BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
MARCH 11, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – A work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Deuntay Diggs, Chairman, at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025 in Conference Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Deuntay Diggs, Chairman; Tinesha O. Allen, Vice Chairman (remote); Meg Bohmke (remote); Pamela Yeung; Darrell English; Monica Gary; Crystal Vanuch.

Also in attendance were Bill Ashton, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Taylor Dunn, Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to allow Supervisor Bohmke to participate in the meeting remotely.

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

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to allow Supervisor Allen to participate in the meeting remotely.

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

WORK SESSION ITEMS

ITEM 1. FY2026 BUDGET WORK SESSION

Andrea Light, Chief of Budget, said that today, the Board would start with the budget work session. She said that the budget placemat was available in handout form and also on the screen, and they would walk the Board through it. She said the proposed budget showed an operating increase of $16.5 million, not including one-time funding for projects and proffer funding, and it represented ongoing operating revenue increase.

Ms. Light said that the proposed tax rate increase was a five-cent increase, with no proposed changes to the fire levy in fiscal year 2025 or calendar year 2025. Each penny of real estate was approximately $2.7 million in new revenue. She said tax relief increases this year were about $11.8

million, primarily from the state's unfunded mandate. She said that leaving the current tax rate at $0.8936 would reduce FY 26 revenues by $13.5 million. She said that total property taxes were projected to increase by 14.3%.

Ms. Light said that the operating budget was going up by $16.5 million in total, with $14.3 million related to real estate, property tax, and penalties and interest, and $1.2 million from other categories. She said that they could find more information about general fund revenues in the budget book available on the County website. She said the school's breakdown and the funding gap for both the superintendent's budget and the School Board's funding gap were provided.

Ms. Light said the School Board would meet with the Board tomorrow to answer any questions the Board may have. She said that they had a sheet available for review, and the proposed budget changes were highlighted in the darker blue areas. She said the sheet showed the key factors impacting the budget this year, starting with schools, where they had a debt service increase of almost $4.8 million. She said this represented a 13.6% increase, attributed to High School 6, Elementary School 18 and 19, and 3R projects. She said there was a school operating increase of approximately $5 million, representing a 2.9% year-over-year increase.

Ms. Light said that moving down to the second row, starting with the regional jail, it experienced a $2.2 million increase, or a 21.6% rise. She said that several factors contributed to this increase, including lost revenue, lost federal revenue, and necessary salary increases to ensure adequate jail officers. She said that their participation in the jail had increased year over year. She said that the juvenile center saw a $76,000 increase, or 3.4%, while partner agencies experienced a small 3.6% increase, totaling $97,000.

Ms. Light said that dedicated funding to the Economic Development Authority (EDA) was introduced this year, providing $60,000 to support administrative costs. She said that the Health Department received a small increase of $26,442, which met their funding request for this fiscal year.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to know where the increases are for the $97,000 under partner agencies.

Ms. Light said that they had had some issues with the partner agency page and a couple others on the website. She said that on the home page, there was a link to partner agency funding, showing each of the partner agencies and how they had changed. She said that the beginning of the page also discussed the process that Ms. Krauss and her team had gone through to create and implement the funding strategy.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the EDA funding was separate from the partner agency funding.

Ms. Light said that it was separate. She said the funding breakdown was $97,000 for partner agencies and an additional $60,000 for the new funding for the EDA.

Dr. Yeung said there was both new funding and increases, but it is unclear how to distinguish between the two. She said that she was particularly interested in the partner agencies and would like to know more about the algorithm used and the study that was conducted. She said that she would appreciate it if the Board could be informed of the results of that study. She said that she would also like to know if there was a baseline figure from which the $97,348 was being added.

Ms. Light said that she believed the easiest approach for the Board would be for them to refer to the budget book, as they had had a partner agency tab. She said that this information could be found on the website, as well.

Ms. Light said that what was depicted in the blue boxes were the relative changes year over year. She said that for instance, the school's debt increased by $4.7 million. She said that this represented just the increase. She said that everything shown was a year-over-year increase, and that was what they were trying to demonstrate, the impact it had on this operational budget. She said that the $16.5 million in new money was essentially allocated according to the dark blue boxes.

Dr. Yeung said that her question was for the audience and her constituents when they asked how much the school operating budget was. She said that they may not have realized that the actual budget was nearly half a billion dollars. She said that if they could at least mention this in conversation, stating that this was the current budget and the proposed increase would be helpful for the audience to understand.

Ms. Light said that salary and benefit increases for General Government represented a pay change of 2.75%, with 1.75% being a scale adjustment and 1% being a merit increase. She said that they had reviewed some comparable localities to determine their proposed budget increases for General Government. She said that Prince William, Albemarle, and Hanover were all at 3%, Spotsylvania was at 5%, Loudoun was at 4%, and Fauquier was at 4.7%. She said that Stafford's 2.75% was the lowest among comparable localities.

Ms. Light said that the Board may recall that last year, a market study had been completed, with 75% implementation of the study. She said that the remaining 25% was intended to bring the remaining individuals back to the point recommended by the market study. She said that they would review each case individually, taking into account factors such as a person's departure from a position due to a new job or their no longer being in that role.

Mr. Diggs asked if Spotsylvania proposed a flat tax rate.

Ms. Light said she believed that was correct.

Ms. Light said that in 2024, as part of the Board's strategic plan, the goal was to continue improving and implementing employee engagement activities that promoted and enhanced customer service, retention, and recruitment centered around County values. She said that as part of this effort, staff conducted a position review, examining 141 employees and compared them to comparative jurisdictions.

Ms. Light said that the review showed that the average increase for these employees would be 5% to bring them back in line with comparative localities. She said that the proposed budget for FY 26 included a 50% implementation of the 2024 position review, which would result in a $220,000 increase. She said there was sheriff pay and fire and rescue pay increases, which aligned with the step plan adopted by the Board several years ago.

Ms. Light said that moving forward, they would discuss health insurance benefits, which had seen increases above budget. She said that the proposed budget included $1.5 million in new funding from the general fund to increase health insurance. She said that there was a recommendation to increase health insurance for employees. She said that to ensure that this increase did not result in a pay reduction, they had analyzed the lowest paid employee's health insurance and compared it to the potential 2.75% raise. She said that the last significant change to employee health insurance was in 2020, with some minor changes last year.

Mr. English asked which year they provided a stipend back to employees.

Ms. Light said she believed it was two years ago. She said that it was approximately $1.5 million in total.

Mr. English asked how much each employee received.

Ms. Light said that they could follow up with that information. She said that the next box was opt-out benefits. She said that Stafford County still offered an opt-out benefit for employees who did not have health insurance, which was $75 paid over a 24-pay period, resulting in a monthly cost of $1,800. She said that after consulting with the HR department and researching other localities, they decided that this benefit was out of market and decided to remove it. She said that by eliminating this benefit, they would save the general government $264,511.

Mr. Diggs asked if removing the opt-out benefit would result in a pay reduction.

Ms. Light said that she would need to re-examine this further. She said that running the numbers indicated that there may be a negative impact on some of their lower earning employees. She said that the next item on the agenda was a managed vacancy savings program. She said the budget increased vacancy savings by approximately $1.9 million in the general fund alone. She said that by managed, they would be holding positions open and actively working to meet the target vacancy savings.

Dr. Yeung said that one of the things that she was interested in, and she had mentioned it on several occasions, was the salary lapse for employees that they had difficulty filling for the past two to three years. She said she would also like to see this addressed on the school side, as she believed it was likely to be more significant.

Ms. Light said that their projected increase was $1.9 million. She said that they will provide an updated number as soon as it is available for the current vacancy savings. She said that she was confident that they would be able to achieve an increase in vacancy savings. She said that she was willing to provide any additional information the Board may need to make an informed decision.

Dr. Yeung said that she would appreciate it if they could review those and explore potential options for increasing revenue and make it more manageable. She said she would also like to see something similar from the school.

Ms. Vanuch said that Dr. Yeung was seeking a comprehensive list of all open positions in the County, including the duration they had been vacant, the corresponding salary, and a review of whether these positions were still necessary. She said that as a Board, they would need to assess whether these positions were worth filling, considering their current staffing situation. She said that they would also need to explore the possibility of consolidating or eliminating certain positions and reallocate resources, such as within the schools and County government.

Dr. Yeung said that is what salary lapse meant.

Ms. Bohmke asked if there were other decreases in the budget.

Ms. Light said that Mr. Ashton had gone through a thorough review of those items during his presentation. She said that those items were not relevant to the presentation today. She said that she was happy to address any questions related to those items that she could. She said that over the past couple of months, they had been diligently searching for every possible source of revenue.

Ms. Light said that regarding the NVCT Memorandum of Understanding, Ms. Baker had brought this to the Board's attention last Tuesday to discuss the changes to the MOU. She said that she would like to add to that conversation that this funding was derived from rollback taxes. She said that as per the Board's financial policies, these taxes were allocated to land conservation measures, which the NVCT MOU fell under. She said that if the Board decided not to fund the increase in the MOU, it was their choice. She said that according to the Board's financial policies, they would need to reallocate approximately $32,000 to another land conservation project, which could be redirected to PDR or another initiative.

Ms. Light said that they would like to review some of the unfunded options to ensure the Board understands the items not included in the budget. She said that the first two items are the schools, specifically the school funding gap. She said that the schools had seen an increase from $170 million to approximately $175 million in their operating costs. She said that these figures can be found in the budget book. She said the second item was debt service, which they have discussed previously.

Ms. Light said that the items in the red block related to fire and rescue, including employee requests that were unfunded. She said that these included 19 positions, including deputy fire marshals, shift safety lieutenants, a 12-member crew, and three firefighters to cover leave vacancies. She said that the 12-member crew would also be based in Potomac if funded. She said that fire and rescue was seeking an ALS increase. She said HR conducted a scale adjustment study to keep up with market rates, which was part of the Board's strategic plan. She said this resulted in a $1.3 million increase for fire and rescue. She said that they have also included a 1% scale adjustment, which would be approximately $338,000 for fire and rescue.

Ms. Light said that for the Sheriff's employee requests, it totaled around $2.6 million. She said that these were listed for reference. She said that notably, six of these requests involved part-time school protection officers being converted to full-time school resource officers.

Dr. Yeung said that currently, the school protection officers were part-time and were not present at every elementary school. She said that she believed this was because they were part-time. She asked if it was challenging to fill these positions.

Major Jason Dembowski, Sheriff's Office, stated that the positions they were trying to fill were challenging to recruit for. He said that they had been able to hire some part-time positions, which had been filled by retired police officers who wanted to become deputy sheriffs. He said that in the Virginia Retirement System, full-time work was not an option, so they were limited to hiring retired individuals who were willing to work part-time.

Mr. Dembowski said that unfortunately, not everyone was interested in part-time work, so to fill these positions, they needed to consider converting them to full-time roles. He said that this would allow them to hire full-time deputies, including transfers from other positions, as the requirements for these positions included two years of law enforcement experience and school resource officer certification. He said that the part-time deputies they had tried to hire had proven to be extremely difficult to fill, as they struggled to find applicants who were willing to work part-time.

Dr. Yeung said that this had been a problem for four years, and she remembered addressing it when she was on the School Board.

Mr. Dembowski said that he was not certain if it had been exactly four years, but they had been working on implementing legislation to establish their own part-time academy to certify school protection officers. He said that unfortunately, that legislation had not been passed. He said that as a result, they had had to rely on these positions. He said that they were currently experiencing difficulty filling these part-time positions, which was why they were making this request.

Ms. Vanuch asked if they currently had six part-time positions.

Mr. Dembowski said that they currently had more than six part-time positions that were vacant. He said that they were attempting to convert some of those to full-time positions.

Ms. Vanuch asked if there was anything prohibiting them from converting 10 part-time positions into five full-time positions.

Ms. Light said that to adjust those, the Board would have to approve full-time counts.

Ms. Vanuch said that perhaps this was a good starting point to help secure the position, and retain some part-time positions. She said that they could get lucky and find someone who was retired from the federal government. She said the remaining few positions could be converted to full-time. She said that in the future, staff may want to come back to them with the number of positions they would like to convert.

Mr. Dembowski said that they would be open to any assistance that could help the program, but he did have some individuals currently occupying part-time positions, so he would not want to push them out of their roles. He said that the vacant positions would be the focus of any additional support they could receive.

Ms. Vanuch requested that staff provide a follow-up with a budget-neutral figure fill the positions.

Dr. Yeung asked how many part-time positions there were.

Mr. Dembowski said he believed they had seven or eight positions.

Dr. Yeung asked why they were not at the schools.

Mr. Dembowski said that they were at the schools that they were assigned to. He said that with seven, eight, or nine vacant positions, they were unable to cover all the elementary schools. He said that they were relying on them to try to cover multiple schools at one time.

Ms. Light said that moving forward with the general government, they had reviewed the positions, including the leadership team, which they had done for several years now.

Ms. Allen asked how not meeting the staffing request for fire and rescue would impact the level of service for the northern area. She asked if there was a number that got them to a staffing level that would not impact the level of service.

Joseph Cardello, Fire Chief, said that they had requested 12 positions for Potomac Hills, a fully staffed engine company, due to the area's high level of activity. He said that the Potomac Hills area was characterized by a concentration of skilled nursing facilities, schools, motels, hotels, and commercial occupancies.

Mr. Cardello said that this presented a significant challenge, as there were three fire response districts in the County that lacked dedicated staffing. He said that two of these districts, located in the Griffis-Widewater area, were adjacent to each other and faced a substantial problem in providing adequate coverage. He said that the next closest fire station, Aquia, was the busiest in the County and often unavailable, making it difficult for them to respond to calls in the Potomac Hills and Griffis-Widewater areas.

Ms. Allen asked for a follow-up regarding the number of emergency response calls in the area.

Mr. Cardello said that he had the data ready. He said that over the past two years, there had been between 800 and 900 fire calls combined in the two areas.

Dr. Yeung asked what the third location was.

Mr. Cardello said that it was the Brooke station.

Ms. Light said that they were discussing general government employee requests. She said she would like to point out the fire and rescue facilities operations and maintenance manager. She said that this position was part of the public safety sector, which also included sheriff and fire and rescue departments. She said that as a result, these positions were grouped together on this list. She said the leadership team conducted a thorough review of all the projects and ranked them from top to bottom. She said that the order of ranking was as follows: the IT project manager was first, and the finance grants accountant was last.

Ms. Light said that if the Board were to add all these positions, the estimated cost would be approximately $745,000. She said that a 1% pay increase was provided for reference. She said that if the Board were to conduct a full 100% review of positions, it would require an additional $220,000. She said that the last list included several new initiatives proposed by departments that were not funded. She said that the financial system, which had been in place since 1999, was another example. She said that although there have been some upgrades, the system remained outdated and was not included in the County Administrator's budget.

Ms. Light said that several strategic priorities outlined in the five-year plan were not funded within the budget. She said that the Central Rappahannock Regional Library increase was also not included in the budget. She said that the library was funded at the same amount as last year, which was $300,000. She said that this increase was intended to help support the library's rising rents and some of their staff's pay, although that additional funding was not included.

Mr. Diggs said that in the past, when they had implemented similar changes, the library adjusted hours or closed certain locations early. He asked if they were considering a similar approach.

Ms. Light said that they had not received a response regarding that matter, but it was ultimately up to the Library Board to manage those changes.

Ms. Bohmke asked about using one-time funds for the financial system replacement. She asked what the ongoing cost would be.

Ms. Light said that they estimated that ongoing costs would increase by anywhere from $800,000 to $1.2 million. She said that the initial amount of $1.6 million was essentially one-time funding and startup costs. She said that they did take a similar approach with the CAD system. She said that the CAD system was reflected in the blue section of this presentation, showing an annual increase of $153,000. She said that a CAD system was significantly more than this amount.

Ms. Light said that they examined the current CAD costs, an estimated $330,000. She said that they chose to allocate this to one-time funding, assuming that a new system would require the elimination of the old one, resulting in some overlap. She said that they considered this the end of the CAD era. She said that they allocated $3.4 million of one-time funding towards the CAD. She said that this plan allowed for a mid-year implementation, one-time funding for a contingency, and a small increase in costs of around $153,000 for the remainder of the year.

Dr. Yeung said that last year, she was one of the proponents of this financial system, as she believed it was extremely important. She said that her follow-up question was regarding the level of IT involvement in the implementation process. She said that typically, when departments attempted to integrate various systems and specialists were involved, IT was often tagged along for extended periods, incurring project management costs and other expenses. She said that she would like to know how much involvement the IT department would have in helping to implement this process. She said that she would also like to know if there was any funding allocated in the IT budget to assist with this effort.

Ms. Krauss said that she wanted to provide some background information on this matter. She said that this was a challenging decision to make, and a significant amount of work was put in by Ms. Light and Mr. Spence to move it forward. She said that their outdated system made it clear that they needed to make a change. She said that they conducted stakeholder meetings, analyzed the implementation, and considered the necessary expertise, training, and funding required.

Ms. Krauss said that they also weighed the time and resources needed, as this was a long-term project that would take years to complete. She said that it was a difficult conversation to have, as they had to consider the County's needs and find ways to mitigate the financial challenges. She said that ultimately, they decided to push it back slightly due to other priorities, but it was something that they must address. She said that if they did not, they may face additional repercussions in the future.

Dr. Yeung said that she was aware of the importance of this issue and, therefore, she would be interested in pursuing it for the benefit of both the IT department and Stafford County as a whole. She said that as a growing county, they were at a critical juncture where continued inaction could lead to significant breakage in their financial and IT systems. She said that she hoped they could avoid this outcome, but she was concerned that if they did not take action, their systems would be compromised.

Mr. Ashton said that from a staff perspective, he believed that they had agreed to prioritize the CAD system at this time. He said that this decision was based on the same reasoning that their county was growing, and the CAD system's needs were increasing annually. He said that to ensure public safety, they wanted to have a solid system in place. He said that in his career, he had implemented both CAD and financial systems, and in both cases, the financial systems had taken three to four years to complete, while CAD systems could be completed in a year. He said that attempting to do both simultaneously, it seemed like a recipe for disaster. He said that they decided to focus on CAD this time around and planned to revisit financial systems in a future budget year.

Mr. English said that in reference to the CAD and the fire tax levy, he was wondering if monies from that fund could be used to cover the cost of the CAD. He asked how much was available in the fire tax levy to address this issue. He said that he would also like to know what the ongoing costs were once the CAD was operational, including any necessary updates.

Ms. Light said that she was estimating the annual ongoing costs, based on some of the bids received from the sheriff, to be approximately $1 million. She said that this was a rough estimate that would require further review and contract negotiation, which they had not yet begun. She said that in the fire levy, the resources allocated to the fire levy and projected for the future were primarily focused on the fire stations, apparatus, and ambulances. She said that if the Board would like them to explore the possibility of reallocating some of these funds to support the CAD, whether on an ongoing or capital basis, it was ultimately at the Board's discretion.

Mr. English said that the CAD was equally, if not more, important than a fire truck. He said that in his view, it was more urgent. He said that to move forward, they should consider reallocating those funds to the CAD system.

Ms. Light said that provided to the Board was a comparison of the large capital projects, which was also included in the handout. She said that Elementary School 18 and 19 were not included in the CIP. She said the Board may recall that these projects came in under budget. She said the Board had already budgeted and appropriated all funds for Elementary School 18 and 19. She said that since those funds had been allocated, there was no more budgeting or appropriation to be done, so they were not included in the CIP. She said these projects were still moving forward.

Ms. Light said there was additional bus parking at Mountain View High School. She said that they considered the FY 25 adopted completion date, the proposed budget completion date, and they compared the costs. She said that they included the change in dollar amount and a brief explanation for the change. She said that Mountain View High School parking and fueling at Colonial Forge were not on the CIP last year, so they were added to the CIP this year.

Ms. Light said that the Fleet Services facility had been discussed at several CIP meetings, and they were able to move this project forward by two years. She said there was a small change in cost. She said the School Board had discussed Drew Middle School and the associated cost increases due to land acquisition and off-site costs. She said that as a result, there was an increase in Drew Middle School costs.

Ms. Light said that Elementary School 20 was still in the out years, but it had some updated costs and square footage. She said a number of critical systems were included for the first time in the CIP, including Gayle Middle School and Hampton Oaks, Thompson Middle School, and Winding Creek Elementary School. She said the schools had discussed the replacement of their critical systems, and those were on this list.

Ms. Light said that High School 6 remained unchanged from year to year, continuing forward. She said that High School 7 and Middle School 9 were still in the last part of the CIP, serving as placeholders. She said that a significant change was expected for the Rising Star Complex and day school replacement, with an increase of approximately $30 million. She said that last year, Rising Star and the day school were separate projects, but this year, the School Board proposed combining them, resulting in a substantial cost increase, but there was a major change in the project.

Ms. Light said that they had a new Parks and Recreation director, who started yesterday and can answer questions about these projects. She said that several maintenance shops were included, as the Parks department identified a need for centralized storage. She said that a new entrance to Pratt Park was planned for year 10, located off Butler Road, which will improve traffic flow during high-traffic events like the Fourth of July. She said that the gymnastics center remained on the CIP, with assumed decreases in land costs. She said that Aquia Landing parking expansion was added to the CIP last year and was currently underway, with no cost changes.

Ms. Light said that the Potomac Park master plan was primarily a proffer project, with a slight increase due to some project delays. She said that the Carl Lewis addition also saw a slight increase, as some of the project was moved out one year. She said that Duff Green Park will be all proffers for the master plan.

Dr. Yeung said that the day school was relocated from its original location in an elementary school to a new site. She said that she was curious to know why the children could not be housed at their individual neighborhood schools instead of relying on buses and transportation. She said this would likely result in increased costs, especially if they were building multiple schools. She said that she thought it would have been a more practical solution to locate the day school in one of the existing elementary schools. She said some of the schools in the area were still underutilized. She said that her second question was, she did not realize that Embrey Mill was pushed so far out.

Ms. Light said that these projects had been moved out one more year, which was primarily due to debt capacity and the prioritization of the School Board. She said that this year, they had implemented a new CIP process, where they were examining the School Board's priorities and working to incorporate them into their budget. She said that they were trying to honor the School Board's requests by focusing on large projects.

Ms. Bohmke said that Dr. Chase recently sent an email that Stafford High School had to close its concession stands. She said that she was not aware of the status of the lockers. She said that she was unsure about the status of the announcer's booth, and they had to perform renovations on the bleachers for safety. She asked if those projects were listed on the School Board's request.

Ms. Light said that this was a 3R project, and it was listed in the 3R items. She said that they were able to incorporate it into the 3R projects in FY 2027, as it had originally been listed. She said that they respected the 3R process as it was presented to them. She said they just explored additional funding sources. She said that for the Stafford High School repair of the press box, they identified 100% proffers that may be used to support these projects.

Ms. Allen said that there was outreach done regarding a potential partnership with the Rouse Center to house the gymnastics center. She asked staff if those conversations were ongoing or what the result was.

Ms. Krauss said that they had received an unsolicited proposal and were currently going through their preliminary process. She said that they had continued to engage in conversations with the potential developer, and they would update the Board after the preliminary process.

Ms. Light said that Bryon Counsell was also present to discuss the more intricate changes that may be seen in some of these projects. She said that as they moved forward, they would see some changes in the large fire and rescue projects. She said that they had maintained the proposed budget's current tax rate of 1.31 cents, which would not increase to 3 cents.

Ms. Light said that the Board and public may recall that when the fire levy was first introduced, it was projected to be 3 cents, but it had remained at 1.5 cents, with the last adjustment returning to

1.31 cents in the previous year. She said that she anticipated that this rate would increase to 3 cents in the second year, which would be FY 27 and calendar year 2026. She said that they would bring this back to the Board for discussion next year.

Ms. Light said that for this year, Aquia Harbor would have some small increases due to reviewing quotes. She said the Public Joint Training Facility would experience a small decrease based on timing. She said that the Brooke Fire and Rescue Station had been moved out five years, and under this plan, it was not feasible to move it closer. She said that the Rock Hill project was underway and would continue to maintain its pace, although they did see some cost increases in that area.

Ms. Light said that the Embrey Mill Fire Station was projected to be moved out three years, and the White Oak Station would be moved out an additional three years. She said that the key factor in this plan was affordability, ensuring that they could fund all apparatus, ambulance needs, and debt service for Aquia and Rock Hill, while also allowing for additional projects.

Ms. Gary said that regarding the Brooke Station rebuild, she understood that finding suitable property had been a challenge. She said that financial constraints were likely a factor in this decision. She said that she had a two-part question: She asked what the current status of locating land for the rebuild was, and what plans were in place to ensure the station remained functional in the interim.

Mr. Cardello said that they had not begun the process of searching for land yet. He said that finding a suitable location was proving to be challenging. He said that they looked forward to pursuing this opportunity when it arose. He said that in terms of keeping the facility open, they were working closely with the volunteers at Brooke to ensure their needs were met. He said that it was a difficult situation, and he was aware of the condition of the building and the issues the volunteers were facing.

Ms. Gary asked what the status was and if there were any issues they should be made aware of.

Mr. Cardello said that he believed there was a good communication between the station chief and support services, as well as the leadership at Brooke. He said that given the age of the building, it was inevitable that issues would arise. He said that he was confident that they could work together and accomplish their goals.

Ms. Light said another significant project was the courthouse. She said that there was undoubtedly a project cost increase associated with the courthouse. She said that Mr. Counsell and Mr. Overton had briefed the Board on the courthouse and its associated costs on multiple occasions. She said that the change in scope for this project was substantial, as it involved a new full court located across the street from the existing one. She said that consequently, there was a notable cost increase. She said that however, the timing of this project appeared to be relatively consistent with the original timeline.

Mr. Diggs asked if they ever received a follow-up to Ms. Bohmke's questions about the design and space requirements for the courtrooms.

Mr. Counsell said that everything they had been working on in the pre-programming phase of this project had been focused on obtaining good quality, order of magnitude numbers. He said that they had been following the study conducted in 2016 to determine the number of courtrooms needed, as well as adhering to the state supreme court design guidelines. He said that as a result, they believed they were meeting the guidelines very strictly and not overestimating the space or the number of courtrooms required.

Mr. Counsell said that Matt Lehane was available to answer any technical questions. He said that in general, they had presented a report to the Board on February 25, covering the main components of the transportation CIP. He said that the Board's consensus was to consider an option of reducing the scope of the Garrisonville Road project and making it a more focused, spot improvement project, concentrating on improving intersections for traffic movement.

Mr. Counsell said that the additional funds from the Garrisonville Road project could be reallocated to wedge widening. He said that they had identified $7 million that could be transferred from the Garrisonville Road project to wedge widening. He said that Mr. Lehane had met with VDOT on multiple occasions, and VDOT was enthusiastic about this proposal, believing they could execute it within their schedules. He said that however, due to the alignment of their fiscal years, the process may take a couple of years to complete.

Mr. Lehane said he wanted to make a correction. He said that the total cost was approximately $11 million. He said that they had previously discussed $9.5 million for 10 projects at the Board work session. He said that the additional $1.5 million was specifically for the Poplar Road project. He said that although they had discussed several segments of Poplar Road, they did not consider the full section. He said that they recommended that the full section of Poplar Road be included in the project.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the total available funding was.

Mr. Lehane said that the total cost for the Garrisonville Road project was approximately $31.5 million in local funding. He said that they reallocated $21.5 million. He said that they planned to allocate $11 million to the Wedge Widening Program to fund 10 projects. He said that there were five or six other projects in their list that they could potentially fund in the future, which would require an additional $6.5 million. He said that staff was currently exploring these options as well.

Ms. Vanuch asked if that included the $1 million set aside by the Board.

Mr. Lehane said that the total cost would be $13 million. He said that there was a contingency fund and some flexibility to conduct safety studies to assess potential improvements, such as reducing the number of trees, adding lane markings, or installing additional signage. He said that they would work with VDOT on this as well.

Mr. Lehane said that there were some complexities to the agreement that they would need to address, which may require presenting the item to other boards. He said that they would work through these details as they moved forward. He said that this item was likely to be included on the consent agenda for the April 1 Board meeting or future meeting, where they would seek a resolution of support to present to VDOT. He said that this would enable them to move forward with the projects. He said that they would proceed with the initial 10 projects, and then they could explore additional options.

Dr. Yeung asked what the plans were for Garrisonville Road.

Mr. Lehane said that one of the things that the Garrisonville Road widening study for Smart Scale had identified, and they had discussed with the Board in January of the previous year, were the improvements they wanted to make on Garrisonville Road. He said that the main improvement was the widening, but the study also identified some additional improvements that they could do, such as two turn lanes onto Eustis Road, two turn lanes onto Parkway Boulevard, a right turn lane onto Wolverine Way, medians on the current five-lane section of Garrisonville Road, and sidewalks. He said that they were currently working with VDOT to determine the project scope they could move forward with.

Mr. Lehane said that they had applied for a revenue-sharing project with a $10 million budget for a widening project, so they still needed to meet the requirements set by VDOT based on the V-TRANS long-range plan and needs. He said that they had also applied for a revenue-sharing project with sidewalks and transit improvements, so they needed to meet those requirements first. He said that their first step was to confirm everything with VDOT.

Mr. Lehane said that assuming they could move forward, staff would begin procurement immediately to start the required study, and they would come back to the Board at a later date once they had their scope of work and VDOT approval to move forward with actual engineering. He said he did not have a timeline for that yet. He said they could be ready to start engineering sometime this fall, once they had VDOT approval and could complete the study.

Dr. Yeung asked what additional changes or updates they were planning.

Mr. Lehane said that currently, they did not have any projects within the CIP to address improvements on that section of Garrisonville Road. He said that during the Board work session, they discussed targeted improvements for Garrisonville Road as part of a future round of Smart Scale projects. He said that they concluded that they needed to take a more targeted approach, similar to what they had done in the previous round.

Mr. Lehane said that to identify their worst roadways for congestion and safety, they focused on Garrisonville Road and Warrenton Road. He said that they would revisit this topic at a future Board meeting with potential ideas. He said the Board had requested that they provide different scopes of work from consultants and estimated costs for the required studies. He said that staff would bring this information back to the Board at a future meeting once it was available from the consultants. He said that afterwards they would conduct the studies on the basic targeted improvements and then consider moving forward with a future Smart Scale application or exploring other directions as recommended by the Board.

Dr. Yeung asked that staff keep in mind that when developers were building roads, there were often proffers included in the agreement, which required them to address certain road repairs, lights, and other infrastructure. She said that she assumed VDOT was involved in these matters, and she would like to work together to ensure that they were collaborating effectively to get things done. She said that if a developer was responsible for a 500-foot stretch of road, for example, she assumed they may be able to work together to minimize the funding that would otherwise be allocated to them.

Mr. Lehane said that was a great point. He said that in all of their transportation studies, they considered background development based on other projects. He said that as a result, they would certainly work with developers if necessary, but at the very least, they would include the traffic generation and the proposed improvements in their traffic study, so they had a clear understanding of what was happening going forward.

Ms. Gary said that she would appreciate it if they could explain to her what was happening with Brooke Road, specifically regarding the cost estimate that had been updated per the Protect grant. She said that they had not formally accepted the grant, which meant that the funds were currently on hold and could potentially be withdrawn. She said that given the current uncertainty, she was struggling to understand why they were proceeding with this process.

Mr. Lehane said that currently, with the Protect grant, they were on hold, as previously discussed. He said that they had submitted their grant agreement to the USDOT, but they were waiting to hear back. He said that at this time, the $7.5 million allocated for the Brooke Road project in the CIP remained untouched. He said that the only change since the last CIP update was the addition of the Protect grant's $10.2 million to the CIP, which had been done in anticipation of signing the grant agreement. He said that this change had occurred two months ago.

Mr. Lehane said that since then, no updates had been made. He said that they still anticipated being able to sign the grant agreement and proceed with the project, although they did not have a definitive timeline. He said that as a result, the project budget remained around $12 to $13 million. He said that technically, there was additional funding in the CIP that they would need to discuss with the Board and revisit when they were ready to sign the grant agreement.

Mr. Lehane said that the $5.2 million was the increase. He said that this was not an actual increase in project cost, but rather a technical paper exercise until they made a decision on how to proceed with the project. He said that they had maintained the local funding at $7.5 million and added the Protect grant.

Mr. Counsell said that the NEPA study was currently underway and ongoing. He said that it was not included in the grant compensation to pay for the project. He said that as a result, the project remained on schedule, but the amount of funding for the project was still uncertain.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the grant on Brooke Road was tied to community-based funding.

Mr. Lehane said that it was not. He said that this was a separate grant from the IIJA bill, known as the Protect Grant.

Ms. Vanuch said that she believed it was safe. She said that upon reviewing the CR documents, she found that the CR had held many of those items harmless. She said that she would double-check to confirm.

Ms. Light said that they would move onto proffers, and they had prepared a discussion and a handout.

Mike Zuraf, Director of Planning and Zoning, said that the purpose and definition of proffers were as follows: they serve to offset the impacts of development on the community that may result from a zoning reclassification to a more intense district. He said that to set the stage, he would briefly cover the basics of proffers. He said that this method of growth management was unique to Virginia and was not commonly found in other states.

Mr. Zuraf said that proffers helped to mitigate the impacts of development, which can include issues such as incompatible land uses, traffic, and the creation of demands for additional public facilities, such as schools, parks, and rescue stations. He said that proffers were tied to the zoning of the property and remained with the land if it was sold to a different owner. He said that they were voluntarily offered by the applicant or property owner and were reviewed and accepted in accordance with state code.

Mr. Zuraf said that the County cannot require proffers to be submitted with a rezoning, and if they were submitted, staff may negotiate the details. He said that staff may also request reasonable proffers as quantified in an impact statement or conduct proffer reasonableness analyses for residential rezonings to identify specific impacts.

Mr. Zuraf said that staff cannot request proffers that exceed or were unrelated to the impacts created by a development. He said that the applicant or owner may offer proffers that they deemed reasonable, which would be evidenced by the signature of the proffers they provided. He said that the types of proffers can include various restrictions, such as prohibiting certain uses that might otherwise be allowed by right, requiring site and building design standards, tree preservation areas, increased building setbacks, reduced maximum building heights, specific building architecture, land or right-of-way dedications for future road improvements or public facilities, and infrastructure improvements, including road improvements and park improvements.

Mr. Zuraf said that monetary contributions were required to mitigate public facility impacts, and these contributions must be used specifically for capital facility improvements, not operations. He said that the types of monetary contributions can take different forms, such as per-unit payments or lump-sum payments, and are typically associated with specific types of facilities, such as transportation, schools, parks, or fire and rescue services. He said that proffers were subject to annual adjustments, based on the Marshall Swift Index or Consumer Price Index, and they were collected prior to occupancy of each residential dwelling unit or commercial building.

Mr. Zuraf said that the required payments were tracked and enforced by Planning and Zoning staff, who managed annual adjustments and ensured that developers were aware of their adjusted proffers. He said that the proffer funds were deposited into a dedicated monetary account and allocated to each development project and specific type of facility as outlined within the proffers.

He said that proffers were established in the state code and had specific limitations on how they can be spent.

Mr. Zuraf said that the funds must be utilized for the facility type established in the proffers. He said that location was a factor, as funds must be used on capital projects that were close enough or provided a benefit for the development that paid into those proffers. He said that all funds collected for a specific project must be used within 12 years of the project's build-out. He said that moving forward, he would like to review how the proffer funds were related to the CIP.

Mr. Zuraf said that once a potential CIP project was identified by a specific department, they coordinated with the Finance Department, and then they contacted Planning and Zoning to determine how to use the funds. He said that if a new project was identified, staff worked to identify which development project funds can be withdrawn for that project, or if the development project already has available funds.

Mr. Zuraf said that staff will then review the proffer language and location criteria to ensure that the funds were spent appropriately, taking into account school attendance zones, fire and rescue first response areas, and other limitations. He said that they maintained a proffer tracking spreadsheet to manage the collected proffers, tracking existing cash balances, the types of facilities they can be used for, and projecting future funds based on known projects and their timelines. He said this information was shared with the budget team to ensure that they were aware of upcoming funds and can plan accordingly. He said they then identified all the possible projects that they are aware of within the spreadsheet.

Ms. Light said that the proposed budget included proffers listed in the CIP. She said that a link to this information was available for the Board or citizens who may need it or have questions.

Mr. English asked if proffers could be revisited and renegotiated with the developer. He said that he would like to know more about the Musselman Park project proffers. He said that it was stated that they had a million dollars allocated for it, but it appeared that amount was not actually available because the project never came into fruition.

Mr. Zuraf said that renegotiating the terms of the proffer likely would require a proffer amendment. He said that in some cases, this was necessary when older rezonings were involved and a project failed to develop. He said that as a result, the parties may have needed to revisit the proffer and seek an amendment to update the terms.

Mr. Zuraf said that he would need to examine the details of the Musselman Park situation to understand it fully. He said that they would also need to identify the specific project and the funds that could be received from each approved proffer.

Dr. Yeung asked if staff updated the Board or individual supervisors when they connected proffer funds with a project.

Ms. Light said that typically, they provided proffer updates to the Board all at once, usually during the budget timeframe. She said that when it came to projected proffer updates, they tried to plan them for the following year, allowing for some flexibility in case they did not materialize. She said they had not had individual conversations with each Board member regarding these updates.

Dr. Yeung said that she was asking this question because when a school, such as Embrey Mill, was pushed out, there were proffers associated with it. She said that she was not sure if the Board or the School Board was aware of the proffers and the timing. She said that she was curious to know who would be responsible for updating the Board members and the School Board.

Ms. Light said that staff worked closely with School Board staff and provided them with the list of proffers. She said that they examined proffer availability and potential uses for them. She said that they did sit down with School Board staff and assumed that they would be briefing their board members on the information in a way that was functional and helpful for them.

Ms. Vanuch said that it had been a while since they had reviewed a residential project, and she was trying to understand the specifics. She asked if a developer had to still pay a proffer if a certain amount was proffered for a school child in a seat and that seat remained empty or the capacity was reduced by the time the project was built.

Mr. Zuraf said that if there was available capacity in a school zoned for a proposed development, and the project did not generate more students than the available capacity, then it would be unreasonable to collect proffers for the school.

Ms. Vanuch asked if they had considered the proffers that would no longer be valid when redistricting the high schools.

Mr. Zuraf said that proffers were set at the time of approval. He said that if there was redistricting, conditions changed, or another development came along and filled up all the seats, the amount that needs to be paid was based on what was set at the time of approval. He said that this means that regardless of any changes that may occur afterwards, the amount that needs to be paid remained the same.

Ms. Vanuch said that she recalled their discussion during the proffer process when she was on the Planning Commission. She said that at that time, the rule was that the developer could appeal the proffer if there were open seats. She said that they had a long-standing agreement to stay informed about school redistricting, particularly with the elementary schools, which were about to undergo significant changes.

Ms. Vanuch said that given the upcoming redistricting of the entire County, this could potentially impact their proffers. She asked staff to look into this matter with the legal team and verify the current policy, as she may have misremembered the details from a long time ago.

Mr. Zuraf said that staff would look into it.

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said that Mr. Zuraf's statement was correct. She said that when a rezoning was approved, the capacity was evaluated at that point, and it was not possible to change a proffer without coming back to the Board. She said that there may be some nuances to discuss offline regarding potential legal challenges, but when it came to altering a proffer payment, once it was set by the Board and approved, it remained in place unless it was revisited by the Board.

Ms. Vanuch said that was true unless it was challenged legally. She said she recalled a closed session on the Planning Commission, and she said she would like to see this matter not be dismissed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned its meeting at 6:38 p.m.

William H. Ashton, II
County Administrator