

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
MAY 27, 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, May 27, 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; Meg Bohmke; Pamela Yeung; Darrell English; Monica Gary; Crystal Vanuch.

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

ADDITIONS – DELETIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR AGENDA

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

ITEM 1. RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER CROSSING BRIDGE PROJECT

Ian Ollis, Director of Transportation Planning for the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO), said that his colleague, John Ridout, was providing a printed copy of one of the maps, as it was difficult to see on the screen. He said that in regards to the background and history of this topic, the answer depended on how far back in time one wanted to go. He said that as could be seen, one of the attempts to find a route to cross the Rappahannock west of I-95 began in 1993, and over the years, multiple alternatives had been considered.

Mr. Ollis said that in fact, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) had previously selected one of the options, only to cancel it. He said that this had been attempted multiple times. He said that the main point about the history was that this was not the first time anyone had tried to find a route to cross the Rappahannock west of I-95. He said that their own process had begun in 2022 with FAMPO's east-west mobility study.

Mr. Ollis said that the consultant had recommended two things of interest to Stafford County: a western network of connected roads parallel to I-95, which would allow for travel through Stafford County without using I-95. He said that I-95 could not continue to be the main street of all jurisdictions due to its unreliability. He said that when there was a crash on I-95, alternative routes were necessary, which happened more frequently than they would like.

Mr. Ollis said that in 2023, the FAMPO Policy Committee had approved a staff research study to examine the viability of building a new bridge. He said that they had completed that study in June

2023. He said that the slides they had linked for them allowed them to click on highlighted sections and access the study reports, which were available online. He said that in October 2023, following a public meeting at the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Center in Southern Stafford, the Policy Committee had approved the Environmental Linkages Study and awarded it to their consultant to perform.

Mr. Ollis said that their goal was to eventually obtain a National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) certification, which would enable the construction of a bridge and roadways to connect across the river. He said that the current study they were conducting was a planning and environmental linkages alternative study. He said that the objective of this study was to determine the most suitable location for a crossing across the river, considering multiple options. He said that a map of the five studied options was available, which the two jurisdictions had identified as necessary for a crossing between Stafford County and the City of Fredericksburg.

Mr. Ollis said that they had progressed through the necessary steps at FAMPO, examining alignments, purpose and need, and revising alignments. He said that the consultant had also screened each alternative, evaluating environmental and traffic studies. He said that the FAMPO Policy Committee had received the consultant's recommendations, and they were now at a decision point. He said that the next step was to select the preferred option, taking into account the jurisdictions' and FAMPO's preferences.

Mr. Ollis said that he would explain the reasoning behind why they needed a bridge. He said that on the two maps displayed on the slide, the density of the color indicated the number of people or trips. He said that darker greens represented more trips, while lighter greens indicated fewer trips. He said that the map on the left, utilizing street light data, showed the destinations of individuals attempting to cross the river.

Mr. Ollis said that the intensity of the greens in the southern part of the map revealed that the primary destination was Central Park. He said that the top destinations in their region following that were the Spotsylvania Town Center, the hospital, and downtown Fredericksburg. He said that considering the bridges that existed, they were all east of I-95, made it difficult for people traveling south to reach these destinations if there was a crash on I-95.

Mr. Ollis said that the map on the right-hand side illustrated this point. He said that if one lived in Spotsylvania or Fredericksburg and crossed the river, the top destinations were the area in southern Stafford, just north of US-17, the Walmart, and Southern Stafford, just south of US-17 and west of I-95. He said that the Walmart was accessible via multiple bridges, but if one was closed, they could use another. He said that in contrast, traveling west of I-95 was very challenging. He said that the maps showed that the lack of bridges in this area was a significant factor in VDOT's determining another bridge was necessary.

Mr. Ollis said that additionally, comparing their region to similar-sized urban areas in Virginia, such as Petersburg and the Tri-Cities, revealed that the Fredericksburg area had relatively few bridges to cross their river to reach various locations. He said that for example, Roanoke had 27 bridges for a population of 230,000, while Petersburg and the Tri-Cities MPO had eight bridges for a population of 190,000. He said that despite having 24 lanes, they still only had four bridges.

He said that the population of 324,000 indicated that they had 36% more traffic per lane compared to other areas.

Mr. Ollis said that he would like to summarize the key points. He said that the purpose and need of this project were to provide an additional north-south travel capacity west of I-95 and to support the establishment of an interconnected grid system of roads. He said that according to VDOT, one of the reasons for future congestion in the region was the limitations of their current grid system, which was hindered by rivers, including I-95. He said that even I-95 had limited crossing points, making their grid system incomplete.

Mr. Ollis said that this project would help establish a new multimodal connection across the river, featuring a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as allowing buses, including OmniRide and FRED Transit buses, to cross the river. He said that it would provide an alternative route for emergency responders in the event of an incident on I-95. He said that they had completed the need and scope studies, including investigating travel demand, environmental, and public input factors.

Mr. Ollis said that their consultant had also performed a cumulative ranking of these factors. He said that now, they needed to choose a locally preferred corridor, which would serve as a rough guide for the final roadway alignment. He said that the final NEPA certification process would involve further investigation by VDOT, including physical inspections and soil sampling, followed by a redesign of the corridor into an actual roadway based on the findings and public participation.

Mr. Ollis said that they had selected a 250-foot-wide corridor, but the roadway and bike shared use path would only be 100 to 115 feet wide. He said that this extra width was necessary to accommodate the roadway around physical features such as a wetland, as it was not possible to build through the middle of one. He said that they would not know what features were present until onsite inspections were performed. He said that they must consider various factors, including conservation issues, flood plains, wetlands, historic battlefield sites, approved development, commercial structures, residential structures, and houses within the 250-foot corridor.

Mr. Ollis said that to evaluate these factors, they used a matrix. He said that the next few slides would be presented quickly, and by reviewing the maps in sequence, one could see how the circles changed in size. He said that the reason for this was that these circles represented the impacts of building the bridge in different locations. He said that the first slide showed what would happen if they did not build a bridge. He said that the large circle at the intersection of US-1 and US-17 was the point of reference. He said that this circle included the US-17 intersections, and US-1 extended to the bottom of the slide.

Mr. Ollis said that the other circles represented State Route 3. He said that now, the options were labeled with letters. He said that Option A, as shown on the earlier map, was the no-build scenario. He said that this option reduced some of the circles. He said that Option B further reduced the circle at US-1 and US-17. He said that Option C improved the situation, and Option D could be seen by flipping through the slides. He said that the options were A, B, C, and D. He said that they had conducted several surveys in conjunction with a consultant, including the March survey.

Mr. Ollis said that in March, the yellow colors indicated the preferences of the residents and participants in the survey and public meetings in Stafford and Spotsylvania. He said that the higher the number, the more people voted for that option. He said that specifically, in Stafford, residents and participants gravitated towards option A. He said that he noticed that there were three points, but he would disregard that detail. He said that City of Fredericksburg residents gravitated towards option B. He said that following this, they conducted another survey.

Ms. Bohmke said that for full disclosure, it was important to explain to the public that when they did the initial survey, they did not include a no-build option.

Mr. Ollis said that no, it was the other way around. He said that the last survey did not include a no-build option. He said that however, in March, they did include the no-build option.

Ms. Bohmke said that another point she wanted to bring up was whether they would be displaying the zip codes. She said that they had previously found that a disproportionate number of people in Celebrate Virginia responded to the surveys, which was expected given their location. She said that upon reviewing the survey results, it was disproportionate to other options than the one that came down Celebrate Virginia Parkway. She said that nobody wanted development in their backyard, regardless of where it may be located.

Mr. Ollis said that he would like to explain the process quickly. He said that the March survey presented two options: a no-build option and the other options. He said that in contrast, the November to January survey was conducted a year later. He said that initially, they did not include the no-build option in the survey. He said that however, after concerns were raised, they added a method for people to vote for a no-build option. He said that to address Ms. Bohmke's question, the left-hand column of each row in the survey shows the zip code number.

Mr. Ollis said that for example, in Stafford, the zip code 22405 was listed. He said that this allowed them to see how each zip code voted. He said that the consultant, Michael Baker, ranked the options based on several factors, including intersection delay, travel demand, conservation and recreation impacts, water resources, cultural resources, built and planned developments, public support, and the average and first-choice public support.

Mr. Ollis said that Option B-1 scored highest when considering all screening factors. He said that A, B-1, B-2, and C were considered viable, while option D was not recommended due to its potential impact on homes on Greenbank Road. He said that those homes were already built close to the existing two-lane road, so widening it would have an outsized impact on those residents. He said that they also had the results from the Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) members, which was part of FAMPO, discussed the options and suggested alternative solutions that they preferred.

Mr. Ollis said that the CTAC's recommendation was a version of what they called Option C. He said that he believed a video was available for context. He said that if they looked at the provided map, which also was given out as a printed copy, the yellow line represented the option that the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee recommended they would like to see built. He said

that it included an alternative addition that would bypass the City of Fredericksburg and go directly into Spotsylvania County, if traveling south from Stafford.

Mr. Ollis said that the two blue lines were Options C and A, which the consultant had been studying for the past year. He said that as part of FAMPO, three staff members who had been working on this project for over three years asked the members to vote blind, so they could not see each other's votes until they finished. He said that the three of them who voted were Becky Golden, Dr. John Ridout, and himself.

Mr. Ollis said that they each voted, then pulled their votes, and they ended up agreeing that the two realistic options for FAMPO to consider in this region would be something like Option A and something like Option C, either of which would be viable. He said that they then examined options C and A and attempted to improve them to avoid wetlands and other environmental features, as well as to move developments away from houses in Stafford that are too close to the roadway options. He said that they had tried to move them further away and avoid developments currently being considered by the jurisdictions on both sides of the river.

Mr. Ollis said that the black lines on the map represented the FAMPO staff-recommended alternatives. He said that they did not make decisions, but they provided this as a suggestion from the FAMPO staff. He said that ultimately, Options A and C were the two they believed were viable. He said that the next steps were that once the region had accepted a locally preferred alternative, the consultant would conduct a cost estimate of that final alternative to provide a more accurate reflection of the bridge's construction costs. He said that they would also create a drawing of the preferred alternative, which would aid in future funding efforts.

Mr. Ollis said that the NEPA certification process commenced after this, and it would be managed by VDOT, not FAMPO. He said that by the June Policy Committee meeting, it would be a significant success if they could secure agreement among jurisdictions on an option, regardless of which option was chosen. He said that the chosen option would be the one that ultimately guided their localities' comprehensive plans, as they could not present a unified vision to funders if the bridge's placement was not agreed upon.

Mr. Ollis said that therefore, their goal was to reach consensus on a general area where the bridge and roadways could be built, rather than pinpointing an exact location. He said that the VDOT engineers would refine this corridor to suit local conditions, necessitating further environmental assessments and engineering studies before a final plan could be developed. He said that they were aiming for a general corridor, not a precise line on the map.

Mr. English asked why they did not have option B on this map.

Mr. Ollis said that if one examined option B, they would see that it included B-1 and B-2, and it crossed directly from Celebrate Virginia Parkway to Gordon Shelton Boulevard, spanning the river. He said that the issue with Option B was that it encroached on a large wetland located on the Fredericksburg side of the river, which was protected by an environmental easement, making it a more environmentally sensitive area. He said that the consultant did recommend to choose one of the B options, but also noted that options C and A could be viable alternatives. He said that they

did not rule out the possibility of Options C and A, but their cumulative score recommended the B options.

Mr. English said that he believed that would be the smartest option because Celebrate Virginia Parkway was there already.

Mr. Diggs said that they were all connected to that.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Mr. Ollis could please share the information regarding the scenario where they build nothing in 2050 for the public's edification. She said that she would like to note that Spotsylvania County's stance on these options was currently uncertain, as they had expressed concerns about the potential impact on traffic, particularly on Route 3. She said that they were planning to present their own recommendations in two weeks, which may differ from Stafford's.

Ms. Bohmke said that according to the 2050 analysis and consultant's work, it was likely that they would face severe congestion issues, to the point where alternative modes of transportation, such as helicopters or bicycles, may become necessary. She said that she would like to emphasize the gravity of this situation. She said that for context, Celebrate Parkway, which was built to accommodate 65,000 vehicles per day, currently handled approximately 2,300 cars daily. She asked if Mr. Ollis could refresh her memory on that road's capacity.

Mr. Ollis said that they had a presentation, and he was not sure who delivered it, but it showed that the parkway was originally designed to accommodate more than 60,000 cars. He said that as a four-lane divided roadway, it was capable of handling substantial vehicles. He said that they had heard concerns that the road may not have been constructed robustly enough, but he did not have the expertise to evaluate that. He said that a structural engineer would be needed to answer that question. He said that it was certainly wide enough to accommodate 60,000 vehicles. He said that the road was not a narrow street, and it did not have very sharp corners.

Ms. Gary said that she was well-acquainted with this situation, having been involved since 2022, when she joined the Board. She said that her question was, what were the key factors that staff considered when narrowing down the options to A and C? She asked, specifically, what were the factors that made options A and C stand out over the others?

Mr. Ollis said that he would hand over to Dr. Ridout in a moment to discuss that. He said that for him, a major concern was the wetland located on the other side of the river. He said that if Option B was chosen, it would likely interfere with this wetland, which in turn would make it more difficult to obtain a NEPA certification, which would further prolong the process. He said that if an environmental easement was compromised, mitigation measures must be offered, which can be costly. He said that this was a key consideration for him, but they had previously decided on this independently.

Ms. Gary said that it sounded like staff had ruled out Options B-1 and B-2 due to environmental and potential cost concerns.

Dr. Ridout asked if they could review the consultant scoring process. He said that he wanted to point out a quirk in the scoring system. He said that when adding up the scores, particularly for Option C, which was not recommended by the consultant, it appeared that this option was hidden due to public feedback. He said that if they examined the intersection of the lay of the land and the plan and built environment, Option C scored similarly to Option B-2. He said that the public tended to favor simple answers, and Option A was preferred because it avoided a complex solution.

Dr. Ridout said that if they looked at the data behind the options, Option C operated effectively, avoiding a challenging topographically difficult area while offering all the necessary features. He said that it was also one of the few options that did not score last. He said that he agreed with some of the CTACs and staff liaison that Option C was a viable choice, as they had discussed it alongside options A, B, and D. He said that they had noted that option C made sense, but it had never been highlighted, likely due to its lack of attention. He said that despite that, it technically performed well.

Ms. Allen said that her question related to the lack of a grid, which was something she had discussed previously. She said that it did not make sense to build this now. She said that regardless of which option was selected, the jurisdictions would still face the same problems, as traffic would be redirected to a neighborhood, and they would still need to figure out how to manage the traffic and congestion on I-95 as it passed through District 16. She said that last week, Courthouse Road was severely congested, taking her mom 40 minutes to travel from the hospital to the other side of the Embrey Mill area.

Ms. Allen said that this was an issue that needed to be addressed. She said that she believed they should consider doing something to alleviate the traffic flow in conjunction with building the chosen option, wherever the bridge landed. She said that they should include some type of grid in the area to help manage the traffic and prevent it from being dumped into a neighborhood, where it could cause significant congestion and impact the quality of life for residents.

Mr. Ollis said that if one examined the map north of the area where the purple and orange lines intersect at Route 17, they would notice an underutilized roadway called Commerce Parkway. He said that it was located on the other side of Route 17 from Plantation Drive. He said that if one traveled up Plantation Drive, they would eventually reach Enon Road. He said that Stafford County had applied for a smart scale project for a new section of roadway called the Enon Connector, which would extend from Enon Road to Centreport Parkway, providing an alternative access to I-95 and US-1.

Mr. Ollis said that Centreport Parkway had been designed to handle more traffic than it currently received. He said that by building the Enon Connector and Commerce Parkway in conjunction, they were creating an additional parallel road to I-95, allowing people to move north and south without using I-95. He said that since Centreport Parkway was primarily used for airport and commercial developments, it was an ideal location to increase traffic. He said that this underutilized roadway provided an additional access point to I-95 and US-1, thereby expanding the grid. He said that further exploration of options further north could also be considered.

Mr. Ollis said that it was worth noting that a developer owned land in this area, but each of these projects added a link to the grid. He said that the alternative was to continually add lanes to existing roadways, which was not a viable long-term solution. He said that this approach became messy and ugly, and it also resulted in massive roadways that overwhelmed everything. He said that it was not a good idea to continually add more lanes, eventually leading to 16 lanes, as this could create more problems.

Mr. Ollis said that it was better to spread traffic across a well-designed grid network. He said that by adding two or three small roadway segments, they could connect existing roads and create a more efficient grid. He said that in 20 years, people would likely say that another roadway connection was needed elsewhere, rather than relying solely on this bridge and one roadway to solve all problems. He said that this alternative would provide an additional option for navigating around I-95, which would be especially useful when I-95 backed up.

Ms. Allen said that the final consideration was funding.

Dr. Yeung said that she would stick to her statement from 2022, which was that, yes, they acknowledged that a bridge was necessary. She said that, however, they also knew that when it was built, it would be used. She said that she did not believe that the bridge could be built before widening Garrisonville Road. She said that she lived off of Garrisonville Road and Mine Road. She said that Supervisor Allen, Supervisor Gary, and Supervisor Vanuch were also familiar with the issues resulting from traffic congestion in that area. She said that when there were accidents, it brought traffic to a complete stop for extended periods of time.

Dr. Yeung said that this highlighted the need for adequate infrastructure. She said that when discussing the comprehensive plan, they often focused on future growth, but they did not have accurate data on the current number of cars on the road. She said they were working to address the traffic congestion as it existed today. She said that when planning for new schools, businesses, and additions, they must consider the existing infrastructure and the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. She said that they must consider the revenue generated by new businesses, but also the additional strain on the existing infrastructure.

Dr. Yeung said that even if a road was built for 65,000 cars, a single business could add at least 25,000 vehicles, so they must think about the long-term implications and ensure that their infrastructure could support this growth. She said that when considering the current situation on Mine Road and I-95, that was the reality they would face every single day. She said that they had to do right by the people they served, who were begging them to do something. She said that to clarify, whichever option was chosen for the river crossing, they needed a more comprehensive solution for the County.

Mr. Ollis said that he heard Dr. Yeung suggesting that they needed a solution for Garrisonville Road as well.

Dr. Yeung said that she did not believe they should bring in this bridge crossing before infrastructure. She said that she agreed they needed a grid, but they needed to widen a road and provide access to alleviate the current congestion.

Mr. Ollis said that it appeared that the County had initiated or was about to initiate a study to address the Garrisonville Road issue. He said that therefore, he believed that something was indeed underway to tackle this problem. He said that although he was not aware of the specific solution, he was aware that something was being pursued to resolve the issue.

Matthew Lehane, Transportation Planning and Funding Manager, said that to summarize, they previously decided to put the Garrisonville Road Widening Project on hold and instead focus on targeted improvements. He said that they were currently working on a study for the section between Eustis Road and Shelton Shop Road, as well as a study for the section between Stafford Marketplace and Eustis Road.

Mr. Lehane said that the Board had also approved a short white paper discussing the challenges with the Quantico and Rappahannock River and Potomac River areas, and how they were limited in their options. He said that in this context, Garrisonville Road was the western alternative. He said that moving north, Route 1 and I-95 were the only options, so they would be exploring alternative solutions to move forward with the project. He said that they would bring back results for those studies later this fall.

Ms. Vanuch said that she agreed with Ms. Allen regarding the grid network, which was why it was crucial that they included this in their plan. She said that if they had secured the support of the Boards from years past, they could have achieved a consensus and avoided many of the traffic issues they face today. She said that Mr. Ollis eloquently discussed this in one of the FAMPO meetings, highlighting the eastern-western lanes in Stafford and Fredericksburg, which fed into I-95 and Route 1.

Ms. Vanuch said that there were only so many lanes that can be added to I-95 and Route 1, and that they needed to find alternative solutions to alleviate the north-south traffic congestion, particularly with the numerous connector roads. She said that in her opinion, it was smart for them to continue with the study for Garrisonville, exploring ways to improve those intersections and maintain east-west traffic flow. She said that even before Garrisonville was widened, having a plan to manage the increased east-west traffic will be essential, as it would only lead to more congestion on I-95 and Route 1, particularly in Stafford County due to Quantico and the limited river crossings.

Ms. Vanuch said that she recalled that during the snowstorm in 2022, some of the Board members at the time were riding around to see what was happening, and they saw what happened when I-95 and Route 1 were completely blocked. She said that Stafford County had nowhere to go, and they could only get to Stafford Hospital, which quickly went offline. She said that she truly believed they were missing the boat if they did not work on this. She said that funding would undoubtedly be a challenge; that was why they were exploring regional partnerships and working with Mr. Ollis.

Ms. Vanuch said that however, if it was not included in the FAMPO plan, it would not happen. She said that it was really just a vision for the future. She said that she did not think any of them would be on the Board when this actually came to fruition. She said that she wished that Boards

20 or 30 years ago had this forward thinking, because they would be in a much different place than they are right now as a community, and they probably would have had better economic development. She said that the only way to truly drive job creation and economic development and get restaurants and shopping on Route 17 was with an interconnection to Fredericksburg.

Ms. Vanuch said that this was because the cars passing by were mostly commuters, east-west, and the trucks, obviously, that passed by. She said that many economic developers had said that businesses would not survive there, and most of Hartwood would likely remain in six-acre parcels, so they would not see much development. She said that if they did not do something, that area would continue to be desolate from a business perspective. She said that they should seriously consider this as they moved forward, because they had to make a decision as a Board, and the three Supervisors who served on FAMPO had to vote according to the Board's direction, so she would appreciate it if they could share their thoughts.

Ms. Allen said that her concern with the funding piece was that, as she had been saying, the grid was a critical issue, and this was where FAMPO came in. She said that perhaps as a Board, they could discuss this with their staff and make it a part of their legislative agenda. She said that CTAC needed to understand this. She said that she understood that Stafford was penalized to some extent due to their perceived wealth, especially in terms of their matching funds. She said that her point about the grid was that when they applied for those funds, they needed to have an opportunity to secure them so that they could help build the grid.

Ms. Allen said that as everyone knew, and as all the Counties in this district were aware, they were all trying to repair and widen roads due to their growth, so any transportation funds they had were primarily used to maintain the existing roads they had, rather than taking on new projects of adding roads to the grid. She said that to pursue these new projects, they must reach out to FAMPO to secure matching funds from the state, but they may not have the necessary funds that FAMPO was looking for in the state.

Ms. Allen said that this created a challenge, as they needed to ensure that their regional bodies were advocating for them to secure the bridge, but also to fill the grid around it to alleviate traffic congestion. She said that as Ms. Vanuch and she had mentioned, this would only lead to further bottlenecks in the same location. She said that she was in favor of the river crossing project, but she did not know what the best option was. She said she would follow the majority's recommendation.

Mr. Ollis said that he believed the chairperson would be instrumental in helping to secure funding for these projects. He said that as a committee, FAMPO itself did not have a significant amount of funding. He said that they did play a role in assisting with funding over time. He said that he wanted to be clear that he did not have the authority to make promises or control the funding streams. He said that the state and federal governments typically controlled the larger funding sources, but they did contribute to the process.

Ms. Allen said that regarding the state's role in attracting businesses, they knew that every governor had their own economic development agenda, and their region had been targeted by the state over

the last two administrations. She said that when a large project like Kalahari came in, with significant traffic, it was puzzling that the state was not taking a more proactive approach.

Ms. Bohmke said that since this state has MPOs that are mandated by the state, they required the localities to bring these matters forward, which ultimately went to the CTB. She said that as a result, they had established a process in place. She said that the state was not directly involved in what they considered their local issues. She said that they got the last two bridges across the Rappahannock River through FAMPO, after much hard work.

Ms. Allen said that her point was that they should not have to fight for something that benefited everyone in the region. She said that a business that would generate economic revenue for all, but also caused consternation, was a consideration that their state legislative body should already be aware of and work to address from the outset, rather than forcing the locality to compete for funding for the bridge. She said that she believed it should be more easily accomplished with less of a struggle.

Ms. Gary said that she was in favor of this project and was eager to move forward in this process, as it had been ongoing for some time. She said that it was a regional project, so she believed they could solve their local issues as well as supporting the river crossing. She said that it would be complex in terms of Spotsylvania's position on the matter, but she agreed with Ms. Vanuch that this project was visionary and if previous Boards had acted on it in that matter, they would be a lot farther along in meeting the needs of their regional community. She said that she was supportive of the river crossing and would like to hear her colleagues' opinions on the options available.

Ms. Bohmke said that she agreed with everyone and thought that extending the north-south road all the way up to Mine Road was a good idea. She said that she had been a strong advocate for this for a while and thought it was crucial. She said that when Mr. Ollis presented a large presentation board that showed that in 1999, showing almost the same proposal that was previously voted down, it became clear to her that this was a crucial point. She said that she had thoroughly reviewed the presentations, CTAC, and other materials.

Ms. Bohmke said that it should be noted that many of the easements were located on Stafford's side of the river, but they were owned by the City of Fredericksburg. She said that these easements were established years ago and were indeed the County's property. She said that she wanted to clarify this for everyone's understanding. She said that regarding Option A, there was no easement, despite the presence of wetlands that should be protected. She said that this was simply not included to be included in the conservation easement, but there were also environmental concerns associated with this option. She said that she simply wanted to address the question of why there was no easement in Option A.

Ms. Allen said that the City would not fight them on giving up the easements.

Ms. Bohmke said that the City would not provide them with any easements. She said that Option A was indeed more expensive due to the use of the Celebrate Virginia roadway, which was a significant factor. She said that she questioned the decision to pursue this option, given its substantial cost. She said that she had concerns about the proximity of Option A to Interstate 95,

as well as its close proximity to the Belmont development, which may raise environmental and community concerns. She said that the fact that it was also near residential neighborhoods and a beautiful stream added to her reservations.

Ms. Bohmke said that personally, she preferred Option C, which had been thoroughly vetted by CTAC and involved extensive discussions with Michael Baker, the consultant. She said that while no scenario was perfect, she believed Option C was the most viable choice. She said that as Marcy Parker, the head of VDOT, had noted, the final decision would be revisited and tweaked as necessary to complete the project.

Ms. Gary asked if Ms. Bohmke had any insight into whether the Spotsylvania Board members would be more amicable to this proposal if they were to choose one option over the other.

Ms. Bohmke said that no, she did not.. She said that they had actually proposed another option to them, a line that had gone straight down and connected, which was actually an option that CTAC had proposed, because there was an area where they could cut through. She said that it would be ideal if they did not want it to go into Central Park, they would take it right down onto Route 3. She said that Spotsylvania representatives contended that that option would actually be even worse.

Mr. English said that it sounded like Spotsylvania would be a no. He asked if Fredericksburg would be supportive.

Mr. Diggs said that based on the information he had, Fredericksburg would be a yes.

Mr. English said that another point he would like to bring up is that, in the past, when Centreport was being built, it was intended to be a bypass. He said that it was ultimately cut off. He said that he was not sure if everyone was aware of this, but when approaching the back curb, there was supposed to be a bypass connecting to Route 2, Route 3, and possibly Centreport.

Mr. English said that unfortunately, the supervisors decided against it, citing concerns about the traffic that would develop. He said that he agreed that Mine Road should be a connector all the way through to Centreport, serving as an additional feeder road. He said that given the majority, he would support this, but he believed using Centreport as a connection point to Virginia Parkway was the most viable option, as it avoided the need for additional road construction and funding. He said that he was curious to know more about Fredericksburg's involvement, but Mr. Diggs mentioned they were on board.

Ms. Allen said that several options were available, but a majority had not yet been reached. She said that the preferred option at this time was not yet clear.

Mr. English said that he would consider either Option C or Option B.

Dr. Yeung said that she wanted to clarify her position regarding the bridge, as it seemed she had been misinterpreted. She said that she was not against the bridge, as she understood it was necessary. She said that she was concerned that they were not taking a comprehensive approach

to this issue. She said that they were piecemealing things, and she believed they needed to consider the broader implications. She said that as Ms. Gary had mentioned, she said that they could explore parallel solutions, such as continuing to examine Garrisonville Road and Mine Road.

Dr. Yeung said that she had heard them discussing Mine Road, and she would like to draw attention to the fact that Hampton Oaks was separated from Mine Road, and if another school were to be built in Embrey Mill, it would also impact Mine Road. She said that she had urged them to consider the community as a whole, rather than just focusing on the bridge. She said that when they discussed Centreport, she encouraged them to think about the potential impact on the surrounding areas.

Dr. Yeung said that she understood that certain projects came with costs, but if they were not considering the needs of the community, they were essentially building for outsiders. She said that they were building for everyone, not just a select few. She said that her vote would be guided by the will of the Board.

Mr. Diggs said that he was hearing that a majority of the Board supported Option C. He said that he would like to clarify one thing. He said that he believed CTAC had prepared a video for the Board, which was intended to be shown tonight. He said that he would appreciate confirmation of the recommendation from CTAC, as he believed it was Option C.

Dr. Ridout said that it was Option C with a modification that would utilize the lower element of Option D to cross the river. He said that instead of taking the short, elbow path across, it would curve back to the orange line just above where C is, and then feed into Central Park on Fall Hill Avenue. He said that essentially, it would build the southern section of option D, connecting to Celebrate Virginia.

Mr. Diggs asked how that recommendation would play into what would happen in the future in terms of the widening to 250 feet.

Mr. Ollis said that they were hoping that at the June Policy Committee meeting, all members would vote and select a particular corridor. He said that the chosen corridor was broad, and VDOT would design a road within that area. He said that the road's path may need to curve multiple times, depending on local environmental factors. He said that VDOT would be able to accommodate these changes. He said that the issue with the orange line was the final, curved section before it intersected with the Carl D Silver Parkway, as it would result in three consecutive traffic lights, making traffic difficult.

Mr. Ollis said that referring to the map, the staff had recommended Option C, which involved converting Gordon Shelton Boulevard into River Crossing Bridge Road. He said that this would eliminate the need for multiple traffic lights in close proximity. He said that the data center may lead to the vacating of most of Gordon Shelton Boulevard, leaving a small portion. He said that if this remaining section was turned into the river crossing, it would likely have six lanes. He said that given that a portion of the roadway already existed, it would be feasible to connect it to option C and cross the river. He said that VDOT would likely prefer this option, as they had publicly

stated that they did not like the current connection to Carl D Silver due to its proximity to two existing traffic lights, which made it challenging to navigate the area.

Mr. Diggs asked what would happen if this Board voted tonight for Option C but Fredericksburg voted for Option A. He asked if they would work through a compromise at the FAMPO meeting.

Mr. Ollis said that if that scenario were to occur, negotiations would be necessary among the parties involved. He said that he hoped it would not come to that.

Ms. Allen asked if it only would require a majority or if it must be a unanimous decision.

Mr. Ollis said that the FAMPO decision was based on the majority. He said that the City and Stafford needed to work together because Stafford owned the land in some of these subject areas.

Ms. Bohmke said that Spotsylvania was an important factor because at least one of their FAMPO members would be voting for an option, although the other two members may not. She said that these types of projects were incredibly important to shape the long-term vision of this County, and this Board must take them seriously.

Mr. Diggs said that as the Supervisor for this district, he had a town hall meeting tomorrow night in Celebrate, and he planned to discuss this with his constituents there. He said that they had expressed concerns about connecting the project to Celebrate Parkway, and he would address those concerns tomorrow night. He said that as he reviewed this project, he recalled when it began that he had expressed concerns about any crossing that would take away people's homes. He said that specifically, he was worried about the impact on Greenbank.

Mr. Diggs said that although Option A may be more expensive, he believed it could be a better solution, even with Belmont that way. He said that however, it appeared that the majority of the Board was in favor of Option C. He said that he would again have this conversation with his constituents, who were concerned about the elderly or older individuals who may need to cross Celebrate to access the lodge and other amenities. He said that these were issues that they would need to address far in the future.

ITEM 2. REVIEW OF NEWLY ADOPTED VIRGINIA LEGISLATION

Anthony Toigo, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, said that he would be providing a high-level review of the adopted legislation from this past session of the General Assembly. He said that the second that the session ended, staff got to work on analyzing what happened, the status of the Board's program, and what the environment looked like going into the next year. He said that this year, they met with departments to get a sense of what their thoughts and priorities were going into this next session. He said that he would provide that feedback momentarily.

Mr. Toigo said that they had engaged with the County Attorney's Office, who had provided a summary of all legislation adopted. He said that they fell into two categories: restrictive or permissive legislation. He said that restrictive required Board action, and permissive bills were

new authorities that did not necessarily require Board action but were optional. He said that today, they would focus on the restrictive legislative topics that required Board action.

Mr. Toigo said that he was pleased to report that this year's legislation was not as consequential as it could have been, with few controversial bills passing. He said that the main goal that he and Ms. Gilbert had, besides working the Board's program, was defending the County. He said that they always looked out for bad bills and Ms. Gilbert met with the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) each week with a state liaison group that discussed various bills. He said that displayed on the screen were some of the more contentious bills that were introduced this year could be seen. He said that in his opinion, House Bill-26-41 was the most problematic.

Mr. Toigo said that sponsored by the Homebuilders Association, it aimed to increase housing production and impose housing targets on localities, with the potential to override local land use decisions. He said that thankfully, it died in committee. He said that they were closely tracking its progress, and it was fortunate that it never reached the Board. He said that as they considered new statutes taking effect next year, he would focus on the left-hand column, which included statutes requiring Board action. He said that these were specific to Planning and Zoning, which he had discussed with Mr. Zuraf.

Mr. Toigo said that House Bill 2660, from Delegate Simon, shortened the timeframe for subdivision and site plan approvals by local government and planning commissions. He said that this change primarily affected staff, requiring them to turn around plan review timelines by 25-30% quicker than the current requirements. He said that this language came out of the conference, so before that, they did not know it would come out like this.

Ms. Allen asked if there was any indication prior to conference that this outcome was possible. She said that they had discussed their staffing shortages during the budget, so she was unsure of how they would meet these state goals now.

Mr. Toigo said that no, they had not had any notification that this would happen.

Lauren Gilbert, Advantus Strategies, said that was is part of an ongoing effort that she believed the General Assembly was undertaking to encourage localities to expedite their development processes. She said that she believed the state may be under the impression that some localities were intentionally slowing down their development. She said that while she did not have firsthand knowledge of this, it was a common perception that they heard in the General Assembly building.

Ms. Gilbert said that another key aspect of this was that it established a work group to examine considerations surrounding subdivisions, with a report due on November 1, 2025. She said that although they had not yet seen this group convene, they would closely follow their progress once they begin meeting, which should provide insight into their plans for moving forward. She said that this bill was a complex one that underwent conference committee review, and when bills are sent to conference, there was limited room for maneuvering, leaving legislators to make decisions and send bills to the floor.

Ms. Allen asked for clarification on the tracking method. She said that she wanted to know how they would be measuring and tracking their productivity. She said that if the target was 25% to 30%, she wondered what specific metrics or data points would be used to track progress. She asked if they would be collecting and submitting data to the state, and whether they would need to report on their progress in a specific format.

Mr. Toigo said that no they would not be sending any data to the state regarding this process. He said that it generally was meant to cut down the turnaround time. He said that for instance, the requirement to forward plats to state agencies within five days after review had been reduced from 10 days, resulting in a 50% decrease. He said that the Planning Commission was now required to act on plats, site plans, and development plans within 40 days, which was a reduction from 60 days. He said that the Commission was now required to provide specific reasons for disapproval to the applicant.

Ms. Allen asked how the state would be able to verify compliance if the review process was expedited.

Ms. Vanuch asked if this would be effective as of July 1, 2025.

Mr. Toigo said that that was correct.

Ms. Vanuch said that right now, the Planning Commission could review site plans, but the Commission did not have the authority to approve or disapprove of them. She said that it sounded like now the state was requiring the Commission to provide a reason for denial of an application. She asked if that was suggesting the Planning Commission now would have the authority to approve or deny an application.

Mike Zuraf, Director of Planning and Zoning, said that the changes mainly applied to site plans and subdivision plans for by-right projects. He said that they did not apply to rezoning cases.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the effect would be on a subdivision review plan.

Mr. Zuraf said that this was a separate issue; it was another change that was going away. He said that the changes to the timeframe was mostly related to by-right projects.

Ms. Vanuch said that that decision did not go to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Zuraf said that it did not apply to construction plans and site plans.

Ms. Vanuch said that upon reviewing one of the bills, she noticed that it also stated that a person must be designated to approve these items, but it also allowed for the Planning Commission to be designated for approval.

Mr. Toigo said that she was referring to a different piece of legislation.

Ms. Bohmke said that this would take effect on July 1, while the subcommittee would not finish its work until November. She said that it may be possible that the legislators would change it again next session if they realized it was too onerous of a requirement.

Ms. Gilbert said that it certainly was a possibility. She said that sometimes, when legislation took a significant step, it also convened a work group to gather feedback and make adjustments before the next year. She said that although some work groups had been slow to convene due to the current legislative cycle, they expected them to start meeting this summer. She said that this presented an opportunity for the localities to have their voice heard and ensure that legislators understood the actual impact of this legislation, particularly in terms of staffing challenges.

Dr. Yeung said that she had a question regarding the House Bill 2025 and Senate Bill 851. She said that unfortunately, it was not listed here. She said that she believed it was intended to be discussed because it involved Tier 4 rainwater.

Mr. Toigo said that he received feedback from staff earlier today, but the general consensus was that this did not impact Stafford, as they were not a Tier 4 utility. He said that therefore, no action was required by the Board.

Ms. Gary said that she would be interested in discussing HB 2630. She said that she was interested in exploring the possibility of collecting funds from developers to offset environmental impacts. She said that she was curious to know more about the specifics of how this could work.

Mr. Toigo said that he had not intended to discuss the new statutes one by one, but if the Board had any interest in discussing them, they could do so. He said that for the permissive bills, if the Board would like for staff to dig into these deeper and bring them back to the Board, they could do that in another meeting.

Ms. Gary said that her question on that statute was, as it stated, a locality may establish a tree canopy fund through an ordinance. She said that the fund collected, maintained, and distributed fees from developers who could not meet the full tree canopy requirements. She asked how it was determined that they could not meet the requirements. She said that she did not want to see a situation where a fund was established, and it became a pay-to-play scenario where developers claimed they could not meet the requirements and gave money as a mitigation instead. She asked how they could determine a developer's ability to meet the requirements.

Mr. Toigo said that staff would need to review it in more detail to answer that.

Ms. Gary said that she would appreciate more information on this topic and then explore the possibility of establishing the fund.

Mr. English said that he would like more information on Senate Bill 1476.

Mr. Toigo said that the key takeaway was that this initiative originated in southwest Virginia and aimed to facilitate the sale of vacant, blighted, or derelict properties.

Ms. Gilbert said that there was a notable case in Bristol, Virginia, where Virginia Intermont College had stopped operating. She said that the City of Bristol had been working for years to find a solution for the property, which was a significant campus with many historic buildings. She said that the locality lacked the necessary resources to utilize the property effectively. She said that as a result, the site became a refuge for individuals without alternative housing, who resorted to starting fires to stay warm.

Ms. Gilbert said that the building ultimately burned down in a devastating fire last year, resulting in the loss of the property. She said that if the locality had been able to deal with it more proactively, the property may have been able to be rehabilitated and used by the City. She said that the legislation could be seen as a response to extreme cases of blighted or derelict buildings. She said that staff would need to assess whether the proposed legislation applied to Stafford, but it was primarily intended to address situations like the one in Bristol.

Mr. English asked if Aquia Town Center would fit the requirements of blight.

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said that there were strict requirements in the bill regarding the property. She said that to clarify, the Board did not have to take any action. She said that this option was available, and if the property was applicable, staff could explore it. She said that there were significant requirements to consider. She said that for instance, the building had to be vacant for at least five years, and it had to be declared uninhabitable and blighted by the building code official. She said that it was a stringent process because it was going into taken property, and staff would need to carefully assess whether this option would be feasible, given the requirements involved.

Mr. English said that he had one question. He said that if they knew a vacant piece of property, they would need to start by contacting Mr. Mayausky's office to determine if it had any outstanding back taxes or other issues. He asked if it would be the County Attorney or Commissioner of Revenue who would be responsible for handling this, given that the property would be delinquent on taxes. He said that he was aware that there were several vacant properties in Stafford that might fit this scenario.

Mr. Toigo said that he believed that the applicability of this concept would require discussion among the staff, but generally, it would work as follows: the locality would appoint someone to purchase the property on their behalf, and as part of that sale, they could impose conditions such as requiring the property owner to clean up their property.

Mr. English asked if the Economic Development Authority (EDA) would be a suitable fit for this process, so they would serve as a mechanism to facilitate it.

Mr. Toigo said that the mechanism in the legislation was fairly specific, so he did not think so.

Ms. Allen asked if the Board had to take action on this item.

Mr. Toigo said that today's briefing was a high-level overview. He said that code revisions were being worked on by staff in order to accommodate this new state-level legislation, with the intention of presenting those revisions to the Board to take action on.

Ms. Allen said that she would like more information on the permissive legislation.

Mr. Toigo said that there were other permissive bills included in Attachment 1. He said that in terms of the options he had presented, he was trying to highlight those that aligned with the new authorities the Board could implement. He said that if there was a specific permissive bill that the Board would like to discuss further or bring up at a later time, they were more than happy to do so.

Ms. Allen said that she was interested in hearing bills that allowed the Board to collect more revenues for their County.

Dr. Yeung said that regarding Bill 2150, she was wondering which department would be responsible for reviewing the goods and services. She said that given that they had a contracting department, she assumed they would be the primary point of contact. She said that she would like to confirm whether there were any additional departments or individuals that needed to be involved in this process.

Mr. Toigo said that it would go through their Procurement Department. He said that it was a language-only amendment, so they would be able to do this in-house.

Dr. Yeung said that her second question was whether they planning to discuss the educational bills or not.

Mr. Toigo said that those items were included as supplementary information only. He said that the County Attorney's Office and he maintained the focus on general government, but they did have that list.

Dr. Yeung said that she had some questions regarding the 1685 Bill regarding the early childhood program. She said that if they reviewed that document, it stated that publicly funded providers of early childhood care and education, such as the school system or state agencies, were not required to disclose or oversee military-funded programs in the same manner as other publicly funded providers. She said that she was wondering if a local funding body like theirs was included in this exemption.

Mr. Toigo said that staff could look into that matter further if it was the desire of the Board.

Dr. Yeung said that regarding Bill 1983, there were new requirements for salary data. She said that it appeared that the intention was to make public the salaries of teachers and staff, and she was unclear about the purpose behind this. She said that with 62 different policies, she was trying to identify which ones were unfunded mandates that the school system would be expected to cover. She said that she would greatly appreciate it if they could investigate this further and provide

information on which policies were unfunded, as the school system would likely need to seek funding from the governing body for these requirements.

Mr. Toigo said that before he turned the discussion over to Ms. Gilbert, he wanted to highlight some key points from their departments' feedback to inform the Board. He said that in terms of their departments' concerns, it was no surprise that unfunded mandates were a top issue for their staff, as they continued to impact programs, services, and staff costs. He said that he strongly recommended that the Board maintain its position against unfunded mandates in the legislative program.

Mr. Toigo said that they also heard concerns about growth and tax relief exonerations, as well as maintaining inter-water basin transferability. He said that Senator Stewart's bill from last year, which Caroline County strongly opposed, had prohibited inter-basin transferability. He said that this was significant for Stafford, as they had two rivers on their north and south sides, and their long-term Utilities Master Plan accounted for inter-basin transfers. He said that Ms. Gilbert and her drafting program had created language to that effect.

Ms. Bohmke asked how that would impact any data centers that they were aware of, as it relates to any Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permits and regulations.

Mr. Toigo said that he would consult with their Utilities team to find an answer to that question.

ITEM 3. PRESENTATION OF THE BOARD'S DRAFT 2026 GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Mr. Toigo said that Ms. Gilbert had provided the first draft of the Board's 2026 Legislative Program. He said that the program continued their County's work on the Disabled Veterans Tax Exemption, education funding, specifically the 1% sales tax bill, which was anticipated to be well-positioned this year.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had made significant progress in 2025, both in advancing their top legislative priorities and defending against legislation that would have harmed the County. She said that defense was also a top priority. She said that for the legislative program, they had made some minor adjustments. She said that given their current situation, there was no need for a total overhaul of their legislative program, as it had been successful and useful so far.

Ms. Gilbert said that some of the changes they had made included moving their local option to add a 1% sales tax to their top legislative priority. She said that she had been in communication with members of the General Assembly and VACo, and they knew that Governor Youngkin had been opposed to this type of legislation due to his reluctance to allow tax increases. She said that regardless of who was elected governor in November, both candidates were open to this possibility.

Ms. Gilbert said that Stafford had been leading the charge on this effort for years, and VACo was counting on them to continue these efforts and ensure that they innovate and kept this issue at the forefront of everyone's minds. She said that she believed there was a strong chance that this might

pass the General Assembly next year. She said that therefore, they had moved it to their top legislative priority.

Ms. Gilbert said that they would be working diligently on it and wanted to ensure that everyone was aware that this was a Stafford issue. She said that although it had not been a top legislative priority last year because they knew the Governor would veto it, they had decided to move their efforts back to the top. She said that they would also see that their second legislative priority was offsetting the cost of state-mandated real estate and personal property tax exemptions.

Ms. Gilbert said that as they knew, the State of Virginia had made a promise to veterans that they would not have to pay real estate taxes, and this was having a significant impact on Stafford County, which had a long-standing commitment to maintaining strong services for the veterans who chose to live there. She said that it was essential for everyone in Stafford to understand the importance of this issue. She said that last year, they had received a lot of positive feedback as they brought this to the General Assembly, and they had conducted extensive education.

Ms. Gilbert said that she had noted that certain language would have focused and tailored funding back to their organization, particularly due to the loss of K-12 funding. She said that in the feedback they received, she did not think they needed to tailor it that closely. She said that therefore, they were taking a broader approach next year, and they would have conversations about what they might be able to secure in the budget or before the money committee.

Ms. Gilbert said that their top priority remained providing excellent services for the veterans they valued, including education, and they would continue to focus on this issue. She said that when reviewing their support statements, they had made a few small changes, primarily to streamline the language. She said that given their emphasis on K-12 education, they wanted to ensure this document was easy to understand.

Ms. Gilbert said that upon reviewing it, she noticed some duplicative information, so they were streamlining the language. She said that this did not mean they were reducing education funding as a priority; it remained their top priority. She said that they had also added language around Emergency Medical Services to support law enforcement, which was a suggestion from staff. She said that they believed this could be a more holistic approach by including EMS. She said that many of these services often went hand-in-hand, so they wanted to ensure they were pushing both efforts.

Ms. Gilbert said that additionally, they had added a strong statement in opposition to restrictions on intervention, as mentioned by Mr. Toigo, on page three of the red lined copy of the program. She said that they had added a strong statement opposing restrictions on intervention. She said that regarding water basin water transfers, staff had emphasized the importance of ensuring Stafford had future access to drinking water. She said that given their previous experience with legislation on this topic last year, they wanted to reiterate their opposition to this and explain their reasoning in case it was brought up again.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had also reaffirmed their opposition to unfunded mandates, which often manifested in legislation that affected localities. She said that it was crucial that they had this

opposition in their legislative program to ensure that they effectively communicated to their delegation members what would be considered an unfunded mandate for their locality. She said that they anticipated continued success in the coming year, particularly with the changing political landscape and the upcoming election. She said that they planned to aggressively pursue the 1% local option, which would permit localities to raise the sales tax by 1% to support school construction. She said that they had included language regarding debt support, building on the 2024 legislation that addressed this issue.

Mr. Diggs asked Ms. Gilbert what her perspective was on the veterans' tax exemption. He asked if they were anticipating any state legislation to assist with that.

Ms. Gilbert said that this year was a budget year, where Governor Youngkin would be drafting his final budget before leaving office for the General Assembly and the new governor to make adjustments. She said that as a result, they would be having conversations with members of the Governor's staff to elevate this issue. She said that when crafting a new budget, it presented an opportunity to secure large sums of money. She said that this year, they focused on budget amendments, and given the economic challenges and concerns about a potential downturn, it was clear from the beginning that large-scale funding was not a consideration.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had made progress with key members of the money committees, including Senators Lucas and Locke, ensuring they were aware that their localities were heavily impacted by this issue, although Stafford was particularly affected. She said that all members of the delegation were supportive of this issue, and they were exploring various approaches to try to secure something. She said that given it was a budget year, their options were different from last year, and they would need to adapt their strategy. She said that last year, they relied heavily on an education campaign, which would still be part of their approach this year, but they would now have the opportunity to come to the table with a new budget.

Mr. Diggs asked if there were any developments regarding the cost of competing adjustment (COCA).

Ms. Gilbert said that they had removed the specific language regarding COCA from this legislative program, as focusing on COCA had not proven successful. She said that they had ensured that language regarding the County's ability to compensate school staff at a rate competitive with their region remained. She said that in line with the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) recommendations, they suggested moving from COCA to a cost of labor index.

Ms. Gilbert said that she believed this language provided them with more options to address the labor discrepancy, rather than solely focusing on COCA, which had not been compelling to the General Assembly so far. She said that this approach allowed them to still pursue COCA if opportunities arose, while also exploring alternative paths to address the issue from a different perspective.

Mr. Diggs asked if they had received a response to the letter they had sent to Delegate King.

Mr. Toigo said that he had received an acknowledgment from the Delegate's staff indicating that they would provide the delegate with the letter. He said that he was scheduled to meet with their staff next week, at which time he would discuss that further.

Ms. Gary asked if the 1% bill was still being considered as something that would be brought up as a local referendum.

Ms. Gilbert said that they would be discussing this matter with Senator McPike. She said that Senator McPike had been a strong advocate for this issue and they would be determining whether he would be willing to champion it again. She said that he had successfully brought back similar language in the past two years, so they anticipated seeing similar legislation. She said that however, the language had already passed the General Assembly but was vetoed, so they would likely focus on pushing for very similar language to maintain the cross-party, cross-regional coalition in the General Assembly and get it to a governor's desk for a signature.

Ms. Gary said that she would only support it as a referendum in order to give citizens the opportunity to vote on implementing it. She asked if they were working on requesting more funding for Fire and Rescue Services since they were located on the I-95 corridor. She said that if they coordinated with some others in their region, they could avoid straining local resources when responding to big accidents.

Ms. Gilbert said that that was absolutely something they had been discussing with VACo. She said that when they reached the time of year when they were drafting budget amendment requests from General Assembly members, they would certainly bring that up to the members of the delegation. She said that she would also mention that there was legislation passed last year to create a fund to support needy localities, such as upgrading their radio systems. She said that this fund was currently unfunded, but it was something they had discussed in their staff meetings and planned to advocate for as well.

Ms. Bohmke said that they had a High Growth Coalition meeting scheduled, and she believed legislation addressing assistance on the interstate highway would be a valuable focus. She said that she was not aware if this topic had been previously discussed or addressed by the coalition.

Ms. Vanuch said that they had discussed this in the Public Safety Subcommittee about three years ago. She said that according to the data, the cost was actually relatively low. She said that however, she was not certain if the calculation was accurate, as it did tie up a significant amount of their resources. She said that she thought they may need to recalculate it to ensure they had accurate figures and cost estimates.

Ms. Gary said that she would like to see updated numbers to understand what they were spending during those types of situations.

Ms. Bohmke said that she appreciated the direction Ms. Gilbert was taking regarding the COCA, because the rest of the delegates and senators in the Commonwealth were unlikely to support this due to a lack of impact on their constituents. She said that they required support from their colleagues to move forward with legislation. She said that therefore, they should focus on the

recommendations from the JLARC study. She said that she appreciated the shift in focus and thanked Ms. Gilbert for her efforts and collaborating with their staff and with VACo.

Dr. Yeung said that to clarify, they were changing their language to not exclusively focus on COCA. She said that it was rephrasing the language, but they would continue the pressure on COCA.

Mr. Toigo said that there would be no action taken on this matter today. He said that they would revisit it at a future Board meeting, tentatively scheduled for July 1.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted to express his gratitude to Mr. Toigo and Ms. Gilbert for all the work they did on behalf of the citizens and government of Stafford County. He said that Mr. Toigo's responsiveness to the issues raised by Board members was greatly appreciated.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to authorize the closed meeting.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

Resolution CM25-07 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Board desires to hold a Closed Meeting for discussion of the performance of a specific employee of the Board; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 27th day of May, 2025, that it be and hereby does authorize discussion of the above matters in Closed Meeting.

CERTIFY CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to certify the closed meeting.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

Resolution CM25-07(C) reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE STAFFORD COUNTY BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS IN A CLOSED MEETING ON MAY 27, 2025

WHEREAS, the Board has, on this the 27th day of May, 2025, adjourned into a Closed Meeting in accordance with a formal vote of the Board and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Stafford County Board of Supervisors does hereby certify, on this the 27th day of May, 2025, that to the best of each member's knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board.

The Board left Closed Session at 8:19 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned its meeting at 8:19 p.m.

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

William H. Ashton, II
County Administrator