortez, Aquia District, said that he spoke as a private citizen and not as a presidential or gubernatorial appointee. He said that it was reported to him by a number of citizens watching the last Board meeting that Supervisors Gary and Yeung, in what was suggested as a sign of disrespect, walked out as he approached and as he made remarks about the election outcome. He said that in his most recent column printed in the Freelance Star the other day, he chronicled the facts that over 46% of the Hispanic vote, an increase of 13% from 2020 of mostly independent voters such as himself, and a 21% increase of the Black vote, the largest in 48 years, that gave Donald Trump a landslide victory.

   Mr. Cortez said that these voters, with large amounts of women, Asians, and veterans, chose Trump over Harris, and Congressman-elect Eugene Vindman. He said that the reasons included the economy, immigration, and integrity. He said that it was disturbing to hear the Aquia supervisor’s elected display of sour political grapes. He said that last election, he recalled the Garrisonville supervisor walking back to embrace citizens for supporting Abigail Spanberger due to what he saw as a serious lack of integrity in her opponent.

   Mr. Cortez said that she did not walk out of the room. He said that when independents wished Ms. Spanberger well, no one said a word. He said that elected officials served at their pleasure, not the other way around. He said that they asked they show maturity and responsibility, and they should respect their free speech that they gave blood for during Vietnam and other wars.

He said that President Trump will be President and Congressman Vindman will be their Congressman. He said that they should embrace maturity and wish them well.

Mr. Cortez said that on January 19, he would be celebrating President Trump's victory at the Hispanic 100's Black Tie Inaugural Ball. He said that the next day, he would be at the inauguration to show support of the office of the outgoing Commander-in-Chief, President Joe Biden. He said that he would witness incredible history for President Trump. He said that they would not be insulted because they honored them and they take the good and the bad. He said that supporters had an obligation to show respect for the office and exhibit strength of character, not public mental ineptitude or petulance.

6. Joe Brito, Hartwood District, said that he was representing over 6,000 people who support the establishment of a regional park on the site of the former Cannon Ridge Golf Course and the construction of the Cannon Ridge to Ferry Farm Riverwalk and Waterfall Trails. He said that this waterfall was situated on over a thousand acres of public land, yet there was no public access.

   Mr. Brito said that developers were controlling access to the land, intending to rezone it for their subdivisions and grant exclusive access to the HOAs, which he did not believe was fair. He said that they needed public access to the waterfall, and they had an opportunity. He said that Stafford County had the chance to create a historic events park and a riverwalk trail that would showcase over 50 historic sites, including this beautiful waterfall. He said that the trail could be promoted as America's most historic trail.

   Mr. Brito said that the Cannon Ridge Golf Course already featured over 7 miles of paved trails, a clubhouse, a lake, 150 parking spaces, and a large maintenance garage, making it an ideal candidate for acquisition with state and federal funding. He said that they should be able to secure 80% or 90% funding through grants. He said that there were 23 documented historic sites located on the golf course property alone. He said that there were 20 years of archeological digs that could take place here, and they could utilize the clubhouse as the headquarters. He said that there were the Mud March, Banks Ford, a trail system. He said that the 7 miles of paved trail were marked in green on the left of the aerial map and extended all the way to Route 17.

   Mr. Brito said that altogether it was 9.5 miles of trail. He said that on the right, the green area featured the trail from Falmouth Beach, which went all the way to the Chatham Bridge. He said that this trail should be extended to Ferry Farm. He said that the trail would include the beautiful waterfall, dozens of historic sites such as Hunter's Iron Works, the site of the Civil War Mud March, Hunter's Island, Rappahannock Canal Locks, and Belmont. He said that there were over 50 historic sites on the trails. He said that he had a more detailed presentation available on his Facebook page.

7. Kristen Maxson, Falmouth District, said that the Utilities Master Plan, which is six years old, is outdated for the public. She said that as seen in the document from February 15, 2018, and revised May 14, 2018, the Utilities Commission has announced that they will be undergoing

undisclosed changes. She said that they received a limited update today, but the impact on the Stafford public for not being informed is concerning.

Ms. Maxson said that the next Utility Commission schedule meeting is set for January 10, 2025 because the November and December meetings had been canceled. She said that the Stafford Tech Campus Impact Statement excludes certain key terms, including fiber, cable, utility, pump, committee, commission, board, representatives, housing, and other terms. She said that the water and sewer volumes are not defined. She said that the proffer statements exclude the County and replace VDOT and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies.

Ms. Maxson said that these redline changes took effect on March 8, 2024, page 3 of 14. She said that the public has many questions, and some of these will be addressed by the Board, as noted on page 8 of 796 of today's agenda. She said that the proposed R24-357 is open-ended, whereas the Stafford acquired conservation easements on properties are not defined. She said that the transfer of grants from one to another, as well as the description of the first two properties, are not specified. She said that tax maps are not included in this study.

Ms. Maxson said that the County Administrators signed the agreement on March 12, 2024, on a Sunday, which is not a working day. She said that the legal witness signed the document a day prior to Saturday, and the Administrator's signature came after that legal witness's. She said that this raises questions about the urgency of the agreement and whether it can be entered on December 31, 2023, or 2024. She said that on December 31, 2022, as seen on pages 29 and 38 of 796 of today's agenda, for signatures dated February 13, 2023. She said that resolution for locality is unknown, as stated on page 56 of the 796-page document.

8. Matthew Schiltz, Hartwood District, said that he was present to discuss the park proposal brought forward by Mr. Brito. He said that three minutes was insufficient time to thoroughly review this proposal. He said that Mr. Brito had done a commendable job of outlining it. He said that if anyone had not had a chance to review it, he recommended taking a look. He said that he believed most of the people in the room had already done so. He said that he did not think there was anyone in the room who had not reviewed it; it was a very good proposal. He said that it was easy to get behind something like this.

   Mr. Schiltz said that as the leader of Slow Down Stafford, he was committed to slowing down uncontrolled growth in Stafford County. He said that this project aligned with that goal. He said that currently, there was an application to build more homes on a portion of the golf course, and the Board must immediately shut down this application. He said that with 7,000 homes already approved but not built, they did not have sufficient space for their infrastructure, including schools and roads, as it was now. He said that everyone he spoke to wanted more trails and parks. He said that he had frequently visited the waterfall and shared photos online.

   Mr. Schiltz said that if anyone had not seen them, he could send them to them. He said that he would be happy to take them on a tour of the waterfall if they wished. He said that if anyone had not had the opportunity to visit, it was a beautiful property. He said that he regularly took his children there. He said that the historical significance of this property was undeniable. He said that it was a site of great importance, as evidenced by the Mud March, which was studied in history classes across the country. He said that he did not grow up in Virginia, but he was familiar with the Mud March and General Burnside. He said that the significance of this property extended beyond its historical importance.

Mr. Schiltz said that the one thing they were missing was that the owner did not want to sell. He said that it ultimately came down to the Board. He said that they must put pressure on the owner and explain that they would not allow them to build more houses on this site. He said that once they had successfully conveyed their message, he believed the owner would be more receptive to building a park in that location. He said that it was his understanding that the owner had expressed a desire to build a park, but it would be a private facility rather than a public one. He said that by applying pressure, they may be able to secure access to the waterfall and river. He said that he was in favor of the park proposal and urged the Board to do everything in their power to make it a reality.

9. Derek Campos, Fredericksburg City, said that he taught youth in the Stafford Civil War Park and on private farmland in the Hartwood District. He said that they taught nature skills, art skills, survival skills, and outdoor leadership skills. He said that he was also a Virginia Master Naturalist. He said that he was here in support of their ideas. He said that he appreciated the fact that there was still open land available, close to cities and development.

   Mr. Campos said that he was not sure who had the appetite or the power to make these things work, but he thought that when the next generation came around and the one after that, what was more important than money and profit, and gas stations and the development of suburban America, was essentially untouched land. He said that it was becoming increasingly rare, especially near urban areas. He said that in the past few decades, the loss of habitat had led to a decline in insects, birds, and other animals.

   Mr. Campos said that many people were worried that climate change could lead to a cascade of negative effects. He said that some said there was a crisis in the country where kids had limited options to go outdoors affordably and form meaningful relationships with nature. He said that he believed it would be really cool if they could find a way to have an appetite for leaving a legacy that prioritized the preservation of untouched land. He said that to him, there was nothing better than leaving the next seven generations with actual, untouched land.

   Mr. Campos said that they could build everything they thought they wanted, but then, a hundred years later, it would likely be forgotten. He said that on the other hand, if they did not touch the land, it became incredibly valuable. He said that he had had the opportunity to spend time in these woods, including Fredericksburg, Stafford, and the area by the Rappahannock River, which was a national treasure and would be an incredible park. He said that he did not know how it got done, but something other than suburban development would be truly awesome.

10. Bart Randall, Garrisonville District, said that it was great that they had a transportation master plan. He said that as a County, they needed on for the past 10 to 15 years before it was finally updated, and it was great to see that impact fees were on the agenda. He said that those had

been stagnant for ten years, and many houses could not be built without the transportation master plan, so he was glad that was taken care of. He said that he would now like to highlight the rest of the plans that are overdue.
Mr. Randall said that they had a parks plan and a utilities plan that were long overdue. He said that he was unsure of what the regularity was for getting these things updated, but it should not take six to eight years; they should be on a regular schedule of updating. He said that he was unsure of the current deficit for Parks and Recreation, but he believed that when they were working on the comprehensive plan three years ago, it was about 800 acres of parks land deficit in the County.

Mr. Randall said that he guessed that it likely had gotten worse, so they were probably near a deficit of 1,000 acres of recreational area in the County. He said that it was challenging to provide the County with what they needed when they had a significant deficit of this magnitude. He said that he believed that they must find a way to improve this situation. He said that he was not aware of the solution, but he was aware that proffers, which were established in 2003 on building houses, were considered sacrosanct.

Mr. Randall said that they could not change these proffers without doing a disservice to the County. He said that however, he believed that there was an opportunity to negotiate with the developer to find a solution that would allow them to create a park in the area. He said that he was confident that with negotiation, they could address both the park deficit and part of their overall deficit. He said that their primary goal should be to serve the best interests of Stafford County, and he firmly believed that they had the opportunity to do so.

**PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS BY DEPARTMENTS (CONTINUED)**

ITEM 7. PLANNING AND ZONING; R24-354; CONSIDER A REQUEST TO VACATE A PORTION OF THE BARRETT KNOLLS BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT AND SUBDIVISIONN PLAT TO REMOVE THE DESIGNATION OF OPEN SPACE FOR PARCEL A ON TAX MAP PARCEL 20PP-A

Mike Zuraf, Director of Planning and Zoning, said that the issue at hand was to consider approving a partial plat vacation within the Barrett-Knolls Commercial Development. He said that this would vacate open space on a single parcel. He said that the property, located between Garrisonville Road and Barrett Heights Road, was currently Zone B-2 on 1.5 acres of land. He said that the parcels under consideration were highlighted in red on the aerial map.

Mr. Zuraf said that Parcel 20PP-A was the specific parcel in question, which currently featured a stormwater management pond. He said that three other parcels in the area had commercial buildings. He said that a three-page plat was being considered, which required Parcel A to be used as open space. He said that this page of the plat identified Parcel A and designated it as open space. He said that the Barrett-Knolls Boundary Line Adjustments in plat had been originally approved and recorded in 2000, creating the three parcels, including an open space parcel.

Mr. Zuraf said that the Owners Association had taken over ownership in 2001, and the property had subsequently been developed as an office park. He said that if the partial vacation was approved and recorded, the parcel could be developed as a public parking lot, serving Germanna Community College, which occupied two of the surrounding office park buildings. He said that this was a subject of the first public hearing item tonight, a use permit for that item. He said that Resolution R24-354 would authorize the County Administrator to execute the deed and plat vacation to remove the open space designation.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to know what would happen to the integrity of the existing stormwater system if the lot were vacated for open space and the parking structure was built.

Mr. Zuraf said that the stormwater still needed to be managed, and that was the only feasible location for it. He said that as a result, the plan was to implement underground stormwater detention. He said that this involved engineered structures that served the same purpose as a standard stormwater pond, but were done underground, which was a common practice.

Dr. Yeung said that she was wondering about how the lack of a stormwater management system when it rains would affect the situation. She said that her main concern was that there would be an issue if there was one on only one side and not the other side. She asked if both of them would be underground.

Mr. Zuraf said that the primary purpose of this underground stormwater pond was to accommodate the drainage that would flow into it. He said that it would still require engineering to ensure it could handle the necessary drainage, which involved a series of calculations and formulas that had to be determined and reviewed by the County before approval and construction could proceed.

Dr. Yeung asked where it would be absorbed. She asked if it would be underground on the other side.

Mr. Zuraf said that it would be in the same spot, but underground.

Mr. Ashton said that if Dr. Yeung could imagine, it was like a vault located underground to store the water that would be held in the stormwater management pond, allowing it to flow out at a specific rate, similar to how they manage stormwater in a traditional pond, but instead of being above ground, it was situated beneath the surface.

Ms. Allen said that she believed it would be beneficial to know if there was a current structure in the County that served as a similar example, so they could use it as a point of reference.

Mr. Zuraf said that the Aquia Park commercial development located off of Route 1 had an underground detention system in place.

Ms. Allen asked if that location had any issues with underground water retention.

Mr. Zuraf said that he was not aware. He said that they would also need to enter into stormwater management agreements with the County and undergo regular maintenance, similar to an above-ground stormwater pond. He said that the maintenance was likely to be more complex.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the consequences would be if they did not do this.

Mr. Zuraf said that if the vacation was not approved, then it must remain as open space.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the implications were for Germanna, which was the next item they were talking about at the public hearing.

Mr. Zuraf said that as it relates to Germanna, Germanna required additional parking to accommodate their build-out, and the additional parking could be accommodated over this site. He said that this would hinder Germanna's ability to occupy the site.

Ms. Vanuch asked if this was in compliance with their County ordinance regarding parking requirements, or based solely on the school's perception of needing additional spaces based on its capacity.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the County was requiring it.

Mr. Zuraf said that that was correct.

Ms. Bohmke said that if this proposal was approved, the total parking deficit would be 123 spaces. She said that if it was not approved by the Board, the deficit would increase even further, assuming the land remained as open space.

Mr. Zuraf said that that was correct.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to adopt proposed Resolution R24-354.

The Voting Board tally was:
    Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
    No: (0)

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

ITEM 8. PLANNING AND ZONING; R24-310; CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) TO ALLOW A PUBLIC PARKING LOT IN THE B-2, URBAN COMMERCIAL ZONING DISTRICT ON TAX MAP PARCEL NO. 20PP-A (CUP23155273; PROJECT KNOWN AS BARRETT KNOLLS PUBLIC PARKING LOT)

Amy Taylor, Planning and Zoning, said that the request before the Board is for a conditional use permit for the Barrett Knolls Public Parking Lot, specifically to allow a public parking lot within the B-2 Urban Commercial Zoning District. She said that this request affects tax map parcel number 20PP-A, located in the Griffis-Widewater District. She said that the applicant and owner of the property is the Stafford Commerce Center's Owner Association, represented by Jonelle Cameron and Jessica Pfeiffer with Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, and Walsh.

Ms. Taylor said that the property, situated along the east side of Center Street, approximately 400 feet north of Garrisonville Road, is currently zoned B-2 urban commercial. She said that the surrounding zoning districts are primarily B-2 to the north, south, east, and west, with some R-3 districts to the east. She said that the property is part of former parent parcels Tax Map 20-100 and 20-102, which were rezoned at separate times to B-2 in October 1986 and December of 1996, and is subject to two existing proffers. She said that the Barrett Knolls Office Park was developed in two phases between 2000 and 2001. She said that this site was specifically designed and constructed as a stormwater management facility to serve the office park, and has remained in continuous operation since its completion.

Ms. Taylor said that the existing conditions at the site, as shown on this slide, depict that the site is located along the east side of Center Street, but lacks direct frontage along Center Street itself. She said that the site is open, with minimal existing vegetation, except for a few medium-sized trees and shrubby overgrowth along the eastern property line, adjacent to the Stafford Meadows condos. She said that in addition to the site's existing features, sensitive resources include office uses to the north, south, and east, as well as residential uses immediately to the east, and some commercial retail in the surrounding area.

Ms. Taylor said that the next slide is a street view of the site as seen from the parking lot at 10 Center Street, which is located just southwest of the site. She said that they are proposing to construct a public parking lot, and the provided Generalized Development Plan (GDP) depicts the site layout, which will provide approximately 103 parking spaces, ultimately serving Germanna Community College, located at 10 and 25 Center Street.

Ms. Taylor said that the existing stormwater management pond would be converted to an underground detention facility, maintaining the existing stormwater capacity for the park. She said that a proposed landscape buffer was also planned along the eastern property line, adjacent to the Stafford Meadows condos, as required by the zoning ordinance. She said that a large parking island in the center of the lot would provide interior landscaping, including small shrubs and ornamental grasses, and would also be developed as a small pocket park, featuring outdoor furniture or seating.

Ms. Taylor said that the site currently lacked access to Center Street, and no new entrances were proposed, although two new points of access would be provided through the existing abutting parking lots to the north and south. She said that the comprehensive plan designated the property within the suburban land use designation and partially within a recommended commercial corridor, and the proposal aligned with the land use recommendations for both suburban areas and commercial corridors.

Ms. Taylor said that the proposed public parking lot use was consistent with the established development pattern in the surrounding area and would support the community college use adjacent to the site. She said that the proposed use was expected to have little to no impact on current level of service standards and was consistent with the comprehensive plan policy discouraging degradation of the affected transportation system. She said that existing proffers and proposed conditions would limit any potential negative impacts to the adjacent properties.

Ms. Taylor said that some of the proposed conditions included requiring the property to be developed in general accordance with the GDP, installing a six-foot opaque fence along the eastern property line to screen the parking from view of the adjacent parcels within the Stafford Meadows condo development. She said that this proposal would require the open space area within the center of the parking lot to be developed as a pocket park, including outdoor furniture, seating, and additional landscape plantings.

Ms. Taylor said that staff noted several positive aspects of the application, including its consistency with the comprehensive plan's recommendations for commercial development in suburban areas, alignment with the established development pattern along Garrisonville Road and the surrounding area, the potential for additional parking, which would support the community college adjacent to the site, and the proposed conditions, which would help mitigate potential negative impacts.

Ms. Taylor said that staff was supportive of the project and recommended approval of the application with conditions as outlined in resolution R24-310. She said that on September 25, 2024, the Planning Commission voted 6-0 with one absence to recommend approval of the application.

Ms. Allen asked if there was permitted use of structured parking in the area.

Ms. Taylor said that structured parking would likely be permitted, but the structures would need to comply with the height regulations. She said that she was not certain about the specifics regarding B-2 zoning, but she did know that a conditional use permit was required for a standalone parking lot, as there was no other use on the property. She said that therefore, she would assume that the parking structure would be permitted, as long as it adhered to the height regulations for B-2 zoning.

Ms. Allen said that one reason she asked was that she was curious about the height and the overall appearance of the environment, as well as the surrounding area. She said that she was also curious about their parking deficit, as it appeared there would still be a limited amount available behind the parking lot. She said that she wondered if this was an option, but it seemed the applicant would be able to address this question when they presented their plans.

Ms. Taylor said that she would need to defer to the applicant. She said that another concern was their ability to meet their stormwater requirements. She said that she was unsure if it would be feasible to accomplish this with a parking structure on top of the detention vault, so it may be something the applicant could address.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the applicant had a presentation.

Jessica Pfeiffer with Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, and Walsh, said that she was representing the owner and applicant, Stafford Commerce Center Owners Association and Nextier Real Estate Investors. She said that Nextier acquired the Stafford Commerce Park and Center in 2019, and the campus is now known as Nextier Connect Quantico. She said that this proposal aims to add more parking within the campus. She said that the attached aerial image shows the location of the property, with the blue star marking the proposed parking lot. She said that the Nextier Connect Quantico comprises six office buildings, totaling approximately 268,000 square feet across 18 acres.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that at the time of purchase, there were approximately 150,000 square feet of vacant space across the campus. She said that in 2022, Germanna Community College announced a major expansion in Stafford County, purchasing two buildings within the campus to establish their Center of Education Excellence. She said that these two buildings, totaling approximately 74,000 square feet, will serve as the Barbara J. Freed building and the Kevin L. Dillard Health Sciences Building. She said that the Barbara J. Freed building will offer a full suite of student support services, as well as dedicated space for business, information technology, and cyber security training.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that the Kevin L. Dillard Health Sciences Building will be a North Stafford hub for health services and healthcare education, featuring a cutting-edge facility to train the next generation of healthcare professionals. She said that as part of the sale to Germanna Community College, Nextier agreed to provide additional parking at Nextier Connect Quantico, on the parcel highlighted in blue. She said that the existing open stormwater management pond will be converted to parking, and stormwater management will be addressed in a vault underground.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that the parcel is approximately 1.52 acres and is zoned B-2 urban commercial. She said that she will now address some of the questions she received, as most of the information she presented is similar to what Ms. Taylor shared. She said that to clarify, this is a parking lot proposal, not a structure. She said that their civil engineer is present, and she explained that they cannot place a parking structure over the vault because the structure would have footers, and that would not work over the vault.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that this proposal includes 103 parking spaces. She said that the applicant is Nextier, and Stafford Commerce Center is also being considered for this. She said that this is not a Germanna proposal, but rather one they are providing for Germanna's parking needs. She said that the number of parking spaces will be determined by the applicant's specific needs, based on the county's zoning ordinance, lab space, office space, classroom space, and hours of operation.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that if the applicant has more nighttime classes, it will impact the available parking. She said that they had agreed, as part of the sale, to provide 103 parking spaces on this parcel, which is the purpose of this conditional use permit. She also had a couple of other questions. She said that one other question was if there are any other vaults like this in the County. She said that their civil engineer, Boehler, designed the Chick-fil-A at Burns Corner, and that location did have a similar vault.

Ms. Pfeiffer said that many newer developments used underground stormwater management, which allowed for less land use with a large pond, for example. She said that the vault would be constructed in phases, allowing for stormwater retention during the entire construction process. She said that she had a technical view of the vault's design and functionality, and it would be maintained via an easement. She said that Alina from Boehler would be happy to answer any specific questions regarding the underground stormwater management.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing and asked if any members of the public wished to speak on this item. Seeing none, she closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to adopt proposed Resolution 24-310.

Dr. Yeung said that she understood that parking was needed for students and staff at this Germanna Community College location. She said that she welcomed young minds in pursuing careers in nursing and cybersecurity.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung

No: (0)

ITEM 9. HUMAN RESOURCES; O24-24; CONSIDER ADOPTING UPDATES TO THE COUNTY'S SALARY ADMINISTRATION POLICY AND AUTHORIZING THE PAYMENTS OF BONUSES TO IMPLEMENT THE POLICY, ALL TO ENHANCE EMPLOYMENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Shannon Wagner, Director of Human Resources, said that they were here to hold a public hearing to consider three policy recommendations in the form of either a bonus or a stipend. She said that the three items she would discuss in detail were a sign-on bonus, a stipend related to bilingual pay, and an employee referral bonus. She said that the action before the Board was to hold this public hearing and then consider next steps for Ordinance 24-24.

Ms. Wagner said that first, the sign-on bonus. She said that they proposed a tiered sign-on bonus structure to help recruit candidates in difficult-to-fill positions. She said that the tiers would be directly related to the type of position and the level of difficulty in the market. She said that Human Resources would work with County Administration to identify specific positions that should be considered at each tier. She said that they would evaluate factors such as turnover data, the length of time a position had been open, and other relevant information. She said that to be eligible, the position must be approved prior to advertisement through County Administration.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had a quick question regarding their budgeting process for this request, which was outside the regular budget cycle. She said that although they had previously discussed this in one-on-one meetings, she believed it was essential for public transparency that they understood how this was being funded. She said that she wanted to know if they could explain how these budgets would not impact future year's budgets or how these bonuses would or would not affect future year's budgets.

Ms. Wagner said that for the current fiscal year, they were proposing utilizing vacancy savings to support these initiatives. She said that these were new programs, which made it challenging to accurately anticipate the budget requirements going forward. She said that they would be tracking this information and would report it back to the Board for consideration and potential funding in subsequent budgets.

Ms. Gary said that regarding that, since these were sign-on bonuses for vacancies, they were not recurring costs. She said that essentially, they used them when they found someone and brought them on board, and they would not need to repeat the process because the position would then be filled. She said that she just wanted to clarify this point for the public.

Dr. Yeung asked if staff could clarify whether the bonuses were planned to be implemented all at once or phased in. She said that she was considering the current staffing challenges within the Planning and Zoning Department, which were facing difficulties in filling certain positions. She asked if they were starting it now or beginning it next year.

Ms. Wagner said that if the Board approved this recommendation, the Human Resources department would begin working with County Administration to identify the positions currently available that would fall under this program. She said that this list would be constantly changing, and it may be challenging to fill those positions at this time. She said that once the vacancies were filled, the department would reassess its needs and potentially adjust the sign-on bonuses accordingly. She said that the evaluation process would commence once the Board had provided its approval, should they choose to move forward with it.

Mr. English asked if this request only was meant to attract new hires and would not be given to any employee. He asked if the County Administrator would oversee it and give everything the green light, so it would not come before the Board again.

Mr. Ashton said that during their one-on-one meetings, the Board members had made it clear that they wanted to report out on their progress. He said that going forward, they would work on a quarterly report to track how many and where they had applied these measures, as well as the total amount applied throughout the time period.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to pose a question for her colleagues to consider as they move through the rest of the presentation. She said that this was not a requirement for an immediate response, but rather something to keep in mind as they discuss the budget implications for the upcoming year. She said that for example, this year they were utilizing vacancy savings, but in the third year, they would be considering the larger payouts associated with the bonus, including the amounts of $10,000 and $12,000.

Ms. Vanuch said that therefore, she was unsure if they wanted to establish a predetermined budget for this process. She said that as Dr. Yeung had mentioned, they were aware that Planning and Zoning was struggling to find staff, and they acknowledged the difficulties in securing project managers and transportation services. She said that to address this, she proposed that the County Administrator develop a set of criteria for evaluating these, including a maximum budget threshold.

Ms. Vanuch said that for example, after spending $100,000 in first-year bonuses, they may reassess the project and consider alternative options, as this would amount to $300,000 in the second year and $600,000 in the third year, based on her calculations. She said that this threshold would serve as a guideline for staff departments to consider when evaluating budget implications, and she planned to make a similar comment on other things that had ongoing expenses. She said that she believed it would be prudent for them to establish a standard threshold to ensure consistency and fairness across departments.

Mr. Ashton said that one of the first things they would do was identify areas where they were the weakest and needed the most help, and then focus their efforts there. He said that that was the original intention of this initiative. He said that he believed in the reporting structure, they could start an iterative conversation about whether they were allocating too much or too little resources, and they could certainly move forward with that. He said that it was essentially an iterative decision-making process. He said that they did not want to rush headlong into a decision and risk making a mistake, but by regularly reporting out and having these conversations, they could adapt to the changing landscape.

Ms. Vanuch said that she thought that was a good point for them, but for the public's transparency, she suggested they establish a threshold where they would present their progress to the public, such as when they reached $100,000, that the sign-on bonus was only for the first year, and that they had been able to critically hire for this project. She said that this public reporting could potentially lead to more support for additional departments and increased funding in future years. She said that as they must report to their taxpayers, who were ultimately paying for this, she believed this transparency was essential.

Mr. Ashton said that he agreed that was a reasonable approach. He said that going back to his previous point about iterative decision-making, he thought it was essential that they did not rush into this decision. He said that instead, they should take a step back, examine how it was working, assess its effectiveness, and then make a decision as they moved forward.

Ms. Wagner said that she would like to clarify one point. She said that she may have misheard, but it was not that the higher-level bonuses would not come into effect until subsequent years. She said that the proposed plan was that the sign-on bonus would be provided upfront at the time of hire, but if the employee left the organization before meeting the required retention period, they would then be required to repay that amount.

Ms. Vanuch said that she misread the phase and the tier components.

Ms. Wagner said that for Tier 1, the lowest sign-on bonus, the retention period was one year. She said that as the sign-on bonus increased, and they were investing more resources into that individual, they were asking them to commit to a longer retention period.

Ms. Bohmke said that to clarify, the different tiers represented different positions within the organization.

Ms. Wagner said that that was correct.

Ms., Wagner said that the second recommendation presented by staff today was a bilingual stipend. She said that they were recommending a $2,000 annual stipend for an employee who was bilingual. She said that the employee would be required to undergo a third-party testing to verify their bilingual status, and both the language and the position would need to be supportive of that status, providing support to their organization and their citizens. She said that this stipend would be paid out through every paycheck.

Ms. Vanuch asked if staff could discuss the peer localities they had reached out to for annual stipends on this item.

Ms. Wagner said that they had reached out to all of their peer localities, which included Spotsylvania, Prince William, Hanover County, Arlington, Alexandria, Loudoun, and some of them had responded. She said that the ones that had responded included Arlington, Prince William County, Spotsylvania County, Alexandria, and Loudoun.

Ms. Vanuch said that she recalled their two-on-one discussions, and she may have misinterpreted. She said that she thought they often compared, and what Spotsylvania was doing was relatively straightforward. She said that she verified this information with their Board, and they did not provide annual stipends. She said that instead, they offered a one-time payment with limited scope in this area.

Ms. Vanuch said that it was their understanding that this was a common practice among localities, and it was not an annual payment. She said that she did not have the opportunity to fact-check other localities, but she was flagging this as an area of concern for the Board. She said that perhaps they could pull this item out and revisit it later, as it had a significant budget impact in future years due to the lack of scope limitations on the departments that would receive this funding, and it represented an unending potential for spending.

Ms. Allen asked if all of these bonuses and stipends were subject to taxes.

Ms. Wagner said that that was correct.

Ms. Allen said that after $2,000, they were not really bringing anything home. She said that in the medical profession, they were required to use interpreters. She said that if the County were to hire interpreting services, she believed it would be a significant investment, far greater than the amount they were considering as a bonus, so that was something to be considered.

Ms. Allen said that another issue was the quality of the interpreting services. She said that currently, their employees were doing it for free, and for $2,000, they may receive $1,000 or $1,200 after taxes. She said that they were utilizing their skills and talents for $1,200 a year, which was likely far below the cost of hiring a professional interpreting service.

Mr. English said that during their one-on-one conversations, he thought it was $1,000. He said that he was on the same page as Ms. Allen, thinking that after taxes it was probably about $800. He said that his other question was how many they would pay out. He said that he would like to pull this specific item for further discussion.

Ms. Gary said that in reviewing what they had covered in their one-on-one meeting, the positions and pay they had discussed would be limited to public-facing roles, not just anyone in the organization who was bilingual. She said that specifically, these positions would require interaction with the public on a regular basis, and they would compensate for that. She asked if Ms. Wagner could review this aspect to ensure they were on the same page.

Ms. Wagner said that the intention behind this policy was to provide direct support to their community and its citizens, aligning with the many initiatives their employees were currently undertaking. She said that although specific departments were not listed, the department would be required to justify the need for this position, citing regular interaction with the public. She said that having someone who was bilingual in Spanish would be beneficial in continuing the translation service.

Ms. Gary said that she was wondering if that was explicitly stated somewhere. She said that if Ms. Wagner could please point her to the relevant section or location where it is mentioned, or if not, she wondered if it would be possible for her to include it in the text for clarity.

Ms. Wagner said that the policy was quite general. She said that the intent was to leave it more open to County Administration's discretion, but they could certainly clarify and provide more detail within the guidance or policy to make it more specific.

Ms. Gary said that if the Board was in agreement, she thought that would be something they would like to see. She said that if they already had that specific information documented, it would allow them to be more comfortable moving forward with it.

Dr. Yeung said that Ms. Wagner had mentioned that for instance, the Tier 2 bonuses had an 18-month retention period and a 36-month retention period. She said that she was unclear about whether this bonus was a one-time payment or if it was a recurring payment over three years.

Ms. Wagner said that it was one time and would be made at the point of hire.

Dr. Yeung said that this was different; the bilingual staff were present every year and translated every day, in addition to their regular job. She said that she had experience with this. She said that at 30 years ago, they may have had a small number of Hispanic residents in the County, but if they replicated the school system's approach, the current percentage was likely around 30%.

Dr. Yeung said that this meant they had more individuals requiring support and translation services in the County. She said that considering Ms. Allen's previous comments, she believed the long-term cost savings of having an interpreter who could speak the language and provide accurate translation would be significant. She said that the proposal was not sufficient, as she believed that when examining the school system, Farsi was likely to be one of the next languages they needed to consider. She asked if staff had considered this.

Ms. Wagner said that they did not restrict the language itself, but there would need to be justification from the department to demonstrate that not every language would be covered. She said that it would not be limited to Spanish, but rather to languages that had a significant population within their department. She said that there would need to be a demonstration that they had a significant population that spoke this language, and therefore, this would be beneficial.

Ms. Vanuch said that to summarize, she believed they were discussing the upcoming policy changes that included some of the provisions they were unable to agree on. She said that her suggestion would be to follow Ms. Gary's approach, which involved outlining the scope of the project, the limited scope of the needs, identifying specific departments eligible for funding, and determining whether the payment should be annual or one-time. She said that this approach would help limit the budget implications.

Ms. Vanuch said that in her opinion, this approach would provide a clearer understanding of the ongoing budget implications. She said that she was even more in support of the retention bonus, which she initially believed had a phased approach of one to three years. She said that however, she was concerned that they may end up with a \$100,000 to \$200,000 budget consequence over the years as the incentives progressed. She said that she was simply asking that they have this information before they voted on it, so that they could make an informed decision.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was a little disappointed that they did not have any data on the language aspect. She said that she wished they had some information to support their policy creation. She said that they were creating a policy here, but she felt like they lacked concrete data. She said that she would like to know, for example, whether 10 people visited Planning and Zoning in July who required assistance with language translation.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to have some basis for making a decision on this policy. She said that she was unsure if it was related to Planning and Zoning, or perhaps the assistance services available on the first floor, or even the DMV. She said that she did not have any information on where the language needs were within the County. She said that although they had asked about Social Services during their agenda review, and they had stated that they had sufficient personnel. She said that they had 145 languages spoken in the schools, which was a significant number. She said that however, she was struggling to support this policy without any data, and they were creating a policy on something with no data to support it.

Ms. Gary said that was a very good point. She said that having more data would enable them to make more informed decisions. She said that she also wanted to make a comment regarding their services. She said that they were available to everyone who lived in the County, regardless of their background or language. She said that it was not necessarily about the number of people from a certain demographic or who spoke a certain language, but rather whether they resided here. She said that this was important because they may not participate in their services if they felt they could not communicate effectively.

Ms. Vanuch said that her colleagues were aware that she had recently traveled to two foreign countries. She said that in most instances, she was the only American present, and she found Google Translate to be extremely effective. She asked if they had they considered utilizing this technology with any of the departments that may require similar assistance. She said that a few of these individuals were coming in to improve their bilingual skills, which would enable them to better meet those needs. She said that they had resources available to the staff, such as iPads in the Treasurer's Office, which had Google Translate readily available to make the process more accommodating for those who needed it.

Ms. Wagner said that she would have to follow up on that. She said that individual staff members have their individual phones, but she was unaware of the resources beyond that.

Mr. Diggs said that as he listened to the discussion on this topic, what stood out to him was that if they had County employees who spoke another language, this could be a retention strategy and also a recruitment tool. He said that by highlighting the opportunity to utilize their language skills in addition to their primary responsibilities, they could attract and retain employees from diverse backgrounds. He said that he thought they may be getting caught up in the details and overlooking the bigger picture.

Mr. Diggs said that what he had observed was that they often reached out to maintenance employees who spoke a particular language to help with specific tasks, even if they did not have a primary role in customer-facing interactions. He said that this proposal suggested that language skills were valuable assets, and they should focus on leveraging them as part of their recruitment and retention efforts. He said that by doing so, they could create a welcoming environment in Stafford County for all cultural backgrounds, encouraging everyone to come here to do business.

Ms. Allen said that she sat there frustrated because she used interpreting services every day at work. She said that despite her enthusiasm for technology, she believed it was not efficient because often she had to wait for translations or retranslate, which delayed services. She said that if they were being criticized for not being efficient with their processes, incorporating something that added more time to the process just because they did not want to provide a small bonus for staff with second languages did not seem productive to her. She said that they were not offering a $20,000 annual bonus for this benefit. She said that the $2,000 per year was a no-brainer, especially considering that languages could be nuanced and translation apps may not accurately convey the intended meaning.

Ms. Allen said that she had experienced this firsthand, particularly with patients, where the app's translation may not match the actual intended message. She said that she thought Dr. Young had hinted at this in their conversation, and she was familiar with the nuances of language translation. She said that she believed they should consider the complexities of language and not rely solely on technology. She said that arguing over a small amount like $2,000 for a benefit that required certification and demonstrated staff competence did not seem justified to her.

Dr. Yeung said that Ms. Allen had already mentioned this, but she wanted to reiterate the issue with the translation. She said that the Google Translate method resulted in inaccuracies, as it often mixed up verb and adjective forms, leading to non-exact translations. She said that to achieve accurate translations, it was essential that the individuals chosen for this task possessed a deep understanding of the language and were able to provide context and convey the intended meaning.

Ms. Bohmke asked Ms. Wagner to continue her presentation.

Ms. Wagner said that the third staff recommendation was a proposal to implement an employee referral bonus program. She said that this would empower their employees to refer qualified candidates from their personal networks, such as friends, past colleagues, or individuals she believed would be a good fit for an open position. She said that research has shown that applicants referred by current employees are statistically higher quality candidates compared to those who are not referred.

Ms. Wagner said that they are suggesting a modest referral bonus structure, with payments ranging from $300 to $500 for most positions, up to $1,200 for hard-to-fill positions. She said that to balance this out, the new hire would receive a sign-on bonus, while the referring employee would also receive a smaller portion of the referral bonus, paid in two installments: 50% at the time of hire and the remaining 50% after the new hire had completed one year of service. She said that this concluded her presentation.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing. She asked if any members of the public wished to speak to this item.

1. Bart Randall, Garrisonville District, said that he appreciated all the comments and questions, but it seemed like they were putting the cart before the horse. He said that he would add his questions to theirs. He said that to clarify, he would like to know how they defined a difficult position. He asked if it was based on why they could not hire someone, such as a bad work environment due to poor management.

   Mr. Randall asked if it was a specialized position that required a specific skillset, like a mechanical engineer or civil engineer. He said that he suggested that defining a difficult position based on the required skillset would be a more accurate approach. He asked how many positions did they consider difficult to fill. He asked if it was 10, 20, or 100. He said that they would need to define this number to address concerns about budget costs. He said that for example, if they were considering a bilingual position, he wondered how much the bonus should be.

   Mr. Randall said that he thought it was reasonable to consider the cost of hiring someone with a specialized language, such as Farsi or Tagalog, which may be rare in the County. He said that perhaps they should adjust the bonus amount accordingly. He said that additionally, he thought it would be beneficial to include bilingual ability as a requirement in the hiring process. He said that if they did, he wondered if they would also need to offer a higher salary to compensate for the added value of bilingual skills. He said that if someone was proficient in another language, he believed they would consider offering a higher salary to compensate for the added responsibility. He said that he believed the other point was that they would need to hold off on certain decisions.

   Mr. Randall said that he appreciated their ideas on this matter and would like to see more specifics before they proceeded. He said that it was essential that they have a clear understanding of the budget implications, including numbers for both the present and the future. He said that while the retention bonus was a valuable incentive, he was concerned about the potential for it to be used as a means to lure someone away from the County if they decided not to stay. He asked if they could discuss the legal process for retrieving the bonus if that were to happen. He asked if there were any precedents for this type of situation. He said that he believed they needed to delve deeper into these questions before they could finalize any decisions.

2. Molly Denham, Hartwood District, said that she had a few comments to share, and she must admit that she was a bit concerned about the generality of the policy. She said that while she believed it was essential for their County employees, she did have some questions. She said that she wondered how the repayment of sign-on bonuses would be enforced if employees were not present for their entire portion. She said that she was curious about the cost of third-party testing for bilingual pay, and she was wondering how much this would add in terms of costs.

   Ms. Denham said that in all honesty, she agreed with Ms. Allen that $2,000 a year for an employee was not a significant amount. She said that after taxes, it equated to approximately $0.63 per hour more in pay. She said that she agreed with Ms. Bohmke that more data was needed, but she was worried about budget creep, as Ms. Vanuch had mentioned. She said that she was concerned about the specifics: how would they cap and limit these costs, and how would they affect future years' budgets. She said that she would like to know the overall cost of implementing and maintaining these tiered systems, particularly in terms of HR and finance for their existing staff.

3. Ms. Maxson asked what specialty someone needed to have to translate English to English. She said that the Stafford people had repeatedly requested transparency. She said that they had a wall of logistics that had been built, and trying to explain this wall of logistics in a second language was very difficult. She asked if Stafford could work on transparency first in order to make things efficient for Stafford citizens and staff.

Ms. Bohmke closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Mr. English asked if staff could please consider including sign language as an option for the bonuses, as it was a very important skill to have.

Mr. English motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung to defer O24-24 until the second Board meeting in January.

Ms. McClendon said that for the Board's purposes, this item will return as a public hearing at the second meeting in January.

Ms. Gary said that while it was clear that further refinement was needed, she believed this was a crucial topic. She said that the need for bilingual services would continue to grow, and she understood the concern about what this might become. She said that their projected population growth was substantial, and it would include a diverse range of people, which was truly exciting. She said that they must figure out how to serve them in a responsible manner. She said that she appreciated staff's work on this and the discussion they had had so far.

Dr. Yeung said that she wanted to make sure Ms. Wagner had noted some of the public comments in addition to those from the Board.

Ms. Bohmke called the vote on the deferral of O24-24 Salary Administration to the second Board meeting in January.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

ITEM 10. UTILITIES; O24-22; CONSIDER AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND REORDAIN STAFFORD COUNTY CODE SEC. 25-165 "TYPE, CAPACITY, LOCATION, ETC." REGARDING ON-SITE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that he was here today to discuss an amendment to Chapter 25, which pertained to onsite disposal systems. He said that a conventional sewage system was commonly referred to as a drain field. He said that if a drain field could not be constructed on a lot, there were two alternative systems available. He said that the first type was an alternative onsite system, which discharged directly into the ground, similar to a drain field.

Mr. Edwards said that the second type was an alternative discharging sewage treatment system, defined in County code as any system that had a direct point source discharge, which was above ground, not into the ground, and required a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality. He said that alternative discharging systems were banned under Chapter 25-165 for new construction to help eliminate these above ground discharges.

Mr. Edwards said that Ordinance O24-22 proposed to amend County code to allow alternative systems to be considered for new construction of public facilities and public facilities only when the proposed location was outside the urban services area, and the parcel could not be served by a conventional onsite system or drain field, and the location of the facility could not be moved. He said that this amendment would provide the County with greater flexibility when locating facilities such as parks and fire stations.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to make a comment regarding the Rock Hill Fire Station. She said that this item is being brought forward because the fire station is outside the urban services area, and the fire station is unable to obtain a suitable septic tank for the property. She said that as a result, they were using an alternative system. She said that having previously served on the Planning Commission and currently on the Board, she must admit that she strongly opposed this project initially.

Ms. Vanuch said that however, she understands that it is necessary for public facilities to move forward in order to provide better services in rural areas. She said that she will support this proposal, but she wants to emphasize that it is specifically for public safety purposes and not intended for residential development. She said that she wants to make it clear to the developers present that this is not a viable option for residential projects.

Ms. Gary said that she did not think they could state that this system is only for public safety and no one else can utilize such a system.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was not stating that; she meant that this specific topic was due to the needs of a public safety facility.

Ms. Gary asked if Mr. Edwards could clarify the issue.

Mr. Edwards said that, in addition to the code change, one of the other points he did not mention was that above-ground discharging systems were permitted for residential and extreme cases. He said that if all other options had been exhausted, those systems could be used. He said that this code change specifically allowed public facilities to utilize discharging systems.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, she closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to approve Ordinance O24-22 On-Site Disposal.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)
Absent: (1) English

ITEM 11. UTILITIES; O24-23; CONSIDER PROPOSED ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND REORDAIN STAFFORD COUNTY CODE SEC. 25-193, "SEPTAGE HAULING" TO ALLOW FOR THE RESTRICTION OF HAULED WASTE

Jon Brindle, Environmental Compliance Manager, said that the proposed code change would disallow the acceptance of septage waste from outside the County. He said that septage refers to the septage pumped out of septic tanks. He said that they were required to pump septic tanks every five years for residential homes with septic tanks. He said that according to the historical record of County code, they had also allowed septage from outside the County to be treated at their water treatment plant. He said that this waste was extremely difficult to treat at their wastewater plants and posed a significant burden on the facilities.

Mr. Brindle said that both of their wastewater plants would undergo major construction within the next year, which would introduce significant safety concerns and increase the number of truckloads arriving daily. He said that this waste was a substantial cost and operational burden on the facilities. He said that for these purposes, staff recommended that they make a code change to disallow the acceptance of outside septage waste at County facilities.

Mr. Brindle said that this change was necessary due to the difficulties in treating this waste and the safety concerns it posed. He said that to clarify, the current rates would not change at all; the septage rates would still be tied to water and sewer rates, so the next proposed change would be in FY27. He said that they would additionally require the VDH authorization, which is already in place but would be made part of the official code language. He said that again, the main point of this proposal is to disallow any outside waste.

Mr. English asked how they determined whether the septage originated outside of the County or not. He said that if one company was based in Stafford County but operated in other areas, he wondered how they would monitor whether they were bringing in septage from outside the County.

Mr. Brindle said that they were required to provide both the address where they picked up the septage and the customer's contact information. He said that to ensure compliance, they were exploring various enforcement methods, with the primary goal being that if someone was found to be providing false information, they would lose their authorization to dump at either County facility, and would no longer be permitted to do so in the future.

Mr. English said that it would be a significant undertaking.

Mr. Brindle said that they were attempting to develop digital solutions that may help alleviate the burden on staff, but he said that they were still in the early stages of development.

Mr. English said that he was on a septic system, so he had to complete the five-year pumping, as per the County's requirements. He said that he received a letter from the County and he signed it. He said that he wondered what would happen if they sent a letter to the septic hauler, who then sent a letter to the County, thereby creating a system of checks and balances. He said that he understood that this would likely be a more labor-intensive process, but he was unsure how they planned to implement the honor system, which seemed to be what they were proposing.

Mr. Brindle said that they currently relied on their Community Development Department to send notifications to residents when their septic tanks were due for maintenance. He said that to improve this process, they planned to obtain a master list of septic tanks held by the Health Department, which would enable them to check records against the database before accepting shipments into the plants. He said that this approach was more efficient than conducting random checks or calling customers. He said that they were exploring alternative solutions, including an app for septic haulers to upload data, which would geolocate them on-site. He said that however, this option would require a slightly larger investment.

Ms. Vanuch said that this issue had arisen when they first discussed it, and she wanted to clarify the oversight and enforcement. She asked at what point would they propose a plan for the app, which she believed it would be the most efficient solution to alleviate the burden on staff. She asked if they could not utilize some of the septage fees to help cover the cost of the app, potentially offsetting some of the planned increases.

Mr. Brindle said that currently, they were exploring a couple of in-house options. He said that they also utilized online digital forms and smartphone app development for other functions. He said that their goal was to determine if they could launch a pilot program with some of the haulers who were more willing to collaborate with them. He said that if this solution proved viable, they aimed to implement it, hopefully by January, when the change would take effect. He said that they had already begun working on this and were developing it, although it was still in its early stages.

Dr. Yeung asked if they had been hauling for free or at reduced costs for residents.

Mr. Edwards said that she was referring to their pump-and-haul program, which they had implemented last year or the year before. He said that they had been subsidizing that program and had paid for approximately 20 houses in the County that were on the subsidized pump-and-haul program.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing. She asked if any members of the public would like to speak on this item.

1. Molly Denham, Hartwood District, asked if the reason for this decision was due to operational costs. She said that if so, she would like to know if the amount of outside use was a factor in this decision. She said that the fact that there was a demand for this service, as indicated by the amount of outside use, suggested that they should not lose this income. She said that instead, she thought they should consider charging a significant increase to continue providing this service. She said that there was potential for this, and she did not want to see the County lose income that could potentially be increased.

2. Bart Randall, Garrisonville District, said that he would ask the same questions: what was their current capacity, and were they operating at or near capacity with their wastewater treatment plans? He said that if they were projected to be down 50%, it may be worth considering alternative solutions. He said that if they returned to full capacity in two years and were only operating at 75% capacity, with 25% of capacity still available, why not consider the out-of-County cost option? He said that if they could achieve 100% capacity using out-of-County costs, and they were willing to pay $10,000, why not allow them to do so?

   Mr. Randall said that the only concerns would be if this would lead to overcapacity or reduced processing ability. He said that unless they planned to revisit this in two years when the wastewater treatment plans were completed, he would state that they had the ability, if necessary, to charge an out-of-County fee. He said that this would allow individuals to pay for services at their wastewater treatment plants if they had capacity for it. He said that they currently did this, so it was reasonable to assume they would still have capacity in two years. He said that if they were only operating at 75% capacity when they returned to full capacity, they were essentially wasting 25% of out-of-County fees that could be used for other purposes.

3. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that in 2022, the budget document listed only two entries for industrial activities. She said that their community had undergone a significant transformation from a farming community to a heavy industrial, traffic-heavy, and trucking-oriented County. She said that what she understood from neighboring counties was that they would dispose of their septic waste in drain fields when no one was looking. She said that this lack of oversight led to concerns about water quality.

   Ms. Maxson said that utilities likely wanted to control the situation, especially since water was a major issue. She said that they would have repurposed water, but before that, where did the contaminated water go? She said that it ended up in the sewer, which eventually filled up the septic systems. She said that it was all connected. She said that given their community's history as a farming community and the public's shock at the changes, she believed it was essential to regulate industrial use. She said that they wanted clean water, and she could understand why utilities might be hesitant to accept sewer from outside sources.

Ms. Bohmke closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Mr. Edwards said that septage, overall, was not a revenue generator, accounting for only a fraction of 1% of their overall revenue. He said that they provided this service more as a courtesy to Stafford County residents. He said that the construction of the plant actually brought this issue to light, highlighting the fact that they were accepting a significant amount of outside septage, something they did not want to continue. He said that the revenue generated from this was relatively minimal compared to the hardship it imposed on the plant to treat the septage. He said that therefore, they were asking to eliminate it from the County code.

Mr. English asked why they were bringing this service to their area instead of having Spotsylvania, Fredericksburg, or King George treat their own residents' septage. He said that he wondered why they were seeking their assistance. He said that one constituent had mentioned that they could charge more, but if they did that, it may ultimately be passed on to the consumer. He said that he failed to understand why the other localities were not taking care of their own residents in this regard.

Mr. Edwards said that for them, the price difference was not huge. He said that for places like King George, the smaller plants faced difficulty in treating the septage. He said that they were not trying to shift the responsibility, but it was five years' worth of concentrated waste that they were attempting to eliminate.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to approve Ordinance O24-23 Septage Hauling.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

**CLOSED MEETING**

At 8:22 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to adopt Resolution CM24-30 to authorize closed session.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

Resolution CM24-30 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Board desires to hold a Closed Meeting for (1) consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff regarding transportation impact fees, which is a specific legal matter requiring provision of legal advice of such counsel, and;

WHEREAS, pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(8) such discussions may occur in Closed Meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 19th day of November, 2024, that it be and hereby does authorize discussion of the above matters in Closed Meeting.

**CERTIFY CLOSED MEETING - SEC. 2.2-3711 (A)**

At 9:03 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to adopt Resolution CM24-30(C) to certify the closed meeting.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

Resolution CM24-30(C) reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE
STAFFORD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS IN A CLOSED
MEETING ON NOVEMBER 19, 2024

WHEREAS, the Board has, on this the 19th day of November, 2024, adjourned into a Closed Meeting in accordance with a formal vote of the Board and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides for certification that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with the law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Stafford County Board of Supervisors does hereby certify, on this the 19th day of November, 2024, that to the best of each member's knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board.

ITEM 12. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; R24-207; CONSIDER AMENDING THE STAFFORD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO ADOPT A NEW APPENDIX ENTITLED "2024 TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN"

Matthew Lehane, Transportation Planning and Funding Manager, said that the first item is an amendment to the master plan, which the Planning Commission had recommended for approval. He said that the second is an amendment to the comprehensive plan for transportation impact fees, also recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. He said that the third is to amend and reordain the impact fee ordinance.

Mr. Lehane said that the Transportation Impact Fee Advisory Committee recommended that the Board of Supervisors keep the current impact fees and structure as-is while also actively and aggressively seeking an alternative means to generate funds for road improvements. He said that they were here today to discuss their strategic plan. He said that this was the Board's plan to develop a multimodal infrastructure and transportation system, as outlined in the transportation master plan.

Mr. Lehane said that it also addressed growth management for community sustainability, which included transportation impact fees and proffers. He said that the master plan was a performance-based plan, serving as their blueprint for transportation in the County. He said that it listed their priorities and was a living document, which they would continue to update. He said that impact fees were assessments on new development to pay for roadway maintenance and improvements that benefited that development. He said that the master plan included priority projects, with phase 1 totaling $215 million, with a quarter of that expected to be under construction next year.

Mr. Lehane said that phase 2 was over $649 million, with much of it tied to existing Smart Scale grant applications. He said that Phase 3 was over $1 billion dollars, representing long-term decisions and major investments in road widenings across the County, including Northwest Stafford Road, Shelton Shop, Mountain View, Courthouse, and a new north-south corridor. He said that they also had a proposed river crossing, with a general location marked on the map for mapping purposes; Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) had a meeting tomorrow night to discuss potential river crossing locations.

Mr. Lehane said that many of the projects listed in their packet tonight were also impact fee projects, which benefited new development. He said that these projects supported adding capacity to their roads to benefit new development. He said that on the screen, they could see the proposed rates by land use type, how they were paid, and the rates for their two service areas, the northern service area and the southern service area, generally defined by Potomac Creek through north and south Stafford County. He said that the rates had been proposed based on a consultant-completed study, dated August 2024, which they had discussed at past Board meetings.

Mr. Lehane said that staff recommended an implementation date of July 1, 2025, to allow time for implementation. He said that this plan included $1.1 billion in projects. He said that of that, $763 million went towards supporting new development. He said that assuming development from FY24, the number of homes, offices, retail, and industrial built in the County, and the permits, they could generate between $15 and $20 million with the proposed rates. He said that this would be equivalent to $200 and $300 million, depending on how long the impact fees were in place. He said that therefore, impact fees could only pay for some, but not all, of the impact fee project costs. He said that he could take any questions, and they were there for the three public hearings for the master plan and impact fees.

Bryon Counsell, Council Chief Engineer for the County, said that he believed it was essential to provide some context regarding the fees. He said that a $10,000 fee was not intended to suggest that the Board adopt any fees outside the study or within it, but rather to illustrate the potential revenue generated. He said that for every 250,000 square feet of industrial or commercial space, the impact fees could amount to approximately $2.5 million. He said that the Board was likely aware that for residential projects, the fee would be 100% of the assessed value, which would, in turn, increase the price of a home based on market conditions. He said that he was providing this context solely for informational purposes, not to recommend a specific fee level, and to give the Board a better understanding of the revenue potential from these impact fees.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing. She asked if any members of the public would like to speak on the transportation master plan.

1. Kristen Maxson, Falmouth District, said that the County had made several amendments to the plan, but the public had seen a slide that did not accurately represent the current slides. She said that there were plans within plans that were not publicly visible; for example, number 12 in the transportation table specified a venture to South Campus Boulevard, which may be an area where they were experiencing erosion issues. She said that the plans did not include adequate measures to prevent soil runoff, and the construction was encroaching on private property, exceeding the specified 15-foot depth by 100 feet. She said that the construction was essentially trespassing on people's property.

   Ms. Maxson said that although this was done according to the right of way, homeowners were not being informed about the project. She said that the construction was parking on people's driveways. She said that this was a premature step, as the infrastructure had not been approved in the traffic analysis number 12. She asked how the public could be assured that the structure would adhere to the current plans and not balloon into additional appendages. She said that if the infrastructure were not properly designed, it would not prevent trespassing on private property or breaking the law. She said that the lack of proper fencing and the resulting silt runoff had already caused issues, including a dust bowl during a period of dry weather, exacerbated by recent rainfall.

2. Jay Hicks, City of Fredericksburg, said that he worked for Gerald Properties, a development company in the area, but he was there tonight in his capacity as Vice President of the Fredericksburg Area Builders Association. He said that he would like to discuss the impact fees and their impact on his membership. He said that their organization had approximately 330 members, employing nearly 5,000 people in their area, and they were concerned about the decision to address impact fees as acknowledged in the Volcker Report.

   Mr. Hicks said that the Volcker Report had been a comprehensive study that had been underway for several years. He said that although they were aware of its existence, the members who served on the committee were bound by their obligations and could not share the report until recently. He said that Stafford County was the only jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Virginia that implemented the statute providing for impact fees. He said that the state's impact fee statutes were strictly construed, with specific requirements that must be met. He said that it was unusual that Stafford County was the only one implementing this statute.

   Mr. Hicks said that the Board-appointed advisory committee had recommended that they leave the current system in place, explore alternative sources of income, and delay any action today. He said that the committee acknowledged that they needed more information to develop solid recommendations. He said that the committee's decision was not unanimous, with one member recommending a course of action that was contrary to the report's advice. He said that there were concerns regarding Stafford County's compliance with the impact fee statute.

Mr. Hicks said that he had previously mentioned that there were strict guidelines that must be followed, and they had specific concerns about whether those guidelines had been adhered to. He said that the methodology used in the report had some issues, including deficiencies in accounting for the way some of the money had been spent. He noted that the report failed to account for nearly 50% of the money that came to the County from state and other sources of income. He said that this oversight would have a negative impact on their goals for commercial businesses, such as a movie theater, which would require nearly $2 million in impact fees before it could be brought forward.

3. Joe Brito said that he would like to express his gratitude to the Board for hosting the public hearing on the Transportation Master Plan initiatives. He said that they had been waiting for many years, and it was essential that they move forward to overcome gridlock. He said that the only way to escape gridlock was to take proactive steps. He said that every time there was an accident on I-95 or Route 1, their region came to a standstill with limited alternative routes.

   Mr. Brito said that gridlock had a detrimental impact on businesses and reduced county revenue. He said that to alleviate this issue, he strongly believed that linking the transportation and trail grid system together with five existing roads to form a city grid system with numerous alternate routes was necessary for their region. He said that traffic would naturally flow to alternative routes to avoid the most congested areas of Route 3, Route 17, Route 630, and Route 1.

   Mr. Brito said that connecting population centers to destination centers, recreation centers, medical facilities, and work centers with the shortest possible routes was a sound planning strategy. He said that this approach would provide a significant time-saving factor. He said that if the average driver could save three miles of driving and there were 40,000 cars, it would substantially reduce driving in their region and air pollution by 120,000 miles of less driving.

   Mr. Brito said that the study actually estimated 200,000 miles of reduced driving, due to shorter distances, as this would lead to people driving less. He said that maximizing the use of $100 million of underutilized infrastructure would yield a substantial return on investment. He said that getting them out of gridlock, improving fire and rescue, and improving transportation times in many parts of Stafford County, particularly at the Falmouth intersection, could not be overstated.

   Mr. Brito said that building a new bridge to provide an alternate route before the Falmouth Bridge reconstruction was essential. He said that as ambulances frequently used the Falmouth Bridge, they must mitigate the impacts of the reconstruction before construction began. He said that building a road with a trail network that could be utilized as the East Coast Greenway Trail would promote tourism and economic development. He said that the trail would accommodate the growing demand for electric bikes, scooters, and wheelchairs. He said that building a road and trail network in conjunction with the FRED bus service complemented and enhanced each other, fulfilling two FAMPO goals.

4. Gene Brown, Hartwood District, said that he is a member of the Impact Fee Committee and the building community, and he would like to explain some of the research and ideas they considered during their process and make a few points. He said that the home-building industry is not opposed to paying impact fees; however, determining an accurate fee proved to be challenging. He said that he spent approximately 40 hours reviewing the Volcker Report and attending committee meetings to extrapolate a reasonable and fair impact fee, but unfortunately, the report, which cost around $200,000, was marred by mistakes, inaccurate data, outdated data, and incomplete data, as well as false assumptions.

   Mr. Brown said that given the consultant's and his assessment, he deemed it a waste of time and resources, especially considering the need to redo the study every two years. He said that he attempted to develop a fee based on the Consumer Price Index, but this methodology was not accepted and the result was inaccurate. He said that he also explored an alternate study, which would have taken around six to eight months to complete accurately, despite the Volcker report taking approximately four years. He said that he examined other localities, but there were limited comparable examples.

   Mr. Brown said that when it came to commercial development, he strongly disagreed with impact fees. He said that in his opinion, these fees have a detrimental impact on businesses, discouraging them from locating in Stafford County and instead driving them to other areas. He said this is particularly concerning for positive-tax revenue businesses, as the substantial fees can discourage them from coming to their area. He said that small and local startup businesses would also be burdened by these costs. He said he does not believe the state code provides a way to waive these fees.

   Mr. Brown said that it appears to be clear that the County should not offset the costs out of their other funds, as was the plan for the past 10 years. He said he does not believe it was fair for the County to rely on this provision. He said the state code, which governs this provision, is overly complicated and was likely not intended to be used in this manner. He said that it is either a testament to the genius of its writers or a reflection of their limitations. He asked that the Board members all take the time to carefully consider the impact fees and work collaboratively with stakeholders to find a solution. He said that they all shared a desire for better roads and facilities in the County, and he appreciated their time and consideration.

5. Wilson Greenlaw, George Washington District, said that he is a former member of the Transportation Impact Fee Committee. He said that one of the advantages they had coming into this was that they took a fresh look at something that people had been working on for many years. He said that Gene Brown had spent about 40 hours researching the issue, and he himself had spent a similar amount of time researching the issue. He said that he began by reading the state code, then the County's code, and finally the 107-page Volcker Report, which provided the data used to generate the numbers for this project.

   Mr. Greenlaw said that after doing this research, at one of their first meetings, he sat down with staff and asked if these guys were really serious. He said that when one read the state code, it was convoluted, difficult, and burdensome to administer, which is why he believed no one else in the state was using it. He said that if they looked back at what staff had done with the code since 2003, it had not been accurately administered. He said that they needed to find another means that was viable, easy to administer, and that generated funds. He said that in the report they provided, they analyzed the code and the Volcker Report to identify areas of concern.

Mr. Greenlaw said that for example, the state code stated that the County shall calculate and credit against impact fees the extent to which other developments had already contributed to the cost of existing roads, which would benefit the development. He said that new development would also contribute to the cost of existing roads, and new development would contribute to the cost of future road improvements. He said this was a requirement that County staff must fulfill for every single project that came through. He said that he encouraged the Board to review the details he had just presented, as he did not have time to read them again. He said that this was an extraordinarily difficult and challenging task to manage and implement for every project that came through.

Mr. Greenlaw said that another issue he found problematic was that the County had divided itself into two separate service districts, and according to state code, any fees imposed on a development must benefit that development. He said he would like to ask whether a development at Burns Corner could benefit from improvements at Onville Road. He said that a development at the south side of Centreport Parkway may have benefited from improvements at the Route 17 corridor.

Mr. Greenlaw said that his experience as a commercial broker came into play. He said that the Volcker data projected 1.1 million square feet of retail development over the next 10 years, but historical data suggested a more realistic figure of 450,000 square feet. He said that this discrepancy was significant. He said that the data also projected 630,000 square feet of office growth, but the Volcker data only accounted for 630,000, whereas data suggested a more conservative estimate of 290,000 square feet. He said that the data projected 1.6 million square feet of industrial development, but the actual figure was likely to be over 6 million square feet, without considering the current data surge.

Ms. Bohmke closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Dr. Yeung motioned to defer R24-207. There was no second.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Ms. Allen, to approve proposed Resolution R24-207.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (7) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

ITEM 13. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; R24-229; CONSIDER AMENDING THE STAFFORD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REGARDING TRANSPORTATION IMPACT FEES

Ms. Bohmke said they would now consider Item 13, Capital Projects Transportation, considering amending the Stafford County Comprehensive Plan regarding transportation impact fees.

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing. She asked if any members of the public wished to speak on this item.

1. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that the discussion about the impact fee was somewhat confusing. She said that people were not referring to it as Richmond Highway; they were still referring to Jefferson Davis Highway. She said that the document was referencing outdated literature. She said that she commended the individuals working on impact fees for their efforts, given the limited and outdated data available; however, she would like to bring attention to a specific situation that occurred approximately a year and a half ago.

   Ms. Maxson said that she was present with the Planning Commission when Commissioner Kristen Barnes had expressed concern about whether the road leading to a warehouse would be built and had said that the developer responded that it would not be built by them, but rather by someone else. She said she recalled Ms. Barnes' jaw had dropped, as this was another instance where multiple warehouses were entering the airport, and a tax-free favoritism cushion was being provided. She said this raised questions about fairness and how to prevent serving one person over another with impact fees.

   Ms. Maxson said that she urged the Board to be honest about the potential impact of impact fees on small developers versus large developers. She said that it would be challenging to ensure that this was done fairly, as these issues were often witnessed by the public on a daily basis. She said that she urged the Board to clarify how this would be proceeded, who would enforce it, and how the costs would be divided. She said that this was a difficult task, and she appreciated the hard work of Mr. Lehane and the Board. She said that she would like to take a moment to thank them for their efforts, and she hoped that others would have the opportunity to speak after her.

2. Wilson Greenlaw said that he wanted to share some numbers with them regarding the impact of the proposed fee on economic development. He said that for example, a small business owner who wanted to build a 20,000-square-foot warehouse for their HVAC company would have an estimated cost of $4 million and the fee would be $187,00, adding approximately 4.5% to the overall cost. He said that in his experience, one of the key goals was to attract businesses from the north to their area, reducing the need for citizens to travel on the highway.

   Mr. Greenlaw said that if he were to build an office building, such as a 40,000-square-foot building, the fee would be $927,000—which would add around 8.5% to the cost of the building. He said that at Merit Properties, they had a potential 400,000-square-foot development, with the first building being 99,000 square feet. He said that their calculations showed that the TIF would add 7.1% to the project cost for that building. He said that when they applied this to the businesses that would rent from them, the total cost increase would be around 8.3%.

Mr. Greenlaw said he would highlight a few specific examples: the Garrison at Stafford, a 500,000-square-foot project, would incur a TIF fee of $1.8 million; a high-end restaurant in north Stafford; an 8,000-square-foot building would have a TIF fee of $289,000, and a 12,000-square-foot Trader Joe's would have a TIF fee of $434,000. He said that the purpose of this exercise was to illustrate that businesses, in his experience, assessed their community's suitability for their location and considered factors such as these. He said that a person in Illinois reviews the opportunities and makes a decision based on these factors.

Mr. Greenlaw said that for example, when Trader Joe's considered Stafford, they required a significant investment of $400,000 for the transportation impact fee. He said that even if this amount were reduced by half, it remained a substantial cost of $200,000 that these companies paid to establish themselves in Stafford. He said that this was a significant burden on economic development for both local and large businesses, as well as the broader community. He urged them to consider this perspective when deciding how to utilize the Tax Increment Financing funds.

3. Joe Brito said that he believed the public desired an immediate and comprehensive approach to road improvements. He said that they had been stuck in gridlock for too long, and it was time to move forward. He said that roads were expensive, and they needed to distribute that cost fairly among everyone. He said that currently, some development projects paid no fees toward transportation, yet they created a demand for transportation improvements. He said that some developers paid $15,000 per house in transportation impact fees while others paid nothing, and this was not equitable to those who did pay.

   Mr. Brito said that the County was losing significant transportation revenue from exempt or reduced-fee development projects. He said that the proposed Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance aimed to level the playing field, ensuring that almost all new development contributed to transportation infrastructure. He said that a survey conducted last year showed that 98% of Stafford citizens prioritized mobility, with mobility being the top or medium priority for all citizens. He said that the 2020 survey also demonstrated bipartisan support, with 85% agreeing that public facilities serving new development should be funded by those developments.

   Mr. Brito said that broad support was expressed for fiscal responsibility and responsiveness in public policy, with 92% agreeing that roads and utility improvements should be provided before development was allowed to occur, and 85% agreeing that construction of public facilities to serve new development should be funded by those developments. He said that believed the proposed fees were too high and should be reduced to 50% of the proposed amount. He said that this reduction was based on VDOT's cost sharing of transportation projects.

   Mr. Brito said that most transportation projects were funded by multiple sources, including state, federal, and Stafford County funds, so he believed a 50% reduction in fees was warranted. He said that when proffer guidelines were eliminated after the legislation was approved in Richmond in 2015, almost all rezoning applications paid impact fees instead of recommended proffer guidelines, resulting in a significant reduction in transportation dollars. He said that the current fees were only 17% of the 2015 recommended guidelines.

Ms. Bohmke closed the public hearing.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to approve proposed Resolution R24-229.

Ms. Gary motioned to enter a substitute motion to defer. There was no second, so the original motion remained on the floor.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (1) Gary

ITEM 14. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; O24-21; CONSIDER AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND REORDAIN STAFFORD COUNTY CODE CHAPTER 13.5, "IMPACT FEES," TO ESTABLISH NEW SERVICE AREAS, NEW FEES, AND UPDATE REGULATIONS, PER THE NEW TRANSPORTATION IMPACT FEE STUDY

Ms. Bohmke opened the public hearing for O24-21, a proposed ordinance to amend and reordain Stafford County Code Chapter 13.5 "Impact Fees," to establish new service areas, new fees, and update regulations, per the new Transportation Impact Fee Study.

1. Jay Hicks said he would like to request a deferral on this decision. He said that this very capable Board had appointed an excellent committee to consider this issue, comprised of individuals with extensive qualifications in the industry. He said that he believed it would be beneficial to allow them to delve deeper into the Volcker Report and present concrete resolutions to this issue. He said that as Mr. Brown had mentioned, the industry was not opposed to impact fees, but rather, they should be implemented in a manner that was acceptable to all parties.

   Mr. Hicks said that he would like to ask the Board, as they strived to determine the County's direction, what approach they intended to take regarding impact fees. He said that as they had heard, these fees would have a direct impact on the availability of commercial opportunities in Stafford County, increasing the costs for businesses to operate in the area. He said that he was aware that the Board and the Economic Development Authority had recently collaborated, and the EDA had been directed to create incentives to attract businesses to this area.

   Mr. Hicks said that he was concerned that the proposed impact fees may undermine these efforts; the addition of $1.8 million to the proposed movie theater project, which was already facing challenges, may ultimately result in the theater never opening. He said that he believed it would be reasonable to defer this decision and give the advisory committee the opportunity to present their findings and recommendations, ensuring that any resolutions presented were reasonable and beneficial to the community.

2. Joe Brito said there were many commercial rezonings with proffers for transportation improvements that had high triggers. He said that these triggers were so high that they may not

be pulled, resulting in little to no transportation funding if they were not met. He said that the proposed transportation impact fee ordinance would provide an incentive for developers to follow through with the proffered improvements, potentially accelerating the completion of these projects.

Mr. Brito said that this was a significant plus, as there were improvements that needed to be done, particularly at Centreport and along Route 630. He said that they must encourage these businesses to move forward, and the fees would help motivate them to do so. He said that additionally, any proffered conditions would receive a credit on the transportation impact fee, reducing the amount of fee paid by the businesses. He said that the transportation impact fee ordinance should include an escalation clause of approximately 3% per year to account for inflation.

Mr. Brito said that the previous ordinance lacked an inflation adjustment clause, resulting in a 12-year delay in increases. He said that he proposed a grandfather clause for family subdivisions to lock in the current $3,000 impact fee rate, and some commercial projects had already been built and were exempt from impact fees. He said that these projects, particularly at Centreport, had increased the demand for new transportation infrastructure, and to help fund these needs, he suggested that the Board consider implementing a transportation service district.

Mr. Brito said that they may also want to examine businesses on Route 630, as many had proffers but had not met the trigger requirements, and a service district could help alleviate the financial burden. He said that by spreading the cost, they could ensure that everyone contributed and that they could build roads. He said the issue they faced was that businesses were reluctant to locate there due to gridlock; if they could alleviate gridlock, businesses would be more likely to move in, so it was essential that they improve the roads. He said that they were on the right track with this initiative, and he appreciated their efforts.

Ms. Bohmke closed the public hearing.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. English, to approve Item O24-21, changing the impact fees to 50% of what is in the ordinance, effective date July 1, 2025.

Dr. Yeung said that she was unsure if she had the authority to defer a vote, but she wanted to confirm that with the new information they received today. She said that this was not about the developers, but rather about the potential impact on local mom-and-pop businesses and the fees that may affect the community and constituents with new homes, ensuring that they fully understood any implications for everyone involved.

Ms. Gary made a substitute motion, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to defer proposed Ordinance O24-21.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to make a statement that she believed they should proceed with this, but she was not confident they were at the right point yet. She said that she would like to hear more information, and while she was confident in the studies they had requested, she would like to allow for more time to review the information. She said that this was about doing good business, and she felt it would be in good faith for them to wait and gather more information before making a decision, and unfortunately, it did not seem like that was going to happen.

Ms. Gary said that she did not think this was the right way to do business and that there was a better way. She said that she felt like they could do better; therefore, she was motioning to defer the decision. She said that she did not think this would move forward, but she would not be able to vote on the original motion because she did not feel she had all the necessary information from the stakeholders in their community, including families and local employers.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (2) Gary, Yeung
No: (5) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch

Ms. Bohmke said that this returned them to the original motion to approve proposed Ordinance O24-21, changing the impact fees to 50% of what is in the ordinance, effective date July 1, 2025.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (5) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch
No: (0)
Abstain: (2) Gary, Yeung

**<u>CLOSED MEETING</u>**

At 9:49 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to adopt Resolution CM24-31 to authorize closed session.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to address the discussion regarding a Board member, which pertained to herself. She said that she wanted to assure the public that she had not engaged in any inappropriate behavior in her public comments, and she would not be lectured about exercising her right to free speech simply because some of her colleagues disagreed with her views. She said that in her opinion, closed sessions were being misused, as she had witnessed this in the past with other board members. She said that she had been a part of this in the past, and she apologized for her actions. She said that as a result, she would not be voting in favor of this resolution.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (1) Gary

Resolution CM24-31 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Board desires to hold a Closed Meeting for (1) consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff regarding railway easement agreements and the relocation of County easements, which is a specific legal matter requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel,

(2) discussion of the performance of a specific member of the Board, and (3) consultation with legal counsel regarding address of performance of an appointee of a board, which is a specific legal matter regarding requiring the provision of advice by such counsel; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(1), and (A)(8) such discussions may occur in Closed Meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 19th day of November, 2024, that it be and hereby does authorize discussion of the above matters in Closed Meeting

**CERTIFY CLOSED MEETING - SEC. 2.2-3711 (A)**

At 10:56 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to adopt Resolution CM24-31(C) to certify the closed meeting.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)
Absent: (1) Gary

Resolution CM24-31 (C) reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE
STAFFORD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS IN A CLOSED
MEETING ON NOVEMBER 19, 2024

WHEREAS, the Board has, on this the 19th day of November, 2024, adjourned into a Closed Meeting in accordance with a formal vote of the Board and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides for certification that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with the law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Stafford County Board of Supervisors does hereby certify, on this the 19th day of November, 2024, that to the best of each member's knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to remove Ms. Gary from the Central Rappahannock Regional Library Board of Trustees and replace with Dr. Yeung for the remainder of the term.

The Voting Board tally was:
Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (0)

Absent: (1) Gary

**REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS**

Dr. Yeung said that she had attended the Virginia Association of Counties Annual Conference over the weekend of November 10 and 11. She said that one of the interesting topics that came up was the Workforce Challenges Coalition of High-Growth Communities and Housing Solutions in Virginia, which was moderated by their own Chair Meg Bohmke.

Dr. Yeung said that on Friday, she had the opportunity to share the stage with Delegate Paul Milde and Joshua Cole at the Take Your Legislators to School panel at Mountain View High School. She said she had also toured classrooms, had lunch in the cafeteria, and participated in the breakout box challenge, which involved solving a puzzle about a constituent issue. She said this constituent advocated for additional pickleball courts instead of more funding for education. She said this was an interesting aspect of the challenge, and what caught her attention was the criminal justice teacher who was also a full-time professional; his wife, a chef, led the culinary arts program at Brook Point.

Dr. Yeung said that it was clear that individuals in her community cared deeply about these students, and what struck her was that this teacher was currently working full-time and could not afford to leave his job. She said that this was not an issue that required them to bring professionals into the classroom immediately, but perhaps they could explore a public-private partnership to hire individuals nearing retirement age, in partnership with companies that would allow them to share their talents before retirement. She said that alternatively, they could consider a day-care model, where individuals could share their expertise for months, rather than being hired solely for civic duty, and she planned to work with the school system to explore this.

Dr. Yeung said that also on Friday, she also celebrated the opening of El Jimador, a restaurant that served Mexican cuisine infused with American flavors, making their meals daily fresh from scratch. She said that over the weekend, she attended the Model UN at Dixon Smith School, an academic program where students simulated the United Nations by acting as delegates to UN committees. She said she was pleased to be a sponsor for this program, which provided students with the opportunity to learn about international relationships, diplomacy, and current world issues without incurring costs. She said she had also visited the multicultural event at Stafford High School, where students proudly shared their cultures, native languages, and foods. She said that yesterday, she had attended the FAMPO meeting and River Crossing presentation.

Ms. Allen said she would like to express her gratitude to Ms. Julia Holmes for her time with Stafford County. She said that this was Ms. Holmes' last meeting, and she would like to extend the Board's appreciation for her service to their County. She said they were grateful for the time she had spent with them and wished her well as she embarked on her new endeavors. She said that to everyone in Stafford County, she wished a Happy Thanksgiving and an enjoyable Black Friday. She said that to everyone in Stafford County, they encouraged everyone to spend their dollars in Stafford County, supporting their local businesses.

Ms. Bohmke agreed and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 11:01 p.m., Chair Bohmke adjourned the November 19, 2024, Stafford County Board of Supervisors meeting.

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|---|---|
| William Ashton, II | Meg Bohmke |
| County Administrator | Chairman |