

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
NOVEMBER 12, 2024

CALL TO ORDER – A joint work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and Stafford County Economic Development Authority was called to order by Meg Bohmke, Chairman, at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 12, 2024 in Conference Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Meg Bohmke, Chairman; Tinesha O. Allen (arrived late), Vice-Chair; Deuntay Diggs; Darrell E. English; Monica L. Gary (participating remotely); 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.

Ms. Bohmke asked for a motion to allow Ms. Gary to participate remotely in the work session.

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to allow Ms. Gary to participate remotely in the meeting. The roll call vote passed (5-0). (Ms. Allen was absent and Ms. Gary did not participate in the vote.)

The following members of the Economic Development Authority were present: Jack Rowley, Chairman; Marlon Wilson, Vice-Chair; Price Jett, Treasurer; Jeff Roosa, Secretary; Janette Holland; Frank Porcelli; Daryl Weedeman.

INVOCATION

Mr. English led the invocation.

WORK SESSION

Ms. Bohmke said that tonight was not just about following the agenda, but about collaboration and open communication within the room. She said that they were eager to hear about the Economic Development Authority's projects, the support they needed from the Board, and how they could work more effectively with their team. She said that they recognized the hard work of the support staff behind them and their goal was to make Stafford a wonderful place for everyone to live, work, and enjoy. She said that this was where the real work began. She said that she would like to turn it over to Ms. Barber to provide an economic development update.

Liz Barber, Director of Economic Development, said that she wanted to keep this brief, as today's focus was on coordination between the EDA and the Board of Supervisors, so she would keep it to a five-minute presentation. She said that if they would like to hear more about these topics,

please let her know, as they could become future work session items or she could provide additional information in the future. She said that she had prepared six main topics for discussion: a strategic plan update, development on main corridors, departmental outcomes, business retention and expansion efforts, new business education events, and retail recruitment initiatives.

Ms. Barber said that the strategic plan update tied back to the Board of Supervisors' Stafford 2040 vision, and they had received eight proposals for this project. She said that after evaluation, they would be awarding a company to work with by the end of this month. She said that the plan's completion timeline was expected to be in the spring, with a target completion date of April, but they were considering a May deadline due to a recent slowdown. She said that the plan would be an interactive document, and the strategic planning team would be in close communication with both sides of the group to ensure alignment with their constituents' needs.

Ms. Barber said that they would find two maps in their package, which provided a snapshot of the Centreport Parkway and Courthouse Road corridors at a particular point in time. She said that they should note that these snapshots were not comprehensive, as there had been significant developments since their publication. She said that she would refrain from delving into further details to avoid hijacking their time. She said that if they had specific questions, please do not hesitate to reach out and follow up or ask now. She said that she and Mr. Santay were happy to address those and provide additional information. She said that they should find a quick snapshot of the project's details, including its name, location, and current status, in their packet.

Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator, said that the information was not in the packet.

Ms. Barber said that it was on the electronic copy that was published. She said that she would make sure everyone received it after the meeting.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Ms. Barber could review the information for the newer members of their group.

Ms. Barber said that this is the published version, which essentially breaks down everything, which can be seen on the key. She said that it will show them the exact name of the project, whether it is a unit, if it is approved, if it is an application, or if it is under construction.

Ms. Bohmke said that she could kind of see it. She said that she saw it on the electronic version under the Board packet, so she was correct that it was on there. She said that she saw all the data center projects on there.

Ms. Vanuch asked what items on the project list were tied to the Board of Supervisors' vision. She said that she saw Staffordshire had 346 residential units, which did not align with her vision. She said that this could lead to confusion for the public in understanding what was part of the Board's approved vision and what was being added, which may have been approved 20 years ago but was now being implemented.

Ms. Barber asked if Mr. Santay could provide an explanation for Ms. Vanuch.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Ms. Vanuch could rephrase her question.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was wondering if they could highlight on the spreadsheet or Excel document the differences between the Board's vision and projects that were approved 20 or 30 years ago, which are now being built out. She said that also, she would like to clarify from an economic development perspective, what aspects of the Board's strategic vision are they aligning with, versus what projects are being built based on existing plans, rather than new initiatives. She asked how they account for projects that were originally approved for land that was zoned appropriately, such as apartments that were approved 30 years ago and are now being constructed.

Paul Santay, Director of Community Development, said that he agreed that those types of projects were not related to the Board's vision. He said that those were simply previously approved plans that demonstrated the development approved in specific areas. He said that he believed that some additional information, which was included in the Board package, provided more insight into the development in the Courthouse Road and Centreport Parkway areas. He said that there was a snapshot in time of that development, which was changing rapidly with various types of retail and commercial development. He said that however, this information was intended to provide a current overview of approved developments in those areas, rather than representing the Board's vision.

Ms. Vanuch asked if that could be included as a clarifying footnote on the document. She said that she was concerned that people may misinterpret the information and assume that the County's vision was focused on data centers and warehouses.

Ms. Barber said that she could definitely do that, but that was why it specifically stated that these were either applications or under construction, to illustrate the various layers and levels of development. She said that these were not economic development-driven projects; she was simply asked to provide a snapshot in time of the actual development happening in this corridor. She said that this was the purpose of what she had provided, and she could definitely clarify that.

Ms. Barber said that if they had specific questions regarding the maps and would like to discuss them further, she was available to set up a call or respond to an email. She said that she was happy to help, and she would do her best to address any questions they may have. She said that however, some of the residential projects listed on the map fell outside of their office's scope of work, and she may need to research those topics to provide accurate information.

Dr. Yeung said that along the lines of housing or any other projects that were not approved by the Board, there was a distinction between those that were approved by right versus those that were not. She asked if there was any possibility that this differentiation could be added. She said that when discussing projects from 20 years ago, some of them were being implemented, but they were approved by right. She said that as a result, they were not subject to the Board's approval.

Ms. Barber said that that was not within her purview, so she would defer to Mr. Santay.

Mr. Santay said that this information was referring to approved activity in the Centreport and including previously approved residential, data centers, and retail projects in the Embrey Mill Town Center. He said that many of these projects were currently under construction or had been

approved from one year or ten years ago. He said that he wanted to emphasize that this snapshot in time did not reflect the Board's vision and strategic plan for future economic development. He said that they wanted to highlight that activity was indeed occurring and continued to occur, encompassing a wide range of projects. He said that it was a snapshot in time and was changing every day.

Ms. Barber said that she hoped the next document was included in the package. She said that it was a brief one-pager, and she would like to share some engagement and activity metrics from their office over the past quarter. She said that they had taken a snapshot from July to September, and she should note that this was a period when they had two staff members instead of their usual five. She said that despite the staffing challenges, she was proud of some of these figures, as they demonstrated their office's busy pace.

Ms. Barber said that they had 277 touch points with leads, businesses, and partner agencies, and they had worked with 137 existing businesses to provide support and resources. She said that they had also identified 75 new prospects considering establishing or expanding in Stafford, and they had had 65 partner agency or collaboration meetings to demonstrate their economic development support. She said that she would like to share this snapshot with them because she thought it was impressive to see the work their small organization and department was doing.

Ms. Barber said that they had seen 520 new visits to their starting a business portion of their website, and 19 businesses had converted from prospects they had directly helped into established businesses. She said that while they could not track all businesses that opened without their involvement, they had successfully assisted 19 businesses through their process. She said that the highest industry they had assisted was full-service restaurants, as tracked by their North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code. She said that they were actively listening to the Board's requests and taking them into consideration.

Ms. Bohmke said that since they had celebrated Veterans Day the previous day, and they had unveiled their mural the previous Friday., there was a wall online that aimed to support veterans more than ever before. She said that in relation to establishing businesses, they were making it easier for veterans to set up. She said that if anyone knew of veterans interested in starting a business, they now had that information available on their website.

Mr. English asked if they knew how many veteran-owned businesses they had in Stafford.

Ms. Barber said that there was a statistic that she could provide. She said that she did not want to provide a number without double-checking to ensure accuracy, but she could follow up with that information for the Board later.

Mr. English asked if there was a way they could promote or recognize those veteran-owned businesses.

Ms. Barber said that a recognition programs was a great idea. She said that it was very timely, because tomorrow the EDA, in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the University of Mary Washington (UMW), will be hosting the Veterans Business

Boot Camp. She said that the EDA, which had been appointed by the Board, had organized this excellent event. She said that she would be attending the event from 8:30 a.m. until approximately 1:00 p.m. tomorrow. She said that the event would include Business of the Year awards, presented by SBDC and UMW, as well as a full day of programming for participating businesses. She said that this event had been co-promoted by Stafford County and the Community Engagement page on their Veterans page. She said that overall, it was a testament to the collaboration and communication that was taking place among them.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to take it a step further and suggest that they also consider utilizing resources specifically for small businesses that are minority and women-owned. She said that these businesses were traditionally the backbone of their economy, and their success was often a key indicator of the overall health of their economy. She said that she would advocate for a broader definition of eligible businesses, one that included women and minority-owned enterprises, in addition to veterans-owned businesses.

Ms. Barber said that she had provided some recap pages, and she would like to draw attention to a few other exciting initiatives. She said that in October of last year, when she was in her previous role, she worked with the County's marketing representative and the Economic Development Authority. She said that they conducted a survey of approximately 7,000 Stafford business contacts, which included multiple businesses within some of those contacts. She said that the survey aimed to gauge the business climate in Stafford and gather insights on what businesses needed. She said that they also received information on the types of technical assistance businesses were seeking, and they identified four key topics.

Ms. Barber said that since then, her department had developed four quarterly annual events to address these topics. She said that one of the events focused on helping Stafford businesses compete for County contracts, with the goal of keeping money local. She said that they co-hosted this event with the Procurement Department, and it was a huge success; they had a completely filled attendance. She said that it was a great example of how working with other departments could make a significant impact.

Ms. Barber said that another event they were co-hosting with the Chamber of Commerce would focus on teaching people the basics of networking, including do's and don'ts, and would also include a speed networking session to help people practice their skills. She said that another topic she would like to address was financing options for their business. She said that they would have various options available to discuss, including angel funding, crowdsourcing, and Small Business Association (SBA) loans, which would be presented at the upcoming event.

Ms. Barber said that they would also be co-promoting a marketing event with the Stafford Tourism Board, which would be a free, three-quarter day workshop specifically for Stafford businesses. She said that they were actively listening to feedback and responding in the best way possible to give people what they were asking for.

Ms. Bohmke said that the marketing for businesses was a significant factor if they did not have a big reach. She asked Ms. Barber how she reached out to all the businesses in Stafford. She asked

what the most effective methods she had found for connecting with them, specifically what platforms they used for outreach, such as email, social media, or others.

Ms. Barber said that they maintained a database that tracked their interactions with individuals. She said that when they worked with people, either in person or through their events, they collected this information. She said that their database currently contained approximately 15,000 contacts. She said that these contacts were in Stafford as well as regional. She said that they also utilized social media to reach a wider audience. She said that occasionally, the County would share their events on their social media platforms, and the Economic Development Authority also maintained their own social media handles.

Ms. Allen said that she had two questions regarding this topic. She said that her first question was how they could track the success of a new business within the first one to two years of its opening. She said that she appreciated the process of hosting events, but she believed it would be beneficial to have a more structured approach, such as quarterly check-ins, to ensure that these businesses were getting the necessary support to succeed.

Ms. Allen said that this was particularly important during the budgeting process, as they needed to assess whether the required manpower was available to engage with these new businesses and provide them with the necessary resources. She said that this would enable them to effectively support these businesses and encourage them to stay in the area.

Ms. Allen said that her second question was related to the Chairman's comments on marketing. She said that some of these businesses may not have the necessary capital to invest in a robust marketing strategy. She said that it was something that the County could supplement, perhaps by hiring a full-time marketing specialist in the EDA, or by promoting one of their existing contractors to a full-time position, where their role would include promoting all of their new businesses across various media channels.

Ms. Barber said that those ideas were great; she certainly valued those opinions and thought they were definitely worth exploring. She said that regarding additional staff, she was not sure what that would look like, but she did think that having the one more person they need would make a significant difference. She said that when they were running on two, and then suddenly had four, it felt like they were doing awesome, so if they were to add a fifth person, she thought they could accomplish even more, but they were close.

Ms. Barber said that when it came to marketing, it could be challenging. She said that she was not saying it was impossible, but sometimes she worried about how they could provide adequate support to all 5,000 businesses in the County, because they must treat them all equally, and if all 5,000 businesses wanted marketing support, there was no way they could do that. She said that they must balance that, and as a result, they could help businesses by providing resources and teaching them how to get the most out of their limited budgets.

Ms. Barber said that however, they definitely should talk more because she thought they had brought up some good ideas. She said that there was a balance to be struck, and it was about finding a way to meet the needs of all businesses, regardless of their size. She said that their marketing

event would feature breakout sessions of businesses and budgets of all kinds. She said that then, smaller businesses like mom-and-pop shops could still benefit from their support. She said that this way, they could provide value to a wider range of businesses, from those with limited budgets to larger corporations.

Mr. English said that, thinking outside the box a bit, someone from the EDA should consider reaching out to the marketing classes in the high schools, or the distributive education class. He said that these programs could be a valuable resource for students interested in marketing and entrepreneurship. He said that it might be beneficial for the EDA to attend one of these classes, potentially taking on a business or shadowing a student to gain a better understanding of the field. He asked if this had been thought about.

Savannah Winbush, Business Development Manager, said that she specializes in business retention and expansion, focusing on small business development and entrepreneurship. She said that she was volunteering to judge at the regional DECA competition tomorrow. She said that she had fostered a great relationship with the state representative and the local representative.

Mr. English said that it would be beneficial for the Economic Development Authority to meet with the students in their classes to introduce themselves and learn about the EDA's purpose and activities. He said that he was referring to local high schools, as they had a program in place for this type of engagement.

Dr. Yeung said that she wanted to touch on something she had noticed during her visits to ribbon-cutting locations. She said that one thing that stood out was the difference between their services and those of Fredericksburg. She said that Fredericksburg charged for their services, whereas they did not. She said that she believed it was time for them to consider charging as well, given the high level of service they provided.

Dr. Yeung said that creating a package of services, which did not have to be identical to Fredericksburg's, would be a good starting point. She said that in addition to talking with Planning and Zoning, specifically Mr. Santay, they often provided valuable services for free. She said that this was because individuals knew they could come to them for assistance and have their questions answered without incurring a cost. She said that as a small group of individuals, they had the opportunity to expand their services and charge for them, potentially bringing in expertise to balance their goals.

Ms. Barber said that as a County department, they would not be able to charge for those services. She said that the Economic Development Authority might be able to explore the option of charging, as they had the authority to handle financial transactions with sponsors or similar entities. She said that this could be something to consider further, and she would defer to Chair Rowley to discuss whether this was something he would like to pursue for the EDA.

Ms. Vanuch said that regarding the procurement class, she was wondering if the County was actively tracking the number of businesses that submitted applications and the number that were awarded contracts. She said that she believed it would be beneficial to also track the success of these procurements, as it could provide valuable insights into whether the process was effective

and beneficial to both the businesses and their process. She said that for instance, it was common for businesses to initially view government funding as an easy opportunity, but they often found that the requirements and regulations could be overwhelming. She said that by tracking the metrics of successful procurements, they could ensure that the money stayed in Stafford and that their process was effective.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would also like to know more about the process for businesses that wanted to open up in the County. She said that specifically, she would like to know if the Economic Development Office notified the Economic Development Authority members when a business expressed interest in opening, and if they provided them with an introduction to the planning and zoning process. She said that this would help ensure that they were providing a service to these businesses and facilitating their growth through the complex process of land use and zoning.

Ms. Barber said that it was more complex, as it often involved people coming in with varying levels of preparedness. She said that when someone expressed interest in opening a restaurant, they might ask them to share their ideas, but they may respond by saying they did not have a business plan or knew how they would fund the venture.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was referring to serious individuals who had identified a location and were committed to opening a restaurant there. She said that for instance, she had received emails about the El Jimador restaurant, even though they were not in her district, because they repeatedly stated they were going to open, but the building had sat empty for almost a year. She said that when some of her constituents visited the one on 17, they blamed the County for the delay. She said that speaking with Mr. Santay, he explained that it was not the County's issue.

Ms. Vanuch said that this highlighted the need for better communication and collaboration among Economic Development, Planning and Zoning, the Board, and their EDA members. She said that if it were a straightforward process, she would expect Jeff to intervene and help facilitate the permitting process, as it can be costly for businesses to remain open. She said that she was inquiring about serious businesses.

Mr. Santay said that to answer Ms. Vanuch's question, yes. He said that a year ago, he may not have been able to provide a comprehensive answer effectively due to the siloed approach of various departments and divisions. He said that however, he believed the organization's vision of Community Development had brought about a shift towards collaboration among departments, including Planning and Zoning, building permits, and Economic Development. He said that this interdepartmental cooperation had helped address complications and problems that arose with businesses not being able to open or operate in certain locations.

Mr. Santay said that by communicating with businesses and potential business owners about their plans and needs, they could provide them with clear guidance on what was and was not feasible. He said that they were actually seeing positive results with staff members in positions that facilitated this communication. He said that it had been an educational process, and he was pleased to report that their staff was becoming more adept at navigating these issues. He said that before coming to meetings, staff members were now more likely to reach out to the relevant individuals to discuss their concerns.

Mr. Santay said that this approach had been effective over the past six to 12 months, and he was confident it would continue to improve. He said that while it had been a challenging period, he believed they were on the path towards success. He said that it would likely require an additional meeting to discuss implementing some of the things suggested by Dr. Yeung, so he would not hijack this meeting to address that, but he certainly could discuss it further.

Ms. Bohmke said that she leaned over to her EDA member, Mr. Porcelli, and asked him about his area of expertise, which was in AI. She asked him if there was something in the AI world that could be related to what they were discussing. She said that she did not have the answer, but she thought that maybe Mr. Porcelli could provide some insight.

Mr. Porcelli said that he would like to build on a point he made in their last EDA meeting. He said that there were numerous technologies available that could help small businesses analyze data to make informed decisions about where to locate their businesses, maximizing their potential for traffic and revenue. He said that for instance, consider Sergeant Snuffy, who commutes daily from Stafford to Quantico.

Mr. Porcelli said that Sergeant Snuffy frequently posted on social media about his desire for a coffee shop in his area. He said that this data could be leveraged to identify the best locations for businesses, such as restaurants or retail outlets, based on social media posts, Facebook, Instagram, or even artificial intelligence-driven analyses. He said that this idea could be a valuable tool for providing insights to help businesses make strategic decisions.

Ms. Barber said that she would like to briefly touch on their other recent initiative, SPARK Hours. She said that they may have seen their Facebook posts about this program, which stood for Strategic Pop-up And Resource Knowledge Hours. She said that to make it easier to remember, they had simply referred to it as SPARK Hours. She said that this program was designed to recognize that not all small business owners or entrepreneurs had the same habits or schedules. She said that not everyone could visit their office between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss economic development opportunities.

Ms. Barber said that they had created a solution where they visited different districts every month, starting in alphabetical order, to provide a more flexible and accessible way for entrepreneurs to connect with their staff. She said that they were working through the districts, and each month, they would be at a different location at a different time of day, such as early morning, lunch break, or evening, to accommodate various schedules. She said that their goal was to meet entrepreneurs where they were, rather than expecting them to come to them.

Ms. Barber said that these SPARK Hours were just a few of the initiatives they had launched in recent months, and she would like to highlight them as a way to showcase their department's commitment to supporting small businesses. She said that as someone who operated a bit differently than previous directors, she wanted to emphasize the importance of balancing the needs of big business with those of small businesses, which were the backbone of their country. She said that she believed that by finding a balance between the two, they could create a more inclusive and supportive environment for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Ms. Allen said that she was discussing the map, specifically the initial map showing different businesses in various sections of the county, she was wondering if it was possible to incorporate housing demands into the EDA perspective going forward. She said that if they were aiming to attract certain businesses, they also needed to consider the type of housing that would be available.

Ms. Barber said that that was a great point. She said that it may be something she could tack into the information, but the Board had not previously tasked Economic Development with exploring housing in depth. She said that it possibly could be incorporated into the strategic plan as it was developed. She said that she completely agreed that housing was becoming increasingly important, and they were hearing questions from their large industry leads. She said that she could attest that it was a real concern. She said that she did not have the best statistics to provide, so she would need to source them from elsewhere. She said that she was just thinking out loud about how that might work.

Ms. Allen said that it would potentially be something to ask of Mr. Santay or the County Administrator. She said that if they were going to be attracting businesses in the future, in general as they received annual updates, receiving information regarding housing demands or needs related to businesses would be beneficial for the Board.

Dr. Yeung said that the Housing Authority was indeed taking on that responsibility, and they had statistics to support it. She said that she could provide those statistics to Ms. Allen.

Ms. Allen said that she believed it would be beneficial for the Economic Development Office to have housing metrics attached to their presentations, as businesses came to them and they received proposals.

Dr. Yeung said that they should consider having a work session on that topic.

Mr. Ashton said that in his job prior to his current one, his experience with larger organizations had shown him that when companies with 100 to 200 employees came in, they often had specific demands for housing, such as executive housing or housing for certain groups of workers. He said that they typically came prepared with data to support these demands. He said that however, it was challenging to apply this same level of analysis to one-off, small businesses or mom-and-pop establishments. He said that they could not provide that level of analysis. He said that however, when they were engaged with larger organizations, they were able to obtain that data from those companies and then provide them with information about their options.

Ms. Vanuch said that large companies would often provide specific numbers of jobs and students they planned to add to the schools, but they also typically outlined a plan to mitigate those impacts. She said that this plan often included a guarantee of a minimum and median salary of \$130,000 per year, as well as a commitment to hire a certain percentage of local residents, such as 20% of Stafford County-based employees, with no more than 10% remote work.

Ms. Vanuch said that the proposal would also include an incentive package that would be reviewed and approved by the EDA, which could include tax breaks, property or real estate incentives, and

other benefits. She said that when a company brought a large number of jobs into an area, it was likely that the EDA would see a comprehensive package that addressed the housing demands, school demands, and the business impacts, all of which would be carefully considered by the Board.

Ms. Allen said that she was thinking specifically about the Amazon jobs and DHL. She said that it would have been beneficial to know the associated housing numbers at the time. She said that moving forward, it would be great to know with that level of employment.

Jack Rowley, Chair of the Economic Development Authority, said that it was great to have this meeting as an opportunity to share their thoughts and gain a better understanding of their vision and where they were headed. He said that they wanted to reflect what was important to the Board of Supervisors. He said that he was excited about the new direction for their Economic Development Authority and the growing cooperation with the Board of Supervisors. He said that this was a crucial aspect of their mission, and they were committed to achieving it.

Mr. Rowley said that he was pleased to see the great new team appointed by the Board of Supervisors. He said that there was a commitment by their team to help Stafford grow and prosper. He said that Ms. Barber, who was leading the County Economic Development Department, was a brilliant leader who prioritized the mutual success of her department and the EDA. He said that he was excited about the new opportunities rising before them, and he believed AWS was a great example of Stafford's growth potential.

Mr. Rowley said that this was the right time to align their plans for Stafford's future. He said that today, they would hear from four speakers, including himself, who would discuss collaboration and alignment. He said that next, Marlon Wilson, Vice Chair, would provide a recap of EDA growth and accomplishments. He said that following that, Price Jett, Treasurer, would discuss their request for support and their ongoing economic impact. He said that finally, Jeff Roosa, Secretary, would outline the next steps in moving forward.

Mr. Rowley said that he would like to acknowledge the entire EDA team, which includes himself as the senior member. He said that the other team members are Marlon, who has been with the EDA since 2021, Price, who joined in 2023, along with Jeff, also from 2023. He said that Janette Holland joined earlier this year, and Frank Porcelli, whom they had just heard from, is also part of their team, as well as Daryl Weedeman. He said that as volunteers, they were committed to the EDA's success.

Mr. Rowley said that on the left of the slide, they saw their team, and on the right, they would see Ms. Barber's team and how they reported to the Board of Supervisors through Mr. Ashton. He said that collaboration between the two groups was crucial, and he was pleased to say it was working well. He said that Ms. Barber had faced challenges with reduced staffing, but that was being corrected. He said that the next slide provided an overview of EDAs, their history, and how they supported the County, government organizations, and businesses. He said that Mr. Roosa and Mr. Wilson would discuss the topics in more detail at the bottom of the chart.

Mr. Rowley said that the alignment and collaboration section highlighted their goal of working closely with the Board of Supervisors. He said that they aimed to understand their goals and objectives, adjust their goals accordingly, and support their vision for 2040. He said that they needed clarification on the specific expectations from the Board of Supervisors to ensure the EDA responded effectively. He said that regarding fine dining and upscale retail, they understood those were very important to their constituents. He said that he had had personal conversations with many supervisors on this topic, and the EDA wholeheartedly supported it.

Mr. Rowley said that he would like to discuss strategic planning. He said that Ms. Barber had been working on her strategic plan, which involved consultants and other resources. He said that the EDA also wanted their strategic plan to align with Ms. Barber's efforts, so they would tag along and make sure the plans were complementary. He said that the EDA had four committees, each with two members: a loan committee, a research committee, a business resource committee, and a technology committee.

Mr. Rowley said that the research committee, consisting of Mr. Wilson and himself, aimed to identify best practices from other Economic Development Authorities that could benefit them. He said that they were also reaching out to local organizations to explore ways their EDA could be more helpful and beneficial. He said that at their next EDA meeting, a representative from McGuire Woods Law Firm would discuss bond financing for industrial bonds, and they would explore potential opportunities. He said that he had some ideas and looked forward to learning from this process.

Mr. Rowley said that the business resource committee reviewed grant requests, such as the \$10,000 grant from the Black Business Chamber of Commerce, and reported back to the full EDA meeting. He said that in this case, they had approved the grant. He said that the technology committee was currently undergoing a period of evolution, with Mr. Porcelli and Mr. Roosa leading the way and bringing their expertise in business and IT skills to the table. He said that with the evolution of the testbed and those changes, he believed they had to determine their mission and direction, but they had the right team in place to accomplish it.

Mr. Rowley said that over the years, they had discussed establishing a memorandum of understanding between the Board of Supervisors and the EDA, but it had not come to fruition. He said that with Ms. Barber's assistance, they had developed an outline that focused on general administrative funding, banking, finance, loans, donation requests, and marketing events. He said that they had used this outline as a structure and had submitted it to the legal department. He said that a draft MOU had been created, and he understood it would be presented to the Board, with the possibility of revisions before it was returned to EDA for review. He said that next, Mr. Wilson would recap the EDA's growth and accomplishments.

Marlon Wilson, Vice Chair of the Economic Development Authority, said that a packet of information including a one-pager was available to hopefully address any additional questions. He said that he assumed some of the attendees were already familiar with their work. He said that the first slide presented their financial programs, which included four capital programs that provided capital to businesses. He said that their loan committee vetted loan requests from businesses, ensuring they were granting loans to businesses that would thrive in Stafford County. He said that

they had granted 10 business loans, and their treasurer closely tracked the funds to ensure accountability.

Mr. Wilson said that they had also provided approximately \$500,000 in grant funds to support small businesses. He said that all of these programs were the foundation upon which they could build further growth. He said that to take a step back, with the various programs and initiatives they had established, they could utilize these existing programs to achieve even more, particularly in growing businesses and attracting new companies to Stafford County. He said that their goal was to leverage these established programs to support both existing and new businesses, fostering a thriving local economy.

Mr. Wilson said that next, he would like to discuss business engagement initiatives, which included educating and training startups, hosting networking events, such as their "Beer and Business" event, where EDA members hosted events to promote local businesses and encourage collaboration among entrepreneurs. He said that this was a great opportunity for not just that business to promote itself, but also for other local businesses to network. He said that they had had a lot of discussions about veteran-owned businesses, and they had established a Veterans' Business Boot Camp that had been well-received.

Mr. Wilson said that he had had the chance to listen in on some of those calls and participate in discussions with veterans, asking questions about how they could get started and seeking guidance on available resources. He said that they strived to do a great job of directing them to the resources they needed. He said that if they did not know of a specific resource, they would research it and follow up with the veteran-owned business to provide additional support. He said that they also hosted a business appreciation reception annually, which was now in their 30th year.

Mr. Wilson said that they were actively working to improve their outreach to these groups, particularly focusing on women-owned and minority-owned businesses. He said that they were actively listening as the EDA. He said that they were exploring other initiatives, such as a business resource fund for 2024. He said that they reviewed presentations from businesses seeking support and carefully considered whether they aligned with their County's goals and objectives, ensuring that any business growth initiatives would benefit both the County and its citizens.

Mr. Wilson said that they had been able to support a few organizations, such as Kilroy Robotics, which was a community-based organization, and they had approved a \$10,000 grant for them. He said that they also previously supported a business accelerator program through UMW, which helped promote the development of educational businesses. He said that the Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce was another organization they supported, and they had presented to them on several occasions. He said that they wanted to ensure that they had accurate information and were providing the right resources to help them succeed.

Mr. Wilson said that in some cases, businesses may need additional support to move forward, and they had sponsored some of these organizations to help them achieve economic growth and community development. He said that for example, they had supported the Langley Flight Museum, the Chamber of Regional Branding, and Juneteenth events, which brought businesses

and communities together. He said that they also provided additional support to help businesses thrive.

Mr. Wilson said that in education, they made a significant donation of \$750,000 to Germanna Community College to build a permanent site in Stafford County, which would provide students with a place to learn and return to their community. He said that this was a crucial investment for their County. He said that next, they had the American Junior Golfers Association (AJGA), which they had been supporting for the past three years. He said that the direct impact on their local community was approximately \$100,000. He said that through charitable funds, they had raised over \$130,000. He said that additionally, when visitors came, they spent around \$300,000 in Stafford County. He said that it was evident that charitable organizations, such as those affiliated with the AJGA, had benefited from their efforts.

Mr. Wilson said that moving forward, he would like to discuss the GoVirginia grant, a technology-type fund. He said that they submitted funding requests to secure the necessary resources to support various technologies, including AI, machine learning, and other innovative companies. He said that their goal was to invite technology companies to Stafford, providing them with the necessary funding to bring their ideas to fruition. He said that they had established a timeline to discuss the progress they had made since the beginning, with each year's efforts focused on securing more funding to support their technology initiatives.

Price Jett, Treasurer of the Economic Development Authority, said that he would like to walk them through the seven essential elements that comprise the bare bones funding for the EDA. He said that he would cover four of these elements on this slide and three on the next. He said that starting from the upper left, they had their legal counsel contract with Hershler, which came with a \$12,000 annual retainer. He said that they also had ongoing expenses for special projects and fees, such as those with Amazon and past deeds, totaling \$20,000.

Mr. Jett said that moving to the lower left, they had an accounting contract that ensured they complied with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) standards, which was crucial for maintaining high standards and ensuring Stafford County was held above reproach. He said that the outcome of their recent audit was an unmodified audit, the gold standard for audits. He said that to conduct this audit, they paid \$15,000 annually to ensure compliance with Virginia code. He said that lastly, they had loan servicing fees, which involved making sure assessments were done correctly and payments were processed through the organization. He said that this cost \$7,000 per year.

Mr. Jett said that the next three elements were related to marketing and events, where they had partnered with Ms. Barber and her department to host events like the business appreciation reception and Veterans Business Boot Camp. He said that they also had the Economic Development Strategic Plan, which was an essential component of their work. He said that a key theme for the day was ensuring that the Economic Development Authority was aligned with the goals and directions of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors. He said that this meant that the EDA should be working in harmony with the County's objectives, rather than moving in a different direction.

Mr. Jett said that ideally, the EDA, the County, and the Economic Development Department should be like three cords bound together in a rope, working together effectively rather than at odds with one another. He said that building a strategic plan in partnership with Ms. Barber and her team was crucial, particularly with how it aligned with the Board of Supervisors. He said that the community partnerships and annual board requests that came through as pass-throughs, such as Juneteenth celebrations, boards and committee meetings, holiday celebrations, and STEM initiatives, were basic components of the EDA's operations. He said that these seven basic components required an annual budget of \$166,000.

Jeff Roosa, Secretary of the Economic Development Authority, said that to begin, he would like to address the concept of collaboration. He said that it was a topic that often came up in discussions among team members, but he would like to pose a rhetorical question: Why Stafford County? He said that each supervisor, EDA member, and County Administration official had their own unique perspective on what made Stafford County attractive to businesses, tourists, and residents.

Mr. Roosa said that this same question was posed on the Go Stafford website, accompanied by a range of qualitative justifications. He said that as an EDA, their goal was to contribute to economic development success. He said that building on the comments from his fellow EDA members, they aimed to champion projects that aligned with the shared vision for Stafford County's economic development. He said that this vision was centered on creating a flourishing community that met the needs and aspirations of their residents, businesses, and visitors.

Mr. Roosa said that in this capacity, the EDA sought to optimize their capabilities and reduce the challenges that hindered economic development objectives. He said that as a starting point, they asked themselves their own rhetorical questions. He asked how they could embrace organized synergy with multiple stakeholders? He asked how could they foster a unified approach to achieve Stafford County's strategic vision for economic development as they moved forward together? He said that the current focus areas included attracting new businesses, retaining and supporting job creation, and enhancing quality of life.

Mr. Roosa said that he would not delve into each of these areas, but their current vision statement emphasized Stafford County's diverse and modern business base, making it an attractive place to live and work. He said that as an EDA, they had articulated a purpose and sought to optimize it with a shared vision. He said that this shared vision aligned with both Stafford County and the Economic Development Department's strategic plans. He said that it was centered on fostering opportunity and aligning their collective purposes to execute a plan. He said that the next question was how they could move the needle in a collaborative direction.

Mr. Roosa said that they had already begun positive collaborative efforts to set conditions for success. He said that for example, earlier this year, and as noted in their packet, they had collaborated with the Economic Development Department to put together to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which established clear responsibilities and helped mitigate unrealistic expectations. He said that recently, their chairman had identified and defined committees, assigning EDA members based on their backgrounds and expertise.

Mr. Roosa said that as a takeaway from this slide, he would like to offer three ideas to enhance their alignment and collaboration outside of their scheduled meetings. He said that firstly, he proposed informal, one-on-one meetings between supervisors and appointed EDA members, without any formal structure. He said that this could be a phone call, a Zoom call, or even a casual meeting over coffee. He said that the goal was to maintain continuous communication.

Mr. Roosa said that secondly, he suggested communicating EDA outcomes to the Board of Supervisors in a way that aligned with Stafford County's economic development strategic plan, using metrics and measurements to demonstrate progress. He said that thirdly, he recommended participating in economic development community engagements as a visible show of support and commitment.

Mr. Roosa said that in conclusion, Stafford County had so much to offer as a thriving community. He said that the EDA remained committed to fostering sustainable economic growth, and they appreciated the Board's continued support and commitment to achieving their shared goals for the County's prosperity. He said that on behalf of the EDA, he would like to thank them for their time and attention this evening. He said that he now opened the floor for any questions or comments for the EDA.

Ms. Bohmke said that the Board would like to extend its gratitude for this excellent presentation. She said that she appreciated the way they had categorized the various areas of expertise, which was a great organizing concept. She said that this was very exciting, and she thanked them for that. She said that she was also impressed that they were undertaking a strategic plan, and they would have more information on that soon.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to take a moment to express her gratitude to each and every one of them. She said that as a reminder to anyone listening to this recorded tape, it was essential to acknowledge that these positions are unpaid and require a significant amount of dedication and hard work. She said that she believed they had had this meeting in previous years, although she was not certain if they had one last year.

Ms. Vanuch said that for many years, they had discussed delivering on the needs of their constituents, which include reducing the number of storage units, vape shops, and auto zone stores, while increasing the availability of entertainment options, activities for children, and fine dining and both chain and non-chain restaurant establishments. She said that she believed it would be beneficial for them to quickly develop a plan with metrics. She said that Mr. Roosa was from the Rock Hill District, and they previously discussed metrics and measuring what that looks like.

Ms. Vanuch said that to their constituents, it may appear that not much is being accomplished, as new areas are developed with similar businesses, such as 15 Starbucks in a row alongside vape shops and storage units. She said that she understood that the Economic Development Authority's scope is broader, but she believed the public often fails to grasp the limitations of what they can control in certain zoning areas. She said that as a Board and EDA, they must develop a better plan for delivering results. She said that she appreciates some of their ideas for hosting seminars, so she would like to see seminars focused on fostering the retail gap, particularly in areas like women's clothing and children's entertainment.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to know if they have conducted any work sessions on driving local veteran-owned businesses to develop these retail gap areas. She said that as a supervisor, she was concerned that much of the money being spent is going towards donations and charitable events, rather than supporting businesses that meet their retail gap needs, such as women's clothing, food, and entertainment. She said that she did not see any funding allocated towards these businesses, which was concerning to her and should be to the taxpayers, especially when the EDA asked for a budget from the Board. She said that she would like to know the answers to these questions as they move forward into the future.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to ask the advocates for STEM and STEAM programs if there were any local businesses contributing to these initiatives. She said that many large businesses are willing to contribute to STEM and STEAM programs by providing a \$25,000 grant when asked by the EDA. She said that this funding supports jobs, learning, and education in areas relevant to their businesses. She said that she wondered if there was a program in place where the EDA solicits funding from these businesses instead of covering the costs themselves.

Ms. Barber asked if Ms. Vanuch was asking about sourcing the EDA with business funding.

Ms. Vanuch said that yes, she was wondering if any EDA members had gone to any of these businesses. She said that often, when these businesses come before the Board seeking approval, they claim to be great community partners and donate to STEM and STEAM learning initiatives. She said that she noticed that the EDA also invests in these programs, and the funding is typically tied together. She said that the businesses donate money, and the EDA helps foster these programs within the school system, which in turn develops job opportunities that align with the businesses' goals. She said that she believed this was a missed opportunity if they were not exploring this avenue, and it could also be a valuable area of investment to help offset some of the costs.

Mr. Wilson said that the EDA had asked businesses to consider whether they had already spoken with other businesses in the area before coming to the EDA. He said that they did not always provide the full funding that businesses needed, but rather offered a smaller portion of what they required. He said that they also advised businesses to reach out to other businesses, including those they knew, and to connect with local schools that may be involved in similar initiatives. He said that this could help businesses build a network of potential partners and supporters. He said that often, businesses were aware that they would be asked these questions, so they would come prepared to present their plans, highlighting the businesses they had already spoken with and the resources they needed.

Mr. Rowley said that he had previously mentioned the Black Business Chamber of Commerce. He said that the \$10,000 that they provided was a requirement for a larger grant from GoVirginia, which they received in conjunction with other funding for the community. He said that this partnership aligned with what Ms. Vanuch had mentioned, where GoVirginia's grant was contingent upon securing additional funding from the community.

Ms. Vanuch said that what she was referring to was that these large businesses were utilizing their local Economic Development Authorities as pass-through partners to develop STEM and STEAM

programs within the school systems. She said that this was intended to foster and develop educational programs that directly fed into those jobs, such as service workers, engineers, biopharma specialists, and others.

Ms. Vanuch said that these businesses would dedicate resources to support these initiatives. She said that this was an area for consideration. She said that it was a bit concerning that other businesses were inquiring about STEM programs, even though this was not a typical approach. She said that this was an interesting development. She said that she had a question regarding the loans provided. She said that she would like to be provided with information on the number of loans currently in default, along with their respective values. She said that she was trying to gauge whether the former EDA was making sound business decisions in terms of the types of businesses they were investing in.

Mr. Rowley said that they currently had one loan in default.

Ms. Barber said that they had only one, and it was valued at \$46,000.

Ms. Vanuch said that there was a business in her district that received \$100,000 from the EDA and, upon inspection, it appeared to be a junkyard. She said that she was also concerned about this situation.

Mr. Rowley said that he could not discuss their housekeeping.

Ms. Vanuch said that she did not think that the Economic Development Authority (EDA) funds had been used for the purposes that they had intended.

Ms. Bohmke said that perhaps they could talk about that specific situation offline.

Dr. Yeung said that she would like to ask a few questions instead of going into further detail. She said that she would send them to someone to follow up on these questions. She said that one of the first questions she had was regarding the strategic plan. She said that she had been wondering if the Economic Development Authority, as well as the Board, had taken the time to review the Board's seven priorities and connect them to their current strategic plan before presenting it.

Ms. Barber said that to provide a quick background, the strategic plan ties together various components. She said that the Economic Development Department should have its plan ready by April or May, with the goal of alignment with the County's strategic plan. She said that as a result of discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair, once the department's plan is approved, ensuring it was aligned with the County's strategic plan, the EDA would create one based off of that outcome. She said that it had not been done yet; the intention was to wait to create the EDA's plan to ensure it better aligned with the approved department strategic plan.

Mr. Rowley said that to his knowledge, the EDA had never had a strategic plan until their current project.

Dr. Yeung said that she had been advocating for this for a while, and Ms. Barber would confirm that she had been pushing for it. She said that she was grateful they were bringing it to the forefront. She asked if this meant there were no bylaws or rules of engagement in place.

Mr. Rowley said that they did have bylaws.

Dr. Yeung asked if they had bylaws that documented the governance structure.

Mr. Rowley said that yes, they did.

Dr. Yeung asked if there is also a funding model associated with that.

Mr. Rowley asked for clarification.

Dr. Yeung said that she was hearing about the funding of grants and loans. She asked if they could explain the differences between these funding options, and if there were specific criteria that they use to determine which ones to offer.

Mr. Rowley said that business resources committee, as well as the other committees, had a charter that outlined the specific requirements. He said that if they were to request something like rebuilding a swimming pool, they would not be able to accommodate it because it was not outlined in their charter.

Dr. Yeung said that they had specific items outlined in there. She said that she had one other question, and she would send her other questions to the Chair. She said that she heard about the community's requests, and she has also heard about when the theater was supposed to be coming. She said that she could ask Planning about that, because it was supposed to be coming in her district. She said that however, people decided ahead of time to use a theater breaking ground ahead of time as a political point, and then individuals asking about the theater two years ago, after breaking ground to pretend it was coming, fooled people and was disingenuous.

Dr. Yeung said that to ask now when it was coming while they were trying to move that ball forward, it could come in any district, but there was one supposed to be coming in the Garrisonville District. She said that Mr. Santay could confirm that it was coming along, but the Planning and Zoning Department controlled that process with the individual development, so she was limited in what she could say about it. She said that however, when they ask about restaurants and fine dining, it was not possible to decide on those without considering the housing needs of the area. She said that they cannot separate housing and fine dining; they need to be considered together. She said that the criteria for development have not changed to accommodate this, so they cannot simply add housing to an area and then decide on fine dining.

Dr. Yeung example, in the case of Embrey, where there are approximately 2,000 homes, it was possible to consider fine dining in certain areas. She said that however, to say they do not want specific housing or do not want to build more housing, it was unrealistic to expect one thing without having another. She said that when they expect certain things, they need to be prepared to accept other things that they may not like in the same area.

Mr. English he would like to thank the Economic Development Authority members for their dedication and hard work. He said that he appreciated everything they did as volunteers. He said that he would like to bring up one thing that he thought the EDA could consider. He said that he had previously discussed this with the past County Administrator as well. He said that he would like to see the EDA reach out to long-standing businesses in the area, such as those that had been in operation for 50 or 60 years. He said that recognizing these businesses would go a long way in acknowledging their contributions to the community.

Mr. English said that he believed that the County did not do enough to recognize businesses that had been here for so long. He said that for example, he knew of businesses that had been in operation for 60 years. He said that he thought it would be beneficial for them to come together and develop a program to recognize 10 businesses per year, perhaps by placing a plaque on their door that acknowledged their 50 years of service to Stafford County.

Mr. English said that he would like to see the EDA take the lead on this initiative. He said that regarding fine dining and restaurant partners, he and Mr. Diggs both lived on Route 17 and had talked about that extensively. He said that people were concerned about the rooftops, and he did not know how to solve that issue. He said that this was where he would ask the EDA to provide guidance and support.

Ms. Bohmke said that the annual business appreciation event was a significant occasion for the local businesses. She said that each year, they presented three awards to recognize the contributions of these businesses.

Mr. English said that he would like them to put something on the doors of long-standing businesses in order to say the County appreciated them. He said that maybe some new businesses would not come to Stafford, but they already had many. He said that each district could have their own recognition.

Ms. Allen said that perhaps they could consider doing five-year anniversary recognitions.

Mr. English said that it would send a good message to businesses.

Ms. Bohmke said that perhaps the Board could do that.

Mr. English said that he would be willing to help with it.

Ms. Barber said that she believed that it was Kyle who had heard him mention that same idea at last year's event. She said that he told her she should create this program, so she set the parameters, but unfortunately, she ended up being interim and had no staff. She said that as a result, she had developed this whole plan, which was even in their budget. She said that recently, they had acquired software that enabled them to send surveys to local businesses, where they could fill in information. She said that they planned to send out a survey in the future, once they had established a stable staff and could track the information of when the business had opened and annual changes to any information.

Ms. Barber said that a lot of other localities used their Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) taxes to keep track of that information, and since Stafford did not have BPOL, they would need to rely on the businesses to provide updates with that survey, and they could partner with the EDA by recognizing those businesses at the business appreciation reception.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to echo everyone's comments about the appreciation for the work the EDA did. She said that it was clear that they valued the efforts they put into their roles, despite not receiving compensation. She said that she, along with the other Board members, appreciated the new approach the EDA was taking to be more responsive and forward-thinking. She said that she understood that budget constraints were a challenge, and she respected their efforts to work within those limits to achieve their goals. She said that she had two concerns that she hoped were part of the strategic plan when it was revealed in the spring.

Ms. Allen said that one of her concerns was the lack of movement with their targeted growth areas (TGAs). She said that she would like to know what steps they were taking to invest in their targeted growth areas, particularly in the north. She said that she had always felt that when entering Stafford, one needed to say, "I want to invest here." She said that in her district, the presence of used car dealerships did not look good. She said that in contrast, Dumfries was making progress with its game resort, which, although not yet open, was expected to drive revenue.

Ms. Allen said that they needed to start taking more proactive steps to develop their targeted growth areas. She said that she was not sure what that looked like, but she would like to see them initiate this effort. She said that she was concerned about the state of certain areas, such as Route 1 and Falmouth, which were plagued by dilapidated buildings and abandoned lands. She said that as they moved west, she would like to know what steps they were taking to develop these areas past Route 17 in Hartwood. She said that it appeared that there was a significant lack of development in areas like 610. She said that she was concerned about the targeted growth area models they would use to identify opportunities for growth.

Ms. Allen said that this concern transitioned into her second point, which was the limited availability of land. She said that she would like to know how this issue fit into the EDA's vision and strategic plan moving forward. She said that this was a real challenge for them, as they lacked the necessary infrastructure to support businesses. She said that she would like to know what available land the County had to economically develop and meet their infrastructure needs. She asked if there were opportunities in certain districts, such as those not served by 610 or 17, but had the necessary connectivity to support development.

Ms. Allen said that perhaps they could work with the Board to implement transportation strategic plans and explore ways to coalesce economic development with transportation, land use, and targeted growth area planning. She said that she would like to see a clear plan for the next year to align these efforts, as they must start integrating economic development with transportation, land use, and targeted growth area planning. She said that if not, they risk competing for very small parcels of land, and the County's own land needs and the schools' needs must also be considered as part of the larger conversation.

Ms. Krauss said that Ms. Gary had just texted her, “Please tell everyone I said I am very grateful for their presentation and work, but I have to jump off the call.”

Mr. English said that something else to consider was to become a certified crime prevention community. He said that this certification would be displayed at each entrance, informing visitors that they were entering a community that had taken proactive steps to prevent crime. He said that this would be a valuable marketing tool for their businesses, as it would help them stand out and attract customers. He said that this certification could lead to lower insurance rates for these businesses. He said that overall, this was a significant opportunity if they could effectively promote it and leverage its benefits.

Ms. Barber said that Ms. Allen’s points were incredibly accurate. She said that three key components that were included in the Request for Proposals (RFP) as requirements for responses for their strategic plan for the department were: first, determining target sectors, meaning the types of businesses she should be promoting and actively working towards aligning with their vision. She said that this was particularly important, as the vision of previous directors and supervisors had evolved, and it was essential that their current vision was reflected in their strategic plan.

Ms. Barber said that second, target locations would be determined by the strategic planning process, working with the Board to gather statistics and identify these locations. She said that this would likely align with the general consensus on areas that required redevelopment. She said that lastly, to develop concepts for incentives that would encourage the growth of these target sectors and areas was essential to their strategic plan and aligned with the questions Ms. Allen had raised.

Ms. Allen said that the utilities and transportation piece was important given the complaints about the saturation on 610 and 17. She said that however, not everyone lived on 610, so this helped with traffic flow and mitigation. She said that she believed there must be an opportunity for them to start exploring the in-between areas and peripherals of the County to develop those places. She said that as a Board, they had to make transportation decisions. She said that if they were to present the Board with data that supported that if they were to put in X amount of road or widen the road in a specific area to potentially attract a few businesses, that might change her vote on road projects. She said that she would rely on those tax dollars to fund other road projects, rather than the County footing the bill every time.

Ms. Bohmke said that one of the businesses that many people in the County had been wanting for 10 or 12 years was Trader Joe's. She said that Trader Joe's had stated to former Economic Development Directors that they were not planning to come to Stafford County, citing the need for more housing. She said that this was true, as Quantico to the north did have an impact on their retail spending and dollars. She said that Quantico was a valuable asset, but it did draw businesses away from their area.

Ms. Bohmke said that when businesses chose a location, they often drew a circle around it, which affected their local numbers. She said that she wanted to highlight the recent opening of Germanna's new site in Stafford County, which they were thrilled about. She said that Germanna offered a range of courses, and she would like to explore the possibility of collaborating with them to direct students from those courses to their local businesses.

Ms. Barber said that they worked closely with Germanna. She said that Jack served on their board, and Savannah was actively involved with the workforce group. She said that as a result, they tried to be heavily involved with them and encouraged their involvement. She said that they had also been part of the Stafford schools' various focus groups and initiatives as they developed curriculum and engaged local businesses. She said that given the significant role workforce played in economic development, this trend was unlikely to diminish, but rather continue to grow.

Mr. Rowley said that Germanna had the first graduate class of the AWS Training Center this week.

Ms. Bohmke said that some of the Board members had recently attended the annual Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Conference in Bath County, and one of the sessions focused on workforce development. She said that she felt bad for some of the smaller counties in the Commonwealth, where they were struggling with population loss. She said that not everyone was facing the same challenges, such as closing schools or struggling to attract businesses.

Ms. Bohmke said that she looked at Germanna Community College and considered it a gem. She said that they were fortunate to have it, especially since not every student needed to attend college. She said that now, many students could pursue a career and raise a family if that was their desire. She said that she was very excited about this opportunity and having it right here in Stafford County.

Dr. Yeung said that she would also like to discuss workforce development. She said that she recalled that they were involved with the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance, which she thought was excellent because they also focused on workforce development. She said that she hoped that there was an alliance or partnership there that they could leverage instead of duplicating efforts. She said that she believed it was essential to have a collaborative approach to workforce housing, which could also benefit their schools.

Dr. Yeung said that she had spoken with representatives from Germanna and other organizations today and yesterday about integrating workforce housing, workforce development, and schools. She said that notably, some individuals were adults seeking a place to live, rather than just high schoolers. She said that she was interested in knowing if they were planning to look at not just their own district, but to engage in some small area planning. She said that Mr. English had mentioned thinking outside the box, and she had been exploring Mine Road, where he discussed the idea of demolishing the hotel.

Dr. Yeung said that the hotel, which was currently for sale, served as a prominent anchor in the area. She said that it could be repurposed into condominiums catering to professionals, young people, firefighters, and teachers, potentially through a public-private partnership. She said that some businesses were already interested in pursuing this concept. She said that she had ideas and a network of people to collaborate with, but she would like to know what steps they could take to support her in bringing a project like this to fruition.

Ms. Barber said that when it comes to housing, normally Economic Development does not directly get involved in housing. She said that it would typically be a different department, but when it

comes to workforce housing, they could be a partner rather than a lead on a project. She said that they would be partnering with the intention of positively impacting the local economy and bringing in businesses.

Dr. Yeung said that in the past, they had provided the EDA with land, then the EDA sold the land, generating profit from it. She said that she was trying to understand how they could plan for self-sufficiency in the future, even after the Board's assistance.

Mr. Rowley said that they were not ready for publication. He said that he had been working with Dr. Taylor and the school system before he left. He said that they had attempted to develop a program with the Cliff Farms project, but unfortunately, that did not work. He said that he had a meeting scheduled with Xavier and others on the same topic. He said that it was something he wanted to take to the EDA for further discussion.

Mr. Rowley said that they did not have a quick solution. He said that his vision was that the EDA might contribute some money, the Board of Supervisors might contribute some money, and with that put together with the developer some housing that people can afford. He said that by implementing certain restrictions, they could make this work and allow people to live there for 10 years, and they would not get any benefit and the growth would be in the value of the property. He said that it had worked in other places, but he was unsure of how it would work here.

Ms. Bohmke said that at the VACo Conference, where she had served as the moderator for the housing discussion, Virginia Housing was present and discussed various projects they were undertaking throughout the state. She said that they had available funds, although the amount of money they had this year was less than the state had allocated to them last year.

Mr. Diggs said that he also wanted to thank the EDA. He said that this was his first year on the Board, and what excited him the most tonight was when they emphasized the importance of collaboration and working together, likening it to the three cords being intertwined, because that was what it would take to move forward. He said that he sensed that they were serious about this, having met with Mr. Rowley and Mr. Jett, and he believed that was reassuring.

Mr. Diggs said that he did not know the history of past discussions or the relationship between them, so that was really exciting for him. He said that as Ms. Barber mentioned, the strategic plan would bring all these elements together, and he was very excited about that. He said that he recently met with a contractor for a fine dining establishment and they had a conversation about bringing that development to their area. He said that the contractor proposed adding housing and an upscale hotel.

Mr. Diggs said that he believed it was their responsibility to explain to constituents what came with these developments, and he planned to discuss this in his December town hall. He said that he had had some conversations, and he knew some citizens did not want this, so it would depend on the district and what constituents were saying. He said that it would undoubtedly come with a cost, and more residential development may be necessary. He said that for him, with their current schools, more residential was not a good idea. He said that they would work it out.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to add a quick comment to the Germanna point. She said that as the largest population center for nursing, Germanna is a prime location for this type of facility. She said that she had the opportunity to speak with nurses, student nurses, and even high school and middle school students, and many of them had already expressed concerns about the lack of opportunities in Stafford. She said that as someone who had children in the schools and was familiar with the area, she could attest to this. She said that they could invest in programs and workforce development initiatives, similar to those being implemented in the high schools, and Germanna could play a significant role in addressing these needs.

Ms. Allen said that however, if they did not address the economic development and job opportunities in Stafford, it would not matter how much Germanna contributed. She said that the mindset of many of these students was that Stafford would be seen as a place where they worked, but not live, and their purchasing power would be lost to neighboring counties like King George, Caroline, or Spotsylvania, which offered more amenities and opportunities. She said that if they did not take action to retain their children and provide meaningful opportunities for their residents, they would lose an entire generation of people, resulting in billions of dollars in lost revenue over time.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to build on the points made by some of her colleagues, and she appreciated Mr. Diggs' comments about clearly communicating the costs to their constituents. He said that he reminded her of the downtown Stafford development, where the proposal included 10,000 new homes, only to have that idea scrapped. She said that to reiterate, the Board had had to build three new schools, and they were facing significant road and infrastructure challenges over the next couple of years, all while their population continued to grow.

Ms. Vanuch said that when she heard about the EDA potentially pursuing a development deal for condominiums, it seemed wrong. She said that what she would prefer was for the EDA to focus on attracting businesses that their residents wanted, rather than solely focusing on areas with perceived population gaps. She said that she had visited counties with lower populations than theirs, yet they had the types of restaurants they lacked. She said that it was unclear what was not being done, and she believed the EDA's strengths could be leveraged to identify the solution.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was curious about the smaller counties that had the amenities they lacked, and she believed they were utilizing incentive programs, such as waiving personal property taxes, offering holiday exemptions on real estate taxes, and implementing comprehensive plans to attract businesses like a bowling alley. She thought they were using these packages to entice businesses to develop in the county, waiving residential property taxes and providing streamlined planning and zoning approvals.

Ms. Vanuch said that this was something she believed they could easily address, and it did not require adding more houses. She said that the EDA had been asked to explore ways to drive these businesses that their residents were consistently inquiring about, such as a bowling alley, movie theater, or a trampoline park.

Ms. Bohmke asked if any EDA members had anything further they would like to share.

Ms. Holland said that she appreciated and enjoyed the conversation. She said that this was her first meeting with the Board, and she was learning a great deal, so she wanted to thank them for taking the time to share all the information with them. She said that she also appreciated the opportunity to meet everyone face-to-face.

Mr. Weedeman said that he wanted to address the comments Ms. Allen made about keeping people in Stafford. He said that he believed some of them may recall a Fredericksburg Chamber meeting from about a year ago, where local businesses discussed the issue of young college graduates leaving the area and how to bring them back. He said that this was not unique to Stafford, but also a concern for Fredericksburg.

Mr. Weedeman said that the issue was centered around the businesses and what they could offer to keep people from leaving once they graduated. He said that he thought Ms. Allen's point was valid. He said that he was not sure what the solution was, but it was a pressing problem. He said that the reasons for this issue were complex, including economic factors, cost of living, and opportunities. He said that given the abundance of opportunities in their area, including government contracts, he believed it was something they should work on collectively to address.

Mr. Porcelli said that he had been thinking about this discussion and had a few thoughts. He said that Kalahari Resort was building a large amusement park and resort in Thornburg, and Stafford County was a convenient pass-through route to get there. He said that he thought that this could be leveraged to attract businesses to Stafford County, as people would be traveling up and down the coast from the north and south. He said that while they may not be able to attract businesses from the south, they could target those coming from the north, west, and other areas.

Mr. Porcelli said that he believed that this was something worth considering, and potentially discussing with the Kalahari team to see how they could support their business and attract their patrons to the park. He said that he also noticed that Stafford County was designated as a hub zone, which could be beneficial for attracting technology companies and government contracting firms. He said that these businesses may be eligible for government programs and incentives. He said that it was not the whole County, however.

Mr. Rowley said that his recollection was that they had two different projects for field houses in this County, and they fell apart. He said that he was unsure what the specific reason was, but he knew that the EDA was not involved in that particular project.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed one of them wanted additional housing.

Ms. Vanuch said that the other did not exist.

Mr. Rowley said that whatever caused those developments to fail was something they needed to fix. He said that they needed more housing.

Mr. Wilson said that he appreciated the feedback from the Board, and he had taken detailed notes. He said that he would also like to reiterate their desire to continue collaborating with the Board. He said that if there were any areas where they needed the Board's expertise, they would like to

have the opportunity to present their ideas to them. He said that if they had some initiatives they were working on, they would like to hear their thoughts on the matter. He said that they understood that they needed to align with the Board's strategic goals, but they wanted to ensure that they were building a strong relationship here. He said that as he had mentioned earlier, they were committed to doing this right by the County, because that was essential to their success.

Mr. Jett said that they were discussing a multitude of issues tonight, and it was true that everyone faced challenges. He said that behind every problem lay an opportunity. He said that as an optimist by nature, he believed that together, they could find solutions. He said that it would require more than an annual conversation. He said that they would have to continue it if they were going to come together for the good of Stafford County. He said that as a lifelong resident, he had had the privilege of living in various parts of the world, but he had always returned to Stafford County.

Mr. Jett said that he was confident that with the County's support and their collective efforts, they could build a great future. He said that it would require collaboration, multiple conversations, and a commitment to working together. He said that if they were dedicated to this, he had no doubt that they could achieve great things. He said that the right people were in this room, and with their combined expertise, passion, and dedication, they could make it happen.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was certain Mr. Jett could bring ideas from around the world back to Stafford.

Mr. Roosa said that building a community in this County, particularly in terms of economic development, was a complex task. He said that they were often surprised by the diverse needs and expectations of their constituents, and trying to balance these competing demands could feel like a game of black and white. He said that from his perspective, drawing on his background in military operations, he saw it as a matter of clear command and intent.

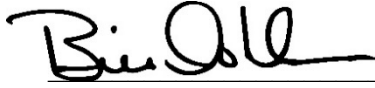
Mr. Roosa said that in this context, their Board of Supervisors served as the commander, and they needed to understand their intent in order to work together effectively. He said that this included collaborating with Ms. Barber and her group to ensure they were all aligned on their goals and objectives. He said that while there had been some positive developments since he joined, he believed that by moving forward in a unified direction and doing things the right way, they could achieve some truly remarkable things.

Ms. Bohmke said that she wanted to echo the points that had been made and leave it to Ms. Barber and the County Administrator to schedule their next meeting, as they often failed to recognize when it was necessary. She said that they regularly talked with their EDA members, but she believed it was best to leave it to them to inform them of the next steps.

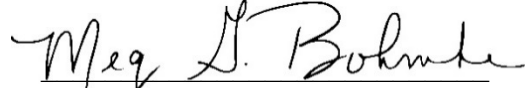
Mr. Ashton said that this meeting had been enlightening and marked the end of his second month, which was a great milestone. He said that he had taken some thorough notes and heard many thoughtful ideas that had been shared. He said that there were several topics that required follow-up, and he would work with Ms. Barber to schedule a future meeting for this group. He said that he was looking forward to meeting with Jack on Friday, where they could discuss these topics further. He said that they would stay in touch.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned its meeting at 6:52 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Ashton", written over a horizontal line.

William Ashton, II
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meg D. Bohmke", written over a horizontal line.

Meg Bohmke
Chairman