BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 1, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – A regular meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Deuntay Diggs, Chairman, at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 in the Board Chambers, 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 Bill Ashton, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Taylor Dunn, Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

INVOCATION

Ms. Gary led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

CHAIR REMARKS

Mr. Diggs said that although it was an A-Day schedule, they would hold a public hearing on a matter. He said that the public hearing would take place around 6:30 p.m. or soon thereafter.

Mr. Diggs said they were continuing to work on the FY 2026 budget. He said that they held a budget public hearing last week. He said that he would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend and participate, and the Board valued the input. He said that the next opportunity to voice opinions would be on April 15, when they would hold public hearings on tax rates, the capital improvement program, VPSA, and ordinance fee changes. He said there would be a joint School Board meeting on April 3 at 5 p.m., which would include both the School Board and the Board.

Mr. Diggs said that following that, the Board would hold a budget work session at 6 p.m. He said they would also hold a work session on April 9 at 3 p.m. He said that the final budget work session would be on April 15 at 1 p.m., preceding the Board's regular meeting. He said that their goal was to give everyone, the public, the Board, the School Board, and staff, the maximum amount of time to collaborate and work toward what was best for this community. He said that in the interim, the full FY 25 proposed budget was available on the front page of the County website.

Mr. Diggs said that they were excited to partner with Stafford County Public Schools for a joint hiring event on Wednesday, April 30, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Rowser Building. He said that while the event was open to all job seekers, it was especially focused on supporting federal government employees. He said that they wanted fellow public servants to know that they stood with them and that they deeply valued their experience, skills, and commitment to service. He said that if one was looking to continue making a difference, he invited them to choose Stafford and take the next step in their public service career with the County.

Mr. Diggs said that on April 26, they were celebrating the grand openings of three exciting new features in County parks with a series of ribbon cuttings throughout the day. He said that the day would kick off at 9:30 a.m. with the debut of a brand-new inclusive playground at Duff McDuff Green Park, a space designed for all children to play together. He said that they would begin at 11:30 a.m. at John Lee Pratt Park to open the new exercise and agility course, designed to promote fun and fitness for all ages. He said that following that, at 1 p.m., they would conclude at St. Clair Brooks Park to unveil the renovated and upgraded skate park, a significant addition to their skating community. He said that he would like to extend a huge congratulations to their parks team for their efforts in bringing these fantastic projects to life. He said that these new amenities would provide even more opportunities for their residents to stay active, connect, and enjoy the outdoors.

ADDITIONS - DELETIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR AGENDA

William Ashton, County Administrator, said that for Item #20, the updated resolution included both the redlined version and the revised resolution which reflected the changes. He said that the redlined version showed the calculation error that reduced the required local match amount, which was now provided. He said that the updated resolution accurately reflected the correct amount.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Bohmke, to approve the Agenda as amended.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

CONSENT AGENDA

ITEM 1. BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT; BUDGET AND APPROPRIATE CASH PROFFER FUNDS COLLECTED FROM BUTLER ESTATES- BLAKE WAY AND WEST HAMPTON DEVELOPMENTS TO THE FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES LEVY FUND FOR FIRE AND RESCUE PROJECTS AT THE ROCKHILL AND AQUIA STATIONS, RESPECTIVELY

ITEM 2. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION: APPROVE THE MARCH 04, 2025, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

ITEM 3. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; APPOINT MS. EVANGELINE COUNCIL AS THE GRIFFIS-WIDEWATER DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STAFFORD COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE FOR THE UNEXPIRED PORTION OF THE TERM ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2027

ITEM 4. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; APPOINT MR. JAMES DEAN TO THE LAKE ARROWHEAD SERVICE DISTRICT ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE UNEXPIRED PORTION OF THE TERM ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025

ITEM 5. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; APPOINT EMILY DIETRICH TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION FOR THE SEAT REPRESENTING THE FALMOUTH DISTRICT

ITEM 6. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO MERCHANT MCINTYRE ASSOCIATES FOR FEDERAL FUNDING CONSULTING SERVICES

ITEM 7. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO ADVERTISE A JOINT PUBLIC HEARING WITH VDOT TO CONSIDER THE PROPOSED FISCAL YEARS 2025-2030 SECONDARY SIX-YEAR PROGRAM (SSYP)

ITEM 8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PROCLAMATION TO RECOGNIZE MARCH 17, 2025, AS PROFOUND AUTISM DAY

ITEM 9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING APRIL 6-12, 2025, AS LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION WEEK

ITEM 10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING APRIL 13-19, 2025, AS NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

ITEM 11. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES; PETITION VDOT TO INCLUDE HARTWOOD VALLEY COURT IN THE HARTWOOD VALLEY SUBDIVISION INTO THE SECONDARY SYSTEM OF STATE HIGHWAYS AS A RURAL ADDITION

ITEM 12. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PETITION VDOT TO ABANDON AN OLD SECTION OF OLD COURTHOUSE ROAD FROM THE SECONDARY SYSTEM OF STATE HIGHWAYS

ITEM 13. FACILITIES MAINTENANCE; AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE A WORK ORDER WITH CENTENNIAL CONTRACTORS ENTERPRISES, INC. TO RENOVATE AND EXPAND THE LOBBY OF THE GEORGE L. GORDON, JR., GOVERNMENT CENTER AND MAKE NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BOARD CHAMBERS

ITEM 14. FIRE AND RESCUE; AUTHORIZE ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURES WITH ATLANTIC EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS, INC. TO PROVIDE THERMAL IMAGING CAMERAS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE

ITEM 15. PARKS, RECREATION, AND TOURISM; AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO ADVERTISE A PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER A LEASE AMENDMENT WITH THE PATAWOMECK INDIAN TRIBE OF VIRGINIA FOR 6.5 ACRES OF COUNTY-OWNED PROPERTY NEAR AQUIA LANDING PARK ON TAX MAP PARCEL NO. 41-6

ITEM 16. PLANNING AND ZONING; APPROVE REVISED RESOLUTION TO ADJUST THE AMOUNT OF GRANT FUNDS AWARDED THROUGH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

ITEM 17. SHERIFF; AUTHORIZE THE STAFFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FY25 PSAP CALL HANDLING EQUIPMENT GRANT

ITEM 18. UTILITIES; AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE A WORK ORDER WITH SAGRES CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF A WATER MAIN ALONG JEWETT LANE

Dr. Yeung requested to pull Item #15.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to adopt the Consent Agenda as amended.

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

Mr. Diggs asked Dr. Yeung is she wanted to address Item #15.

Dr. Yeung said that she would like to discuss the emails she had received, and she had been reviewing them more closely in light of the 10-year lease extension. She said that she was hoping to have a bit more time to consider this. She said that it was an A-Day schedule, but they had a public hearing, so she was concerned. She said that they usually had public hearings on B-Day schedules. She requested to defer the item because she was still doing research.

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said that this item would not be feasible for the April 15 public hearing, as it was too soon. She said that the earliest they could schedule it would be May 20.

Ms. Bohmke asked when the lease would go into effect if the public hearing was delayed until May 20. She asked if deferral would cause issues.

Ms. McClendon said that the current lease expired on March 17, 2025. She said that if the item was delayed to the first meeting in May, they would not be able to hold a public hearing until the second meeting in June. She said that they required two weeks to advertise, so there was not enough time between those two meetings to advertise properly.

Ms. Bohmke asked what Dr. Yeung's concerns were with the transaction.

Dr. Yeung said they involved some of the information about the ordinance that she had received, including the legislation that delegates had sent her. She said she wanted to seek additional clarification regarding the tribe's involvement. She said that she would like to know if the tribe had any additional information on how they had been proven to be recipients of this land or similar matters.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to clarify what she thought she had heard. She said that she believed Dr. Yeung had mentioned that she would like to defer the public hearing until May. She said that if they were to defer the public hearing until May, it would be too long. She said that she was confused because she thought that what they should be asking was whether they could defer this to come back on consent at the April 15 meeting. She said that way, they could vote at the April 15 meeting to send it to a public hearing in May.

Ms. McClendon said that it could be rescheduled for May 15. She said that this would not be on the Consent Agenda, but rather a presentation from the department. She said there was no consent agenda for the April 15 meeting.

Ms. Allen asked how that would impact the public hearing schedule. She said that they would receive a staff report during the public hearing.

Ms. McClendon said that if this comes back to the Board at the April 15 meeting, the timeline will remain unaffected as long as they took action on April 15 to authorize a public hearing. She said that the public hearing would still be scheduled for May 20, and that hearing would include a staff presentation.

Ms. Bohmke motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to defer Item #15 to the April 15 meeting for a staff report.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (5) Allen, Bohmke, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung

No: (2) Diggs, English

PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION OF A PROCLAMATION HONORING AND RECOGNIZING PROFOUND AUTISM DAY

Mr. Diggs said that approximately one in four children with autism were diagnosed with profound autism, requiring round-the-clock care from a dedicated caregiver throughout their lives. He said that today, they honored individuals with profound autism, as well as the families, caregivers, and professionals who support them every day. He said that individuals with profound autism were their friends, neighbors, and valued members of their community, deserving of their most profound respect and unwavering support.

Mr. Diggs read the proclamation.

Ms. Mayer expressed her gratitude for the time and the support of the Board of Supervisors. She said that they were trying to raise awareness about the significant needs of individuals on the autism spectrum, particularly those who were profoundly impacted, like her 22-year-old son. She said that this population faced substantial lifelong caregiving needs, yet they received the least amount of research, which was crucial for developing effective supports for their futures.

PRESENTATIONS

PRESENTATION OF A PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATORS WEEK

Mr. Diggs said he would like to invite Lieutenant Christopher Smith, Captain Brian Jacobs, Major Dembowski, and three of their outstanding public safety dispatchers, Aiden Dixon, Shawnta Johnson, and Katherine Whited, to join them at the dais. He said that they were proud to present a proclamation recognizing April 13 through the 19 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

Mr. Diggs said that these were the professionals spoken to during the most difficult moments, and they were the ones who ensured help was on the way. He said that these telecommunicators not only supported the public, but were a critical lifeline for first responders, providing essential information that kept everyone safe and enabled effective response.

Mr. Diggs read the proclamation.

Major Dembowski said that he was grateful for recognizing their dedication to their work. He said that they consistently worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He said that they were often the calm and composed individuals on the other end of the line during emergency situations, and he was impressed by their ability to multitask, which far exceeded his own capabilities. He said that they worked extremely hard and were always available to support them when they needed assistance.

PRESENTATIONS BY THE PUBLIC

1. Linda Burdette, Falmouth District, said she had been the chair of the Architectural Review Board for two years, and she would like to report to the Board on the ARB's historic preservation recommendations. She said that on June 5, 2023, the ARB recommended that Sherwood Forest be placed in a historic resource overlay. She said this was one of the most historic properties in Stafford County. She said that it was owned by Mary Ball Washington

when she was raising George and Betty at Ferry Farm. She said that during the Civil War, it played a significant role in the emancipation of enslaved persons in Stafford County.

Ms. Burdette said that at the beginning of the 20th century, it was the site of a progressive and groundbreaking dairy. She said that many of the original buildings were still standing, and placing this property in a historic overlay would be a huge step toward preservation for future generations. She said that on September 9, 2024, the ARB recommended that Little Falls Farm also be placed in the Historic Resource Overlay. She said that this property was recently named eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Ms. Burdette said that it belonged to Stafford County, managed by Parks and Recreation, and was currently leased to the Patawomeck Tribe. She said that the farm was originally owned by George Washington's maternal grandfather and played an important role in the Union Army's crossing of the Rappahannock prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862. She said that the current lease included permission to make changes to the house and other structures, which could degrade the historic features of the property.

Ms. Burdette said that the ARB had reached out to the lessee to offer assistance with renovations, but she believed the County should place this property in a historic overlay to ensure future preservation. She said that the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, as well as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, recommended that communities conduct a Historic Resources Survey every 10 years. She said that the last survey for Stafford County was conducted 32 years ago.

Ms. Burdette said that they needed a new survey to identify historic and endangered properties before they were under threat. She said that using an available grant from the state of Virginia for half the cost, this survey would cost Stafford County $20,000. She said that in January 2024, the ARB requested that funds be set aside in the next available budget for this survey. She said that the Stafford ARB is deeply committed to the history of the County and took its responsibility to advise the Board on the preservation of historic buildings very seriously.

2. Molly Denham, Hartwood District, said that she wanted to start by thanking the County for including an increase in per-pupil funding, support for teachers and staffers, and an increase in support for repair, replacement, and rehabilitation, or 3R projects, in the FY 26 budget proposal. She said that as chairperson of the School Board CIP Advisory Committee, she was extremely happy to see the County specifically acknowledge the need for an increase in 3R funding. She said that 3R was not like CIP; it was not the flashy new building or the cool new addition. She said that 3R was the backbone of a building, encompassing the general maintenance and upkeep of buildings.

   Ms. Denham said that it was the routine maintenance and repairs that kept their facilities running. She said that she would like to provide some perspective on the schools' 3R maintenance costs. She said that according to industry standards, they should budget 2% to 4% of their total property value for routine maintenance and repairs of public buildings. She said that considering the value of their school facilities, they should budget roughly $20 million every year for 3R projects. She said that over the past 10 to 12 years, schools had received roughly $8 to $9 million per year for 3R. She said this had resulted in a substantial backlog of general maintenance on school buildings. She said she commended the Board for being generous last year in increasing budgeting from $8.3 million in FY 24 to $14.5 million in FY 26.

Ms. Denham said that even with this increase, they did not even meet the bare minimum industry standard. She said that the Board could not simply assume that the large increase last year was a one-time solution; it was a Band-Aid fix at best. She said that to put it into perspective, if one bought a brand new home and only changed the light bulbs and replaced the fire alarm batteries over the course of 15 years, they were not maintaining the home. She said that it was unrealistic to expect homes to remain unchanged after 15 years of use. She said that while it may still be functional, it would not be maintained. She said this was precisely the situation the schools faced every year. She said that her child spent most of her waking hours in these buildings during the weekdays.

Ms. Denham said that as a parent, she expected them to be well-maintained, and to achieve this, they must be fully funded. She said that she appreciated the County's decision to prioritize 3R funding and hoped the Board would continue this trend. She said that there was still much work to be done. She said that they must do everything possible to close the funding gap and at least bring the maintenance budget up to the bare minimum industry standards. She said that they could do better for their facilities and should not expect them to maintain themselves.

3. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that page 10 of the agenda packet was empty with a red cross line edit, and it should read, "This page is deliberately left empty since the edit has no reference to source." She said that the main information page on the website, New Stafford County Administration, dated June 7, 2022, should read that Randy Vosburg was appointed. She said that it incorrectly said "Bill Ashton". She said she had attempted to correct this quietly due to its sensitive nature. She said she was puzzled as to why the website could not accurately point to the correct director, and despite her efforts, it was not corrected. She said that people try to find out how the budget happened, and they reviewed 2022 and 2023. She said that they would think it was the wrong director.

   Ms. Maxson said that April had not been kind to Stafford's governance, and accountability could not be fudged. She said that Executive Order 14149, signed January 20, 2025, stated, "Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship". She said this was the First Amendment, and it must be reinforced on page 65 of the agenda packet. She said that Executive Order 14147, signed January 20, 2025, aimed to "End the Weaponizing of the Federal Government", and it included an end to pivoting and spearheading as a described statement by staff. She said this was the reason behind the Second Amendment, written by their forefathers during a time of great change and freedom struggles. She said that they should work on freedom of speech and transparency.

4. Clayton Hill, George Washington District, said that he had owned property in Stafford County since 1973, and he had witnessed many changes. He said that he was there to express his support for the discussion regarding the proposed solar farm on Enon Road.

Mr. Diggs said that they would be holding a public hearing tonight, where they would specifically discuss the topic. He said that the hearing was scheduled for 6:30 p.m. He said that Mr. Hill could speak at that time.

5. Nancy Rueter, Garrisonville District, said that she would like to extend her gratitude to County Administrator Mr. Ashton for his excellent presentation on the budget. She said that it was well done, and it was the best budget meeting she had ever attended. She said the presentation convinced her that the needed increase in taxes was practical and well thought out. She said that many of them had insurance of some kind, and she would like to think of these taxes as a kind of insurance policy bill.

   Ms. Rueter said that by funding police and fire, they had the assurance that competent, well-equipped personnel would respond to their needs. She said that by funding schools, they got educated students who would become competent, productive adult members of their community. She said that by funding infrastructure, they would have access to water, sewer, and roads. She said she supported the budget as presented. She said that she would also like to speak to the proposed Embrey Mill Data Center Complex, located just south of Courthouse Road.

   Ms. Rueter said that she attended a recent public presentation by the developer, and based on the strong opposition from the community, it was clear that the community did not want to see 1,000 acres of prime real estate turned into a data center complex. She said that the current M1 and mixed zoning was part of the comprehensive plan for a reason, and it better fit their community. She said the presentation failed to provide real benefits to Stafford. She said when it came up for rezoning to M2, she urged the Board to reject it. She said that they needed mixed-use and much-needed housing on this land.

6. Renee Kendall, George Washington District, said that a couple of meetings ago, Chair Diggs mentioned that he did not want to raise taxes, however, he also stated that they had a shortfall. She said that she was not certain if she had the correct figure, but Chair Diggs had mentioned an $18 million shortfall. She asked what steps they would take to address this shortfall. She said that sometimes, the reality was that shortfalls were a part of life, and they must find ways to manage them, and they all have to make the necessary cuts. She said that personally, and even as elected officials, they must make the hard decisions.

   Ms. Kendall said that choosing where to make cuts was particularly challenging. She said that as a member of the baby boomer generation, which was the largest generation in U.S. history, she was aware of the sacrifices they made to plan and save for their retirement. She said that they aimed to be self-sufficient and not become a burden on society. She said if they continued to be heavily taxed, they may lose their financial cushion and become a burden on society, even requiring government assistance.

Ms. Kendall said that Supervisor Vanuch had mentioned a plan she wanted to discuss with the Board. She said that she hoped the Board will consider meeting to discuss the proposal, even though she did not know the specifics. She said that hard decisions were necessary, and they all have budgets and must make tough choices.

7. Dave Kendall, George Washington District, said that everything had a cost, and he tried to reflect on that. He said that he recognized that they dealt with other issues, such as data centers, which could be unpopular. He said that he did not personally love data centers, but he understood the need for revenue. He said that to be flexible in their mindset was essential. He said that as a frequent traveler, he often visited Buc-ee's, and he was aware that they were interested in locating in Stafford County. He said he thought it was an opportunity to work with them and potentially find an alternative location if the current site was not desirable.

   Mr. Kendall said that Stafford County was a major hub, with millions of people passing through each year, and he believed that a well-designed visitor center, like Buc-ee's, could generate significant revenue. He said he had seen firsthand that Buc-ee's provided a much better experience than the existing visitor centers. He said that when discussing developers, it was easy to say to charge them, but he had experienced it firsthand. He said that when he moved into Celebrate Virginia, he had to pay $10,000.

   Mr. Kendall said that this highlighted that developers were not just a source of revenue; they also contributed to the community in meaningful ways. He said that he would also be interested in knowing their thought process. He said that having worked 30 years in the Department of Defense and in financial management, he was familiar with the need to make reductions and implement cost-cutting measures.

REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Yeung - reported that on March 19, she was honored to attend the Stafford African American Heritage Trail celebration, which was made possible by the invaluable contributions of the Walker Family, the University of Mary Washington Department of Geography, historians, and community elders. She said that this trail preserved over three centuries of African American heritage in Stafford County, and a significant part of the history was now commemorated on the grounds of Stafford Hospital, where a plaque stood as a testament to the resilience and strength of the African American community throughout 300 years.

Dr. Yeung said that on March 21, she attended the VRE Operations Meeting and wanted to highlight the VRE Cares Program launched in 2024. She said that this new outreach initiative leveraged staff resources and expertise to address community needs. She said it hosted events such as canned food drives and back-to-school drives, which were especially important now as these efforts made a meaningful impact on communities. She said that on March 24, she was honored to receive a resolution honoring Women's History Month from the General Assembly, in part, by Delegate Candi King's District coverage and the City of Dumfries.

Dr. Yeung said that on March 26, she attended the Rappahannock River Basin Commission meeting, where they discussed data centers with presentations from Kimberly Sart and Scarlett

Saunders, which condensed a 179-page JLARC report into a manageable discussion. She said that she will be sharing this information with the rest of the Board. She said that her goal was to form a subcommittee to take on such subjects and unpack them, bringing needed information to the rest of the commissions and boards. She said that on March 28, Governor Youngkin visited Stafford and highlighted jobs across Virginia that may be affected by the Trump executive orders and federal job cuts.

Dr. Yeung said that on March 29, the Fire and Rescue Banquet was held, honoring Kim Orr, who received the Fire Chief's Award, the department's highest recognition for exceptional dedication to the Fire and Rescue Department, the community, and public service. She said that she wanted to extend her gratitude to Walmart Management for removing the trailers that had been obstructing Mine Road. She said that it was a concerning sight for her, and she was pleased that they had finally been removed after a year. She said that she also wanted to thank VDOT for installing the "One Way" sign on Mine Road. She said that she appreciated the efforts of their transportation team and Mr. Toigo in ensuring this was done, as it prevented a potential head-on collision for her.

Dr. Yeung said that they had extensive discussions about veterans and the state's obligations to them, particularly in insurance tax exemptions for those who were 100% disabled. She said that as a result, they had rightfully extended these exemptions to their surviving spouses and one vehicle per household. She said according to the Commission of Revenue's projections, by 2034, $913 million in tax revenue would be exempted over the program's lifetime in Virginia, with approximately $160 million exempted in 2023 alone for Stafford County. She said that to maintain the solvency of this vital and widely supported exemption program, localities required state funding and administrative support to continue providing veterans with the quality services they deserved. She said that it was essential to remember that veterans were their family members.

Dr. Yeung said that she had a stepson who served in Iraq and struggled with suicidal thoughts, requiring regular psychological care. She said that her daughter also served in the Air Force, spending three years stationed in Japan. She said some constituents had made disparaging remarks about individuals receiving 100% disability benefits while still working. She said that she would not stand idly by while veterans were disrespected in this manner. She said that they had served the country, and the Board had already addressed this issue when it was legislated. She said that now it was the responsibility of the state government to fight for them to reclaim the lost revenue.

Dr. Yeung said that they must fight for 100% COCA, a cause she had championed since leaving the School Board. She said that recently, their community had been negatively impacted by the failure to implement a 1% tax increase that would have directly funded the CIP for the schools. She said that on top of that, the Governor had now cut $40 million from the educational budget, redirecting it towards labs, academies, and charter schools—another blow to the public education system.

Dr. Yeung said that they must refocus on what truly mattered: students and children. She said that the Board had worked tirelessly to educate elected officials about the devastating impact of lost funding and the financial squeeze they faced, particularly as Prince William County to the north and Spotsylvania County to the south generated revenue that they were still struggling to match. She said that with smart growth and the right investment in key businesses, they could generate the necessary revenue to sustain their community without placing an undue tax burden on their residents.

Ms. Bohmke - wanted to add to Dr. Yeung's comments regarding VRE. She said that the VRE ridership had increased to 13,000 riders per day. She said that pre-COVID, it was 18,000. She said that during COVID, the ridership plummeted to 500 per day. She said that the increase was largely due to the return of federal workers and others to the area. She said that she also wanted to echo Chair Diggs' comments about Pratt Park. She said that if one had not had a chance to visit, it was located just before crossing the river and featured outdoor weight stations. She said that one could use them without being watched, and it was actually quite enjoyable.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had the opportunity to try it out herself. She said that she was excited about the new skate park. She said she did not have personal experience with skating, but she had worked on the project for seven years and had seen it come to fruition. She said it was great to see the community come together. She said that the skate park was a wonderful example of how people of all ages could skate together. She said that it was a great addition to their region. She said she was also disappointed that she had missed the African American Heritage Trail event. She said the location had been relocated several times due to various reasons, but she was unable to attend that day as she was traveling from Tampa.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had an announcement to make to the community and especially to Falmouth District constituents. She said that after 12 years on the Board of Supervisors and four years on the School Board, she had decided not to seek re-election. She said it had been an honor and a pleasure to serve the County, and she appreciated the Falmouth voters for entrusting her to represent them for 16 years. She said that for some time, she had been seeking a candidate who shared her values and was committed to serving the people with the same passion that she had demonstrated.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was pleased to officially endorse Mike Catell, who had lived and raised his family in Falmouth for 22 years. She said that Mr. Catell was currently the Vice President of Development for a national policy institute in Washington, D.C. She said that he was well-known in the community and was well aware of the challenges they faced and the opportunities they had before them. She said that as a community leader in various service organizations, Mr. Catell would serve the Falmouth District with integrity and vigor.

Mr. English - reported that he had a complaint that the area by the Griswold School on Butler Road needed to be graded. He said that it appeared that the cemetery committee would be conducting a walk-through there soon, and it was likely damaged during the recent snowstorm. He said that he had contacted VDOT, but he never received a response. He said that if they could arrange for utilities or parks and recreation to conduct a quick assessment, he would appreciate it. He said that he wanted to take a moment to pay tribute to two remarkable individuals who had passed away recently.

Mr. English said that Joyce Loving Thorpe, a 1949 graduate of Falmouth High School, and she spent 40 years driving a school bus for Stafford County and also taught at Head Start. He said that her dedication to the school system was truly remarkable. He said that he also wanted to honor Hazel Terry, who had driven school buses for Stafford County for 44 years. He said that she was also the first bus driver to receive air conditioning. He said that his thoughts and prayers went out to both families. He said that he was sure that their families should be incredibly proud of their accomplishments.

Mr. English said that he also wanted to share his experience at the recent Fire and Rescue banquet. He said that it was a great event, and he appreciated the recognition of volunteers, including Jimmy Raines from Mountain View and Patricia Copeland. He said that the banquet was a wonderful tribute to the hard work and dedication of their first responders. He said that he wanted to discuss the COCA. He said that specifically, he wanted to know why Delegate King voted against sending the proposal to committee. He said that she was the only dissenting vote, and he was curious about her reasoning.

Mr. English said that he wanted to request that the Board send a letter to Delegate King, asking her to explain her decision. He said that this was particularly relevant, as they had been advocating for the COCA increase for years, and it was ultimately blocked by a single vote.

Ms. Vanuch said she supported the request.

Dr. Yeung said she supported the request.

Ms. Bohmke supported the request.

Ms. Gary said she supported the request with the caveat that they had previously discussed this during their meeting with the School Board, and there were mentions of other elected officials who had not supported their goals, particularly regarding school funding. She said that she was willing to reach out to those individuals as well. She said that as long as they remained inclusive and fought for what they believed in, without allowing it to become a partisan issue, she was comfortable with that approach.

Ms. Allen said she did not support the request, and she had already stated at their meeting why she did not think it was a good idea. She said that they should have a conversation with her staff or their staff to discuss this. She said that Delegate Milde did not vote to allow them to move forward with school construction. She said that as a result, they were not sending a letter to Delegate Milde, and she did not think they should engage in a tit-for-tat situation. She said that instead, they should focus on consistency.

Dr. Yeung said that behind the scenes, she had stated that they could not begin with a letter campaign unless they sent a letter to everyone. She said that the 1% was crucial, and that was something that was very tangible. She said that they could have achieved it, but it was not done. She said that if they were going to send a letter to one person, they would have to send a letter to everyone.

Mr. Diggs said that he believed they should ask why certain decisions were made, without being sarcastic or confrontational. He said that they could address this concern to Governor Youngkin, Delegate Milde, and Delegate King. He said he believed it was still essential to ask the question. He said he supported the request.

Mr. Ashton asked for clarification about what letters to draft.

Mr. Diggs said that one would be for Delegate King regarding COCA.

Dr. Yeung said that the letters should be general rather than specific. She said that for instance, instead of mentioning particular issues like COCA or the 1%, they could draft a letter expressing their disappointment with some of the decisions and reaffirm their request for support. She said she did not support specific letters to individual delegates.

Ms. Vanuch said that she believed there was a notable distinction between Delegate King's actions and those of some other members. She said that specifically, Delegate King was the tie-breaking vote in committee, where the bill would have otherwise moved to the floor for a full House vote. She said that her vote against it resulted in the bill failing to even come out of committee for a full House vote, which set it apart from Delegate Milde.

Ms. Vanuch said that Delegate Milde did not vote to stop school construction; he voted against the bill on the floor. She said that the bill's fate was ultimately decided on a party-line vote, with all Republicans opposing it due to their opposition to new taxes on residences. She said that this was a promise made by the governor during his campaign, which had been explained in numerous articles. She said that it had no bearing on stopping school construction. She said that the bill would have only allowed a locality to issue a bond referendum to send to voters, allowing them to decide whether to pay 1% to add to school construction.

Ms. Vanuch said that she believed the distinguishing factor was the difference between killing a bill in committee versus voting against it on the floor, where the outcome was already known. She said this was why she was in support of sending a letter to Delegate King. She said that they had discussed this issue with Delegate King. She said that Delegate King was the only delegate who pushed back, stating that she did not need to be contacted by residents or advocates, and that she was familiar with their cause.

Ms. Gary said that she would like to make a brief comment before you consider pulling the Board. She said that this should not be a partisan issue; it was about children, educators, and the environments they interacted with every day. She said that they had advocated for this, and their lobbyist had worked tirelessly to support it. She said that she believed it was essential to understand the complexities of the political landscape, but they also needed to hold everyone accountable. She said that she would like to see clarification on whether the Board would be even-handed in this matter. She said that if not, she would not support it.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to clarify that the bill that Delegate Milde did not support was a historic $782 million increase in state funding for K-12 education, which would provide schools with the necessary resources. She said that this funding included higher salaries for educators, including school support staff, whom they had severely underpaid as a County. She said that the allocation also included $150 million towards improving school facilities and $52.8 million towards special education. She said that given this information, she did not believe it was necessary to send a letter to Delegate Milde or Delegate King.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to clarify this point, as it highlighted a concern with this approach. She said that Delegate Milde voted against a budget bill, which was distinct from the priority bills they sent to legislators for consideration. She said that unlike those bills, they did not dictate their voting decisions in a budget. She said that they had never done so outside of isolated instances. She said that comparing this process to their usual procedures was not entirely accurate.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted each supervisor to confirm who they wanted to send the letter to, specifically so that staff was clear on the recipient. He said that they were sending a letter to Delegate King, and this was a targeted effort, not a general letter. He said that they would be sending specific letters to Delegate King, and if necessary, they may also send letters to other recipients.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was in favor of it, and it was not about partisan politics; this was something they had been fighting for over the past 10 or 12 years. She said that it was about addressing the inequities between Stafford County and other areas, particularly in terms of labor costs. She said that the JLARC study from last July highlighted the significant disparities in school funding across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Ms. Bohmke said that they had been advocating for the COCA increase for years, even during. She said that unfortunately, it had largely fallen on deaf ears. She said that this was the first time it had gotten to a committee. She said that she was in favor of it because it could have brought in an additional $10 million for their area. She said that last year, they were considering a potential $5 million, so $10 million was a substantial amount.

Ms. Bohmke said that she wanted to note that the construction bill, which had been introduced by VACo in recent years, provided them with the ability to issue bonds and allow communities to vote on whether to increase sales tax for school construction. She said that she did not think these were the same issue, and this proposal was primarily focused on addressing the inequities between Northern Virginia, particularly Prince William. She said that she did not at this point support sending a letter to Delegate Milde. She said that if someone wanted to revisit this topic in another meeting and provide more specific details, she would consider it at that time.

Ms. Gary said that she was in favor of sending the letters to whomever her colleagues may also want to include, provided there were four of them who wished to do so, including herself, if that was clear. She said that her primary concern was that one of those individuals was Governor Youngkin. She said that the legislation he vetoed, which was bipartisan and aimed at allowing voters to decide whether to allocate a 1% sales tax to school construction, was deeply concerning to her.

Ms. Gary said that, in her opinion, they should always seek to give constituents a voice whenever possible, and the fact that this opportunity was withheld from them was alarming. She said that the bipartisan nature of this legislation made it even more concerning, as it was not a partisan issue. She said that she was particularly troubled by this because they had similar issues in their community. She said that while she was willing to support the letter if it was preferred by the supervisors.

Ms. Allen said that she had already expressed her opinion on the matter. She said that if it was not intended to be sent to everyone, she was not in favor of it. She said that she was not in favor of sending it to Delegate Milde. She said that Senator Durant had voted in favor of the budget bill, so it was not strictly partisan. She said all of their delegates and senators received the County's legislative priorities, which included funding.

Ms. Allen said that aside from the construction piece, only one voted to not fund schools. She said that it was quite obvious. She said she planned to have a conversation with Delegate Milde during their delegation meeting to understand what had happened, rather than sending a letter, because there was always another perspective.

Mr. English said he wanted to reiterate that the COCA issue had been on the table for many years. He said that this was why he was specifically advocating for sending a letter to Delegate King. He said that he was not yet convinced for the others until they received more information. He said that as a delegate, Ms. King had been well aware of the importance of COCA. He said that he was simply seeking clarification on her actions.

Dr. Yeung said that she did not support sending a general letter. She said that she thought that was what the delegation dinner would have been like. She said that she wanted to be able to work with these delegates in the future, she would like to use the example of a regional day school as a starting point. She said that vote would be a crucial one for creating such programs. She said that she encouraged them to continue exploring the votes they needed to create these programs and have that conversation.

Dr. Yeung said that she recently attended a Town Hall in Dumfries, where her colleague, Supervisor Gary, was present. She said that she received a positive resolution regarding the work they had accomplished in Stafford County.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was in favor of sending the letter to Delegate King, mainly because she believed they did not have to agree on everything all the time. She said that while she appreciated the efforts of Senator McPike, Senator Durant, Delegate Milde, and Delegate Cole to represent Stafford, she felt that Delegate King consistently prioritized Prince William County over Stafford County.

Ms. Vanuch said that this letter served as a reminder to Delegate King that she represented the northernmost part of the County and should stand up for their issues. She said that she thought it was worth noting that the conversation around the 1% issue with Delegate Milde revealed some valid points from the Republican side. She said that for instance, if Stafford were to opt in, it could potentially change the local composite index, resulting in reduced state funding and effectively doubling the tax burden on constituents. She said that she believed it was essential to understand the reasoning behind their vote, but she thought the issue with Delegate King was an anomaly.

Mr. Diggs said that during their work session, he too was frustrated because they had a conversation at the delegation dinner about this topic. He said he was surprised that School Board Member Maya Guy knew why Delegate King voted against and suggested they discuss it with Delegate King to understand her reasons. He said that he wanted to send her a letter, asking her to explain her vote. He said that he did not think it was a bad idea to ask for her reasons, and then they could have a conversation about sending other letters at a future date.

Dr. Yeung asked if supervisors would send individual letters, or if this letter would be sent from the Board.

Mr. Diggs said that it would be sent by the Board under the County Administrator's direction.

Dr. Yeung said that it should be stated that there were members who were in favor and those who were not. She said she was not in favor, and she did not appreciate the Board making a decision on how she thought. She said that they should think about what they were doing. She said that they wanted to send a letter but they had not tried to have a conversation.

Mr. Diggs said that for him, they had a dinner meeting with Delegate King where they had a conversation and explained their concerns. He said that she took a different approach when she went to Richmond, and that was his frustration. He said that he believed it was essential to formalize the reasons behind her decision. He said that while he could have a private conversation with her, it was clear that School Board Member Guy was not going to share the details of her conversations. He said that he believed they could move forward.

Mr. Ashton said that direction from the Board was clear.

Ms. Gary - reported that she attended the African American Heritage Trail plaque unveiling, which could be viewed on the side of the hospital where Hospital Center Boulevard ran. She said that it was a beautiful ceremony, and she was delighted to meet so many people from the families who had traveled a long way. She said that on March 29, she attended the Stafford County Fire and Rescue Annual Awards Banquet. She said that she wanted to personally commend the individuals from the Brooke Fire Station and others for their response to the recent incident on the train tracks.

Ms. Gary said that she had the opportunity to sit down with them occasionally at pancake breakfasts or similar events and hear about their experiences firsthand. She said that she truly appreciated the dedication of the County's first responders. She said that she also wanted to inform everyone that she would be hosting a community meeting regarding the status of the Brooke Road S-Curve. She said the meeting would be held at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, at the Brooke Volunteer Fire Station on Andrew Chapel Road. She said that she was working with the County Administrator to ensure that staff were present to answer questions. She said that according to her last update, they were approximately 60% complete with the project.

Ms. Gary said that beyond that, she wanted to assure her constituents who were affected by the flooding that County funds were still allocated for this project. She said it was continuing to move forward, about 60% complete, and they had not received any negative news regarding the Federal Protect Grant, and they were still in the process of formally accepting that grant. She said that if one felt compelled to reach out to federal representatives and advocate for the continued support of this initiative, she would greatly appreciate it. She said that the Spring Fever 5K was scheduled for this coming Saturday, April 5. She said that she would be participating, and she invited anyone in her district to join her. She said that they typically had a large turnout of runners from throughout the County, and it was a fun event.

Ms. Vanuch - extended her gratitude to Supervisor Bohmke for her more than 16 years of service. She said that Supervisor Bohmke had served with diligence for 12 years on the Board of Supervisors and four years on the School Board, demonstrating her unwavering commitment to this community. She said that she would truly miss Supervisor Bohmke's presence on the Board.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would also like to express her sincere appreciation to Supervisor English for inviting her to the Bright Night event at the Mount Ararat Church a couple of weeks ago. She said that the special needs dinner they hosted annually was truly remarkable. She said that the evening featured volunteers dressed in prom attire, dancing to music, and enjoying food provided by the community. She said that she would like to extend her gratitude to the Mount Ararat community and all the volunteers who made this event a highlight of the year for their special needs community.

Ms. Vanuch said that in an effort to keep the meeting on schedule, she would like to request that they revisit the April 15 Board meeting and consider adding a work session item to review the leave policy. She said that she would like to see a deep dive into vacation and sick time payout policies, including carryover provisions. She said that she had noticed significant leave payout numbers in previous years, with some employees receiving payouts of $70,000, $80,000, or even $100,000 upon leaving the County government. She said that she believed it was essential that they examine their leave policy to ensure it was fair and reasonable for all employees.

Ms. Vanuch said that the federal government did not payout sick time, and many employers did not do it either. She said this created a significant deficit in their budget, with an estimated over $1 million at the local level and an additional $1 million on the school side. She said that they needed to thoroughly examine this policy and its budget implications to ensure they were keeping pace with the times. She said that this policy posed a substantial liability on the County, with a potential $12 million carryover on their books if the entire policy were to be paid out today.

Ms. Vanuch said that staff should prepare a presentation on this topic, including the budget implications, comparative jurisdictions, federal government policies, and what other competitive organizations in the community were doing. She said that she would like to request that this presentation be brought to the Board for discussion and consideration. She said that if it could not be done through a work session, she would request that it be added to the next agenda under new business.

Ms. Gary asked if this was only regarding the payout of unused sick leave.

Ms. Vanuch said it included unused sick leave and vacation leave. She said that she would like to compare their policy to that of other localities to see how they stacked up. She said that some may have less, while others may have more. She said that she was interested in examining the breakdown of their leave policy, as it was largely reflected in their budget. She said that specifically, she would like to know how much of the carryover hours was allocated to vacation pay versus sick leave. She said that she suspected that approximately half of the carryover hours were likely sick pay, which would significantly reduce their deficit if they were to adjust the policy to be more in line with federal guidelines.

Ms. Gary said she was interested in knowing if it was sick leave. She said that she was uncertain about the vacation leave, so if they could separate those two issues and move forward, she would be willing to explore this.

Ms. Vanuch said that she completely agreed. She said that she believed that the two options should be separated to ensure they could accurately understand the true budget implications. She said that to make informed decisions, they needed to consider the full impact on their budget. She said that for instance, if 80% was for vacation leave and 20% for sick leave, the financial implications were significantly reduced. She said that according to the County Administrator's initial assessment, the budget impact was approximately $500,000 for sick leave. She said that she wanted the Board to have a clear understanding of this figure and consider it in their decision-making process.

Mr. Ashton said that they recently implemented a system where department-to-department County-side payouts were tracked, including sick leave and annual leave, on the portal. He said that he believed this information was available on the portal.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had requested this information earlier, and it did have budget implications. She said that to move forward, she would like to get ahead of the curve by suggesting that if the staff recommended a change in policy and they voted on a tax rate next week, they should have some estimates in hand to minimize the impact.

Mr. Ashton said that the comparatives to other jurisdictions were not included in this data; it was only County data over the past five years.

Mr. Diggs said that it was essential that they were mindful of any employees who may be listening or present in the room when they discussed changes to benefits. He said that they were referring to changes that would be implemented as they hired new employees, not changes to the benefits of current staff.

Ms. Vanuch said that she believed the policy should be all-encompassing because if someone had worked for the county for 30 years and had accrued 2,000 hours of sick time and were paid out $100,000 when they quit, she did not think that was fair. She said that no business practices like that existed. She said that the federal government did not either. She said that there should be a cap on accrued sick time, or it was lost. She said that if one was entitled to sick time while working, they should not be entitled to a payout on the taxpayer's dime. She said that she thought the sick time policy was absolute, and they must change it.

Mr. Diggs said that he would not support this proposal and he would like to explain why. He said that employees who had been with the county for 15 years or more had given significantly to the community and had consistently put the County's interests first. He said that when they joined the County, they were offered a contract that included specific benefits, such as sick leave and annual leave.

Mr. Diggs said that to suggest that these benefits were no longer guaranteed, even if the federal government no longer provided them, was not fair. He said that if they were going to consider changing benefits for employees, they must be mindful of the impact on those who had already invested their time and effort into the County. He said that they had already changed the benefits policy for new employees. He said that this change could cause unnecessary panic and stress among employees, particularly those who had been with the County for a long time.

Mr. Diggs said that he believed they should have a conversation about benefits, but they must approach this topic with sensitivity and consider the long-term implications for their employees. He said that for example, he recalled that first responders did not receive pay increases because health insurance was provided by the County. He said that when they started having to pay for healthcare, they probably would have been better off with the pay increases instead.

Ms. Gary said that she would withdraw her support if the changes were to be retroactive.

Ms. Allens said that she would not be in favor. She said that one of the things that stood out to her when she first joined this Board five years ago was the trade-off between pay raises and benefits. She said that when she inquired about competitiveness with their neighbors to the north, she was told that they were forgoing pay raises in exchange for benefits.

Ms. Allen said that she believed they had not kept pace with pay raises compared to their neighbors to the north. She said that they had not raised their staff or County employees' pay, and instead, they had cited the difference between their size and those of their neighbors as a reason. She said that now that they were considering taking away benefits, she thought it was hypocritical to use the same justification.

Ms. Allen said that she was not in the business of engaging in a tit-for-tat approach or being counterintuitive. She said that they had already addressed this policy, and if they wanted to revisit it after this budget session, that was fine. She said that she would not support taking away employee benefits.

Mr. English said that he was one of the long-time employees who had to forgo raises over the years. He said that he had been with the County for 45 years, and he believed that was something he had looked forward to when he retired, and they only received a quarter payout. He said that if they voted tonight to eliminate this benefit, they would see a mass exodus of employees. He said that he was not in support of this proposal. He said that he believed this was one of the few good benefits the County offered. He said that for many employees, this benefit was a significant part of their retirement package, and he thought taking it away would have a negative impact on their benefits. He said that he was strongly opposed to this proposal.

Mr. Diggs said that it was worth noting that the cost was diminishing as more senior employees retired across the government. He said he had always emphasized the importance of taking care of their employees, as they were the ones who ultimately cared for their constituents.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had requested a presentation from staff to make a decision on whether to change the policy. She said that she believed it was necessary, as they were approaching a fiscal cliff with regards to these issues. She said that if they did not take action, healthcare benefits may be reduced or pay raises may be limited. She said that she would be in favor of going back and moving the policy forward retroactively. She said that she was open to this approach. She said that organizations often took this step to achieve fiscal solvency.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would like to see a thorough analysis of the true fiscal impact and have staff present this information to the Board, so they could make an informed and unified decision. She said that they needed to consider whether to apply this change to all employees, new hires, or those hired after a certain date, such as July 1, 2025, and whether to eliminate paid sick leave for new employees. She noted that sick leave was still paid out.

Mr. Diggs said that even though sick leave was paid out, there were limits on the amount employees could accrue.

Ms. Vanuch said there was no cap, and Mr. Ashton had previously implemented a financial cap on payouts in Herndon.

Mr. Ashton said that to clarify, this was all tied to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). He said that if one had been a member of VRS prior to the 2010 timeframe, they would have been part of VRS Plan 1, which allowed for unlimited sick leave accrual in any VRS-covered locality. He said that this was where the issue arose.

Mr. Ashton said that around 2009, the system transitioned to a hybrid model, which no longer allowed for unlimited sick leave accrual. He said that the reason for this change was to introduce a short-term disability component, providing coverage for illnesses or conditions that would keep an employee out of the workplace for more than five days. He said that as they moved forward, it was essential to acknowledge that employees who joined the system after this transition would not be eligible for the same rate of sick leave accrual.

Ms. Vanuch said they still were payed out for accrued sick leave, which was not typical. She said that she was asking for a financial analysis of this situation so that they could determine whether they had the necessary support to revise a policy and draft something that made sense as they moved towards greater fiscal solvency.

Dr. Yeung said that for her, she would like to consider other aspects of this discussion as well. She said that in terms of what they were currently addressing, she believed that providing sick leave was a valuable employee benefit. She said that it allowed workers to take time off for health reasons without fear of losing their job or income, ultimately promoting better health. She said that unlike the Family Medical Leave Act, which was a federal law, there was no requirement to pay out sick leave. She said that in her experience working in corporate America, when an employee left, they typically lost their accrued sick leave. She said that instead, they received a payout for vacation days. She said that as a result, employers were not obligated to pay out unused sick time. She said that given that they had excellent insurance coverage in Virginia.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had reviewed the numbers presented in the online portal. She said that while she did not think the numbers were excessively high, she believed it would be beneficial to compare their situation to that of other localities. She said that she did not see any harm in doing so. She said that she would like to see how they stacked up. She said that she recalled a conversation she had with an employee on their first day, who mentioned that Stafford County offered the best benefits around. She said that she was surprised to hear that.

Ms. Bohmke said that she did not think it was a bad idea to evaluate and make informed decisions. She said that unfortunately, they were having this conversation now, which was more suitable for a work session. She said that she was in favor of exploring what other localities were doing.

Mr. Diggs said the matter would be brought back for another agenda item because there was no support to move forward at this time.

Ms. Allen - announced that this year, they would receive $4,008,833 from PRTC for their portion of the motor fuel tax. She said that she would like to extend her congratulations to all of their first responders. She said that she wanted to express her appreciation for the incredible job their first responders did in being responsive, professional, and excellent in their roles. She extended kudos to those who won and to those who consistently showed up and demonstrated their dedication to Stafford County.

Ms. Allen said that there would be a public meeting on April 14, 2025, in the Board Chambers to discuss the Route 1/Woodstock/Telegraph Road Project. She said that anyone interested in learning more about the project, timeline, scope, and other details was welcome to attend. She said that Supervisor Bohmke was leaving, but they would have plenty of time in December to celebrate her service to Stafford County on both the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. She said that Supervisor Bohmke had been a pillar of their community, and she looked forward to continuing to work with her.

Mr. Diggs - reported that he had attended many of the events others had attended, and it was a privilege to speak at the African American History Heritage Trail event. He said that at a town hall around March 27, about 30 to 40 people attended, leading to a phenomenal conversation about the tax rate and budget. He said that if anyone had a question about anything, please do not hesitate to reach out to him. He said that he did not want people to rely solely on social media for information; instead, he encouraged them to verify facts through other sources.

Mr. Diggs said that he was willing to have open and honest conversations about any issue, and he encouraged everyone to do the same. He said that his contact information was (826) 204-0767. He said that he believed that despite their differences of opinion, they were a family, and they could disagree one day but come together the next. He said he appreciated Supervisor Bohmke's service to the County. He said that the best thing he recalled from his time on the Board was when a constituent said Ms. Bohmke was 70 years old.

REPORT OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

There was no report.

REPORT OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

There was no report.

PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS BY AGENCIES

ITEM 19. PRESENTATION ON VETERAN TAX EXEMPTION ADMINISTRATION PROCESS, PRESENTED BY COMMISSIONER OF THE REVENUE SCOTT MAYAUSKY

Scott Mayausky, Commissioner of Revenue, said he thought it was essential to remind everyone that this was not about the veterans themselves, but rather about preserving the program. He said that this was about building a partnership with Richmond and finding a way to make it work. He said that he would like to introduce a few individuals who had been instrumental in this effort. He said that this was a complex program, and he would like to highlight the community's engagement.

Mr. Mayausky said that their participation demonstrated that they were not alone in this issue and that they had been working to raise awareness for years. He said that he would like to introduce Sheila Colbeth, a real estate specialist; Millie Alessi; Judy Dunnigan, veteran coordinator; and Kenny Musselman, personal property specialist. He said that he worked closely with them daily to ensure they were interpreting the laws correctly and making the program work for both the veteran and the taxpayer in Stafford County.

Mr. Mayausky said that there were numerous resources available to them, and they utilized them frequently. He said that the veteran program had been established as a constitutional amendment, and they had all voted on it. He said that the details were outlined in the Code of Virginia, specifically the general law. He said that while the code was not overly specific, it gave the Department of Veteran Affairs the responsibility for creating guidelines.

Mr. Mayausky said that they worked closely with the veterans benefits coordinator, who had direct line to the Attorney General's office. He said that his association, Commissioner Revenue's Association, provided educational resources, and they had a standing veterans committee that helped interpret the code sections to achieve uniformity across the state. He said that the code granted the Commissioner of Revenue in each locality the authority and responsibility to interpret the code.

Mr. Mayausky said that they strived to ensure uniformity in their approach, but they were not immune to errors. He said that there were localities that did not follow the same exemptions as others, as had been discussed at the last meeting. He said that they also needed to communicate with assessment offices across the country to police this program. He said that this meant they must be aware of the rules in each state regarding this program in case someone owned property out of state. He said that, for example, a veteran who owned a house in Arizona was initially denied relief because they assumed it was his primary residence here. He said that when they contacted Arizona, they explained they did not have a primary residence requirement, so the veteran was able to receive relief on both properties.

Mr. Mayausky said that to effectively serve their veterans, they must consider not only state law but also the nuances of the program nationwide. He said that a brief overview of what is exempted includes real estate, the principal residence up to one acre, and certain dollar amounts. He said that an Attorney General opinion from 2011 clarified that this exemption included land and structures permanently attached to the land, such as driveways, fences, and swimming pools. He said that swimming pools accounted for less than one-third of one percent of the total $23 million exemption.

Mr. Mayausky said that training documents indicated that if a veteran provided a doctor's note stating the pool was necessary for therapy, the pool was exempted. He said that they exempt swimming pools, but it was a relatively minor portion of the overall program. He said that veterans were exempt from paying property taxes on one vehicle that was regularly used by the veteran, estimated to be around $4 million per year. He said that this exemption required the vehicle to be primarily used or owned by the veteran to qualify.

Mr. Mayausky said that he had mentioned several times that this program was extremely challenging, and they had discussed the lack of reimbursement from the state. He said that there was also a lack of support from the state, with laws that were very confusing and unclear. He said that they had to navigate these issues every day. He said that to illustrate this, he would like to provide a quick example from 2023. He said the General Assembly passed a law allowing local governments to set a separate tax rate for surviving spouses, which was memorialized in the 2023 benefits guide. He said that this law was repealed in 2024 and never updated in the guide.

Mr. Mayausky said that as a result, they faced these challenges on a daily basis. He said that what made it so difficult and confusing was the lack of a centralized database, which required them to conduct extensive detective work to determine if a veteran was eligible for benefits in another locality, as well as here. He said that they did not receive funding from the Compensation Board, which was responsible for reimbursing constitutional officers for state-mandated duties.

Mr. Mayausky said that they did receive some state funding for other services, but in terms of taxation, this was the only state-mandated service where they did not receive compensation for administration. He said that this was a significant area that he believed they needed to focus on as they continued to discuss the program. He said that it required over two full-time employees to administer every day, and it was difficult to ask taxpayers for additional resources to provide benefits. He said that the state must also step up to support them.

Ms. Bohmke said she had spoken with numerous localities that faced similar challenges. She said that the key difference, however, was that this represented 8% of the County general fund, which was a significant portion. She asked what the total exemption was for all localities state-wide.

Mr. Mayausky said that the total cost was approximately $250 million statewide.

Ms. Gary said that she was wondering, given the long-term nature of the issue and the fact that other states had already begun to address similar concerns, if it would be helpful to request an assessment from federal legislators on how the program was handled nationally. She said that she thought it would be beneficial to identify any potential loopholes that may be exploited.

Mr. Mayausky said he wholeheartedly agreed. He said that one of the significant challenges was the lack of centralization in this process. He said that even at the state level, if the VA had a more active role, providing a list of qualified veterans on an annual basis, it would greatly improve the situation.

Ms. Gary asked for staff to provide a bullet-point list of items that would be beneficial for the Board to request of federal representatives.

Mr. English said that he received an email from one of his constituents who had a question regarding proof of eligibility. He said that according to the Stafford County website and the application requirements, a veteran did not need to provide proof of qualification as a homeowner to qualify for the exemption. He said that instead, they could simply provide a utility bill as proof of residency. He said that he wondered if this exemption only applied to veterans who owned property.

Mr. Mayausky said that they had to own the property. He said that they did not specifically request ownership documentation because they maintained the County's land records. He said that as a result, they already knew who legally owned the property.

Dr. Yeung said that specifically, she had asked staff to provide comparable data for Spotsylvania and Prince William counties, including numbers and tax rates relevant to this program. She said that this was one of the questions she had regarding the data center. She asked staff to share the information they had provided her via email.

Mr. Diggs said he wanted to finish this topic before discussing data centers.

Ms. Vanuch said that she received a phone call from a 100% disabled service-connected veteran on her way to the previous board meeting. She said that the veteran had read an article in the Freelance Star and was very complimentary of the way Mr. Mayausky handled some of the questions and quotes in the article. She said that the veteran also praised his advocacy at the state level for working to find a solution to make this program solvent and offered to accompany him to the General Assembly next year to bring a veteran's perspective to the discussion.

Mr. Mayausky said that would be helpful.

Ms. Vanuch said that she planned to send an email to connect with them because she believed this could be a tremendous asset. She said that she was concerned that their approach may have changed over time. She said that in her sixth year on the Board, she was worried that when they first addressed this issue, they had highlighted it primarily due to the high cost, and they had discussed it every budget season.

Ms. Vanuch said that now, she felt that the message to taxpayers had shifted to imply that they needed to raise taxes to support veterans. She said that she was not comfortable with this message, and she wanted to emphasize that it was not a reflection on staff. She said that she was concerned about the way they were communicating this issue. She said that she believed they should focus on the fact that they had unfunded mandates from the state and federal governments, which were costly and should be discussed more thoroughly.

Ms. Vanuch said she would be working with the County Administrator and schools to obtain a list of these unfunded mandates. She said that she looked forward to reviewing it, as she was confident that it would reveal significant, costly obligations that should be addressed, rather than relying solely on this particular issue to justify tax increases. She said that veteran's benefits were not the reason they needed to raise taxes.

Ms. Allen said that she agreed that this was a difficult conversation due to the sensitivity of the subject. She said that the day they could openly discuss policy would likely lead to a better solution, which was not currently happening. She said that their state representatives were hesitant to touch this issue, possibly due to fear of repercussions. She said that when the amendment was previously presented, she did not vote for it because she felt it was unclear about the ramifications and policies and how it would impact taxpayers, voters, and veterans. She said that she believed that with more information, this could have been sent back to the General Assembly for rewrites before being presented to them.

Ms. Allen said she brought this up because other states already had similar programs. She said that, for example, her cousin, who recently retired with 100% service disability, was considering Virginia versus Texas. She said she advised her to go to Texas because the County did not need her to add to its deficit. She said that as an elected body, they had difficult decisions to make, and some people asked questions.

Ms. Allen said that she had constituents ask her why some individuals were receiving exemptions, despite having a second job. She said she did not have an answer to that, as she did not create the policy. She said that for those who were struggling to balance work and their fiduciary responsibilities, how did they explain to someone that they needed to pay their bills, while someone who was working for the federal government or a similar entity was exempt from paying due to their disability.

Ms. Allen said some veterans were utilizing County resources. She said that she was not suggesting that they did not earn it, and they could not tell them not to send their children to public schools or not to use their resources, as those were still necessary for them. She said that she was unsure of how to address this issue without their state legislators taking concrete action. She said that it was the state's responsibility to fix this problem, and until they did, they were limited in what they could do at the local level.

Ms. Allen said that Mr. Mayausky had been transparent about the process and had been involved from the beginning, trying to figure out how to rewrite the rules or close loopholes. She said that with veterans moving into the state daily and their understaffing, there were only so many things they could do. She said this was a plea to their state delegation to make the difficult decisions and figure out how to fund Virginia so that veterans could work, play, and raise their families. She said that they could not sit there and have communities make difficult decisions about how to fill significant funding gaps due to something that had not been properly thought through.

He said that he had a few questions and he knew that he had mentioned this before, but he would like to clarify it for the general public in case some details were missed. He said that he was receiving a large number of applications daily for the Veterans Relief program.

Mr. Diggs asked how many applications Mr. Mayausky was receiving each day for the veterans tax relief.

Mr. Mayausky said that they received an average of 10 applications per day. He said that he wanted to point out to Ms. Allen that the law, as it was written, the County did not qualify the veterans. He said that to clarify, the Veterans Administration was the entity that provided them with the letter certifying their disability, and by Virginia law, the County abided by that qualification. He said that what the County did was policing on the back end to ensure they lived in the house they applied with and did not have a second home that also was exempted. He said that the qualification aspect was out of their hands.

Mr. Diggs asked about the current impact on the budget.

Mr. Mayausky said that the total cost was approximately $23 million for real estate and $4 million for personal property, such as vehicles.

Mr. Diggs said that as a veteran, he was known for speaking plainly, and he was not afraid to call things as he saw them. He said that he had similar conversations to Ms. Vanuch where people tried to avoid blaming veterans and scapegoating them. He said that he did not think that was the intention, but it was challenging to have this conversation because there was criticism on both sides of the issue. He said that people asked them to tighten things and cut costs to avoid a tax increase.

Mr. Diggs said that when they explained the pressures they were facing as a Board, they were trying to convey that regardless of who was at fault, this was what they were dealing with. He said that it was a delicate conversation. He said that he believed Stafford was a community that valued its veterans, and he did not think any of them doubted that.

Mr. Diggs said that when they discussed the tax rate and other issues, this was a significant hit to the budget. He said that it was a reality they were facing, and it was unlikely to change soon. He said that his main concern was when they built the VA hospital in Spotsylvania, Stafford was experiencing it as well as Fairfax and Hampton Roads.

Mr. Mayausky said that the City of Hampton was currently ranked second in the state in terms of the percentage of veterans receiving relief. He said that Spotsylvania was also showing an increase. He said that however, the entire state was experiencing this trend. He said that in the past, he could count on one hand the number of localities that exempted 1% of their real estate base. He said that now, this number had more than doubled to half of the state. He said that even localities that may not yet be aware of the issue were likely to face it soon.

Mr. Diggs said that what he was hearing was not sustainable. He said that they supported their veterans, but they were trying to have this conversation to acknowledge the challenges veterans were facing. He said that Mr. Mayausky was doing his job with integrity and transparency, and this forum provided a platform for constituents to express their concerns. He said that since they did not have a back-and-forth format, they could not necessarily correct inaccuracies or say certain comments were wrong. He said that Mr. Mayausky was there today to clarify and answer questions, and to engage with the public directly, rather than relying on Facebook.

Ms. Allen asked if there were any peer localities in other states that did not offer 100%.

Mr. Mayausky said that he did not know, but he could certainly ask when they conversed with other states.

Ms. Allen asked if they had talked with other states about how they dealt with those budgetary impacts.

Mr. Mayausky said that he had not; however, that was a good question. He said that it would be beneficial to study this further, as it would be nice to present a case to their General Assembly using other states' processes to show a path forward for their own state.

Ms. Allen said that she was interested to know if the Association could have conversations with other states that had similar equivalents for Commissioners of Revenue to explore potential solutions. She said that she would like to understand what strategies they were using to bridge the funding gap for their staff and operations. She said that she was concerned that the solvency program may be unsustainable if it was not generating sufficient revenue. She said that she wondered how they could ensure that the program was self-sustaining and continued to offer the benefits it provided to the association.

Mr. Mayausky said that he agreed that this was a great idea. He said that he would reach out to the National Association to explore the possibility of starting a survey or collecting data on this topic.

Mr. Diggs asked if Mr. Mayausky could elaborate on the limitations in terms of changing the processes that affected this issue.

Mr. Mayausky said that he believed the approach they were taking was the correct one, as no one was attempting to alter the benefit requirements, which would require a constitutional amendment and was unlikely to pass. He said that it was essential to respect the benefits earned by veterans, and personally, he found it disheartening that the current law structure placed veterans in the middle of this conversation, where they should not be.

Mr. Mayausky said that he believed they were on the right track in recognizing that it was a shared responsibility with the state. He said that they needed to reimburse the state, at the very least, for a portion of the program. He said that he recently attended an event with the Governor, where the Governor discussed the state's annual surpluses.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed the Board should consider authorizing Mr. Ashton to send a letter to Dean Lynch, the Executive Director of VACo. She said that VACo had extensive connections across the nation, and Dean Lynch was well-versed in knowing the Executive Directors of various organizations, including NACo, the National Association of Counties.

Mr. Diggs said that there was consensus from the Board to reach out to VACo about gathering relevant information from their contacts.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the importance of Mr. Mayausky's point, which she believed they should highlight more frequently in their discussions. She said that she wanted to thank him for bringing it to their attention. She said that unfortunately, the veterans had become a target of criticism in this situation, even from some politicians.

Ms. Gary said that she had heard it expressed in their words, and it was truly disheartening. She said that she was not naming names, but she did want to ask that they refrain from doing so. She said that her point was that, as they engaged with the veteran community, she often had conversations with individuals who were struggling to access the benefits they deserved.

Ms. Gary said that these individuals were driven by a deep sense of humility and service, and they often did so out of a desire to do what was right. She said that her message was that, if they needed these benefits, please did not let their discussions discourage them from pursuing them; instead, please seek out the help and support available to them.

Ms. Gary said that they should make the most of the programs designed to assist them. She said that they were not the problem. She said that they should work together to address the policy issues with the state and other relevant parties. She said that from her perspective, and she believed from this Board and County, veterans had their full support in accessing the resources they needed in this community.

Mr. Mayausky said that he personally knew that there were a number of veterans who were not taking advantage of this benefit due to the conversations they had been having, and that was not what they wanted. He said that the veterans had earned it. He said that he told them to take her benefits with pride, and the County government would figure out the rest.

Dr. Yeung said that her second question pertained to the tax rate. She said that Prince William had started at $2.15 and now were at $4.15. She said that Loudoun was at $4.15 but she could not recall if they went down or up. She said that Stafford started at $1.25. She asked if Mr. Mayausky could clarify on the competitiveness.

Mr. Diggs said that he would like to clarify that Dr. Yeung was referring to the assessed tax rate for data centers. He said that there had been a conversation about whether Stafford was favoring the developer over the constituent, and therefore, Dr. Yeung and the rest of the Board were essentially asking Mr. Mayausky to provide an overview of how they had arrived at their current situation and why there was a difference between Prince William's approach and their own.

Mr. Mayausky said that he had been around for a long time, so he would start from the beginning. He said that around 2011, the Board had prioritized attracting data centers. He said that by 2018 or 2019, they had begun discussing how to incentivize them to come. He said that they had looked at what Prince William County was doing, as they were being very successful in attracting them. He said that they had lowered their tax rate to $1.25 and changed their depreciation schedule to a more rapid depreciation schedule. He said that this made sense, as computer equipment depreciates at a faster rate than furniture or other items.

Mr. Mayausky said that they all knew that their cell phones and furniture depreciate at different rates. He said that the County Administrators, led by a gentleman from Caroline County, had decided that to attract data centers as a region, they needed a regional strategy. He said that since Prince William County was working well, they had adopted their same tax rate and depreciation schedule. He said that he had worked with his colleagues in Planning District 16 to implement the same strategy.

Mr. Mayausky said that he would explain why the regional approach was important. He said that in Richmond, they had gotten into a bidding war for Facebook and a few other companies. He said that he would read the tax rates for the Richmond region. He said that Chesterfield County's tax rate was $0.24, Hanover’s was $0.45, Henrico's was $0.40, Powhatan’s was $0.40, and Goochland’s was $0.40. He said that they had created a race to the bottom in that region.

Mr. Mayausky adopting a regional strategy, Stafford had created a floor of $1.25, which was still higher than what was occurring in the rest of the state. He said that in fact, five localities in the southwest region had last summer adopted a similar strategy, using them as a model. He said that they had adopted a tax rate of $0.24, with Virginia Beach lowering its rate to $0.40 and Frederick remaining at $1.25. He said that the reason why their rates were so much higher in Loudoun was because Loudoun was the epicenter of the world for data centers. He said that as they moved further away from Loudoun, the competition increased, not just with Virginia localities, but with localities across the country.

Mr. Mayausky said that this was evident in their current rate of $1.25. He said that he was unsure how this would impact the desirability of data centers in the area. He said that he expected that data centers would be less likely to move there due to the increased rate. He said that a recent comment on Facebook mentioned that Amazon could pay more in taxes, which was true, but they would not. He said that businesses went where they could save the most money. He said that their region was experiencing a highly competitive market, and they were succeeding in achieving their goals. He said that they had set out with a clear objective, developed a plan, and were successfully executing that plan as a region, rather than just as a County.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to make a comment regarding the Commissioner's presentation on data center rates. She said that in the context of the budget, she believed it was essential to consider the implications of this proposal. She said that as they had discussed the veterans' budget, it was also relevant to examine the data center budget. She said that given the competitive nature of the market, with similar facilities in neighboring states and to their south and west, she did not think it was wise to ask them how to pay more taxes before they even had one open. She said that it was unlikely that they could persuade the data centers to pay higher taxes, as they had numerous alternatives. She said that $0.24 was a drastic decrease compared to their region.

Ms. Allen said that as they made decisions and residents saw data centers being proposed, she asked everyone to verify information through reputable channels rather than solely relying on social media. She said that she recommended that the public do their research and reach out to Mr. Mayausky's office, as he had access to that information. She said that the County could provide them with the necessary information. She said that it was not smart to set financial policies that deterred business when their goal was to be open for business.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted to thank the County staff for all their hard work.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 20. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; CONSIDER BUDGETING AND APPROPRIATING REVENUE RECEIVED FROM THE SALE OF RETIRED FIRE AND RESCUE VEHICLES FOR THE PURCHASE OF REPLACEMENT FIRE AND RESCUE VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Andy Vita, Assistant Chief of Support Services, said that he had the privilege of overseeing the Fleet Services Division, and he was extremely proud of the work that their leadership and technicians do behind the scenes to ensure that their fleet was ready for response and was also fiscally responsible with taxpayer dollars. He said that Captain Ferguson advised Chief Cardello and their leadership team on their fleet replacement plan, which balances the age, condition, cost of repairs, cost of replacement, and the value of surplus vehicles.

Mr. Vita said that this plan aimed to strike a balance between these factors. He said that through collaboration with Finance and Procurement, the Fire Department successfully sold six retired vehicles through surplus for $159,051. He said that tonight, they were requesting the appropriation of the $159,051 back into the Fleet Services Division.

Ms. Allen asked if they were replacing equipment and vehicles at a quicker pace than the expected lifespan.

Mr. Vita said that they were currently evaluating that. He said that they were doing three ambulances per year and had reduced it to two because of their strong fleet. He said that part of the plan accounted for the fact that if they had vehicles for too long, they cost too much and lost value, but at the same time, if they kept them for too short of a time, they were wasting taxpayer dollars. He said that they were evaluating how often they were doing that. He said that they had a consistent cycle for the replacement of vehicles.

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve Proposed resolution R25-73.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ITEM 21. PLANNING AND ZONING; CONSIDER 1) APPROVING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP) REQUEST TO ALLOW A SOLAR FACILITY WITHIN THE A-1, AGRICULTURAL ZONING DISTRICT, AND 2) AUTHORIZING ENTRANCE INTO A SOLAR FACILITY DECOMMISSIONING AGREEMENT ON TAX MAP PARCEL NO. 45-127 (PROJECT KNOWN AS CUP24155766; ENON ROAD SOLAR FARM)

Mike Zuraf, Director of Planning and Zoning, said that this item was regarding a conditional use permit (CUP) request for a solar facility within the A-1 Agricultural Zoning District. He said that the second part of this request was to authorize the County Administrator to enter into an agreement for the decommissioning of the solar facility. He said that the proposed project was the Enon Road Solar Farm, located on a single parcel of approximately 36.8 acres in the Hartwood District. He said that the applicant was Enon Road Solar Farm.

Mr. Zuraf said that he would like to note that this was the same project that was proposed back in 2022, which was denied in 2023. He said that the site, which was highlighted on the map, was situated on the southeast corner of Enon Road and Truslow Road. He said that a zoning map of the site and surrounding area was provided. He said that most of the surrounding properties were zoned A-1 agriculture, with one B-1 convenience commercial property located just to the west across Truslow Road. He said that the property was largely undeveloped, featuring a mix of open fields and forested areas, with several barn structures centrally located on the site. He said that there were also several intermittent streams and associated wetlands.

Mr. Zuraf said that the site had one driveway entrance off of Enon Road and a private access easement on the southern end of the site off of Truslow Road. He said that surrounding uses to the north included a new water tank site, a place of worship, and several residential properties that continued around to the west. He said that to the south, there was the planned Musselman Park and another residence, with additional undeveloped land to the east.

Mr. Zuraf said that a Google Street View from the Truslow Road and Enon Road intersection was also provided. He said that the submitted general development plan (GDP) identified solar panel arrays, grouped in two areas of the site, each enclosed by security fencing. He said that these fenced areas covered 12.7 acres of the total 37 acres, and were situated to avoid wetland areas and existing mature tree cover.

Mr. Zuraf said that the western half of the site was proposed to remain as a conservation area and remain undeveloped. He said that in contrast to the original proposal in 2022, which proposed solar arrays across the entire site. He said that the facility had a single entrance located at the current driveway site, off Enon Road.

Mr. Zuraf said that gravel access roads would be provided to the solar array areas, and the fenced area around the solar arrays would be planted with low-growing native grasses. He said that a 50-foot wide landscape buffer was provided around the perimeter of the site, where existing vegetation did not exist. He said that provided was a version of the proposed GDP, which sought to waive the 50-foot perimeter buffer along the eastern property line.

Mr. Zuraf said that the County Code allowed for buffers to be waived by the Board as part of the Conditional Use Permit approval. He said that the applicant submitted a buffer reduction memo, which would be further discussed when they gave their presentation to the Board. He said that this version of the GDP highlighted the limits and conservation area on the western side of the property, providing a closer view of the facility near the entrance.

Mr. Zuraf said that the displayed GDP section provided a better view of the buffers, access road, fence locations, and solar panels. He said that the solar panels were mounted on parallel racking systems aligned east-west, with a fixed angle racking structure, as opposed to the tilting axes that followed the sun throughout the day. He said that the cross sections of the solar arrays showed the panels ranging from 10 to 15 feet above ground level.

Mr. Zuraf said that the comprehensive plan's future land use map (FLUM) classified the property as suburban, within the urban services area, where suburban-scale development was most suitable. He said that the comprehensive plan included specific recommendations for solar facilities, addressing location and site design criteria. He said that the application had been evaluated for compliance with these criteria. He said that the comprehensive plan encouraged location of community-scale solar projects outside of the urban services area.

Mr. Zuraf said that this proposed location was within the urban services area; however, the comprehensive plan allowed for consideration of projects within this area under certain conditions, such as a project size under 50 acres, which applied to this project. He said that the comprehensive plan also considered that the potential residential or commercial uses may not be a better use of land in this location.

Mr. Zuraf said that staff commented that there could be an argument to be made that this would be the case in this location, given the current rural nature of the surrounding land uses and the need for improvements to the area road network to support higher traffic volumes that would come with more intense residential or commercial development. He said that the proposed project had several characteristics that aligned with additional location criteria. He said that the solar panels were being sited in areas of limited visibility, preserving most of the visible areas of the site as a conservation area, which was in conformance with the comprehensive plan's recommendation.

Mr. Zuraf said that the site was used for limited agriculture activity, with crops grown on the site. He said that the comprehensive plan recommended avoiding locating sites with active agriculture. He said that the project avoided impacts to wetlands and mature trees, which was in compliance with the plan. He said that fencing around the solar panels enclosed each of the two areas individually, avoiding wetlands and helping to maintain wildlife corridors, consistent with the plan.

Mr. Zuraf said that there were no dense residential neighborhoods within the project's view shed, with the closest being England Run North and the Falls Run community, located to the west of the site across Truslow Road, which was also consistent with the plan's recommendations. He said that the next slide addressed site design criteria in the comprehensive plan. He said that the project had several characteristics that aligned with the site design criteria.

Mr. Zuraf said that to mitigate noise impacts, string inverters or microinverters would be used to transfer the power collected from the panels, rather than central inverters, which would generate more noise. He said that the existing tree cover on the site was minimal, but most of it would be preserved. He said that the comprehensive plan recommended retaining existing tree cover, which meant planting new trees around the perimeter of the site where trees did not exist. He said that the comprehensive plan also recommended providing travel ways around the perimeter of each group of solar arrays. He said that the project would have open grassy areas for pedestrian access around the solar arrays.

Mr. Zuraf said that in accordance with the Fire Marshal's Office, the applicant was required to provide emergency response training for Fire and Rescue personnel prior to the facility's operation. He said that the project minimized environmental impacts and maintained wildlife corridors, consistent with the comprehensive plan. He said that the gradual terrain also minimized the need for mass grading, consistent with the comprehensive plan. He said that construction impacts would be mitigated with time limit conditions.

Mr. Zuraf said that several conditions were being recommended by staff, including: the property will be developed in accordance with the General Development Plan; the western half of the site will remain undeveloped; perimeter landscape buffers will include evergreen trees with a minimum height of six feet at the time of planting; solar equipment setbacks will include 105 feet from the centerline of Enon Road, and 75 feet from other property lines to maintain buffers; maximum solar panel heights above ground level will be 10 feet for panels within 400 feet of residences, and up to 15 feet beyond 400 feet; and the access road will be as shown on the plan.

Mr. Zuraf said that the conditions also included that woven wire security fencing, eight feet in height, will be required; permit-only string inverters or microinverters will be used to reduce noise impacts; construction activities will be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and not on national holidays; emergency contact information will be posted at the site; a decommissioning agreement will be recorded prior to occupancy; and a cash contribution of

$42,000 will be made at three different points during the development of the site, as allowed under state code.

Mr. Zuraf said that for the overall evaluation, staff found the positive aspects included that the proposed solar facility meets all the standards for issuance of a conditional use permit, aligns with the comprehensive plan recommendations, and the Planning Commission determined the use to be substantially in accord with the plan when it was considered in 2023. He said that the proposed location, setbacks, fencing, and screening should not detract from the character of the surrounding area, and conditions would mitigate other potential negative impacts.

Mr. Zuraf said that staff did not foresee any negative impacts with this proposal and recommended approval with the recommended conditions. He said that he would like to note that the proposed Condition 2 requires conformance with the original General Development Plan, which maintains a 50-foot buffer around the entire site. He said that if the Board was inclined to approve the applicant's request to reduce that buffer, the conditions would need to be amended to reference the other General Development Plan, dated February 19, 2025. He said that the Planning Commission voted 4-3 to recommend approval on February 26, 2025, and the Planning Commission and staff also recommended approval of the decommissioning agreement.

Mr. English asked if the CUP would apply to the entire property.

Mr. Zuraf said that yes, the CUP applied to the entire site.

Mr. English asked why they needed the CUP for the entire site if only a portion of it would be developed.

Mr. Zuraf said that the application had traditionally included the entire parcel, and they subsequently added a condition that restricted where solar facilities could be permitted on the parcel.

Mr. English asked what the cash contribution was when this project was denied in 2023.

Mr. Zuraf said that he believed it was the same amount.

Mr. English asked why the three Planning Commissioners voted against recommending approval of this application.

Mr. Zuraf said that the Commissioners generally felt that the proposal was not suitable for this area, and one of the Commissioners mentioned that, considering the schools nearby, the area might be more suitable for more intense residential development.

Mr. English asked how many houses could be developed on this parcel if the solar facility were not developed.

Mr. Zuraf said that under the current A-1 zoning, they could have up to six homes.

Dr. Yeung said that she was searching for the word "proffers," but it appeared that they were no longer allowed to use it.

Mr. Zuraf said that proffers only applied to rezonings; this item was a conditional use permit so it had no proffers.

Dr. Yeung asked if there was analysis on the impacts the installation would have on the land in terms of degradation.

Mr. Zuraf said that they would need to meet Environmental and Safety requirements when establishing land cover.

Dr. Yeung asked if there was a specific plan that addressed that.

Mr. Zuraf said that during the site plan review process, the applicant would need to go through a major site plan, and the County had requirements that would necessitate ground cover.

Dr. Yeung said that once the CUP was approved, it was not a guarantee that the degradation document would be complete. She said that she had noticed that the decommissioning document was included in this package, and it would be helpful to have the degradation document included as well.

Mr. Zuraf said that the work involved more technical details and stormwater management calculations that were typically addressed at a later stage. He said that applicants may not be willing to go through the entire process if they did not intend to receive approval. He said that they would work through the series of requirements necessary to meet the County's standards for stormwater management, soil stabilization, and other site plan requirements.

Dr. Yeung asked if there was a provision that addressed the land restoration as part of the decommissioning plan.

Mr. Zuraf said that was correct; once all the materials were removed and everything was cleared, they then had to re-stabilize the ground.

Dr. Yeung asked if their agreement included a no conversion clause, which prohibited the property from being rezoned for alternative uses such as data centers or warehouses once the solar farm's lifespan had expired.

Mr. Zuraf said no; the consideration before the Board was only for the proposed use. He said that it would be inappropriate to have a condition for some future use.

Dr. Yeung asked if they could expand the solar farm to cover the rest of the land in the parcel.

Mr. Zuraf said no. He said that the conditions as proposed limited the solar arrays to the area shown on the generalized development plan.

Dr. Yeung asked if the restoration requirement would return the land to its original state, or if it was more about achieving a similar condition. She said that the development would result in compaction of the dirt with heavy equipment. She said that she was trying to understand how the restoration process would work, and what that meant in terms of the final outcome.

Mr. Zuraf said that the applicant provided that document, which detailed that it would get it as close as possible to the previous conditions. He said that as mentioned in the staff report, the terrain on this site was relatively gradual, so they did not see the need for any mass grading that could potentially affect the post-life condition of the ground.

Dr. Yeung said that she had one final question regarding the bond or escrow fund. She said that she wanted to know if this fund was sufficient to cover cleanup costs after decommissioning, ensuring that taxpayers were not left with an undue burden.

Mr. Zuraf said that the amount was subject to re-evaluation every few years, as per the provision that allowed for adjustments based on increasing prices.

Dr. Yeung asked if Mr. Zuraf thought the $42,000 was sufficient.

Mr. Zuraf said that the $42,000 figure mentioned in the conditions was not the decommissioning amount. He said that was a separate document, and he was trying to locate it in the package. He said that the $42,000 was actually a cash contribution from the county for any capital improvements that they may need in the area. He said that the decommissioning amount was a different figure, approximately $167,000.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the Board would consider holding questions until after the public hearing so the applicant could present their information and the public could provide comments.

Mr. Diggs said that there was consensus from the Board to proceed with the public hearing. He asked if the applicant had a presentation.

Cara Romaine, Development Manager at ESA, said that she was joined tonight by her colleagues, Wes Shaffer, their land entitlement manager, and Justin Vandenbroeck, their co-owner at ESA. She said that tonight, Mr. Shaffer and she were pleased to present and request CUP approval for the Enon Road Community Solar Preserve project. She said that over the past three years since their initial meeting and presentation with the County, this project had undergone significant changes in response to community feedback.

Ms. Romaine said that the Enon Road project would span approximately 16 acres, encompassing the panel area, buffers, and access road. She said that as previously mentioned by Mr. Zuraf, the panel area under the panels was approximately 12.75 acres. She said that this project would provide power for approximately 600 homes and participate in the Virginia Shared Solar Program, allowing Dominion Energy customers to receive monthly electricity bill savings. She said that they had made several key modifications to the project since 2023, including reducing the street frontage by 95%, the panel area by 33%, and lowering the panel height by 5 feet. She said that these changes were directly influenced by feedback from the Board, the community, and their neighbors.

Wes Shaffer, Land Entitlement Manager with ESA, said that over the next few slides, he would walk through the site plan and reiterate some key points made by Mr. Zuraf. He said that they were not only meeting the special regulations for solar facilities in Stafford County, but also showing a site plan that reflected and respected the character of this community. He said that in the displayed image, they were above the barn and silo, looking north towards the Enon water tank. He said that right away, they were providing a reservation area along Enon Road for future right-of-way expansion, which could accommodate a trail or other multimodal opportunities.

Mr. Shaffer said that this aligned with both the comprehensive plan and the Stafford County Transportation Master Plan. He said that they were also planting a 50-foot wide buffer using pollinator-friendly native species to provide year-round screening. He said that an access road led to each fenced equipment area and was paved at the entrance of Enon to prevent gravel tracking onto the road. He said that as Ms. Romaine had mentioned, they had reduced the panel coverage area significantly, concentrating it into a space that comprised less than 35% of the total parcel area, which was below the 80% allowed by code.

Mr. Shaffer said that the rows were spaced to allow sunlight to reach the ground underneath the panels, supporting natural and native vegetation growth. He said that they were using silicon-based panels, which were UL-listed, anti-glare coated, and free of hazardous materials such as cadmium telluride. He said that the site was enclosed by an eight-foot woven wire fence, providing security while allowing small wildlife to pass through. He said that the conditions of approval required a 105 feet setback from the fence to the center line of Enon, but they were providing 155 feet, exceeding the minimum requirement and ensuring a 75 feet setback at all property lines.

Mr. Shaffer said that the equipment pad, holding the transformer and string inverters, was intentionally located to minimize sound intrusion on neighboring properties. He said that they had located this site within a space where, even within the fence line, they met Stafford County's code requirements for sound levels within the fenced area. By the time they reached the property lines, the sound would have dissipated well below ambient sound levels. He said that he hoped the members had a chance to step outside today and appreciate the beautiful weather. He said that it had indeed been a perfect day for solar, and he believed the sun had set about 15 minutes ago. He said that if this project were operational, it would generate enough power to power approximately 600 homes.

Mr. Shaffer said that since it was connected to the local distribution network, 100% of that electricity would be distributed to homes on this network, providing local energy for Stafford County. He said that if they looked towards the west, they could see this beautiful open field with wooded wetlands. He said that according to their general development plan and Condition 3, they were holding this land as rural conservation, which met the definition of open space according to the code. He said that as a planner and developer with over 10 years of experience, he believed it was quite unique and remarkable to provide a conservation space like this for commercial use. He said that they were proud to deliver that with this project.

Mr. Shaffer said that neighbors had shared how meaningful this open space was, particularly those who enjoyed watching the sunrise over this field. He said that they were pleased that they could adjust their design to protect this local character resource. To address Mr. English's question, they would maintain this space as open space within the confines of their conditional use permit. He said that even on day one of operation, the conservation of this rural character would remain intact.

Mr. Shaffer said that to take a closer look at the site from different perspectives, he would use a pickup truck as a reference point, which was approximately six and a half feet tall. He said that on the first day of planting the native vegetation in staggered rows, it fully concealed the view of their neighbors, and ideally, they could not see in. He said that moving to the entrance of the project site, they anticipated that some panels and fencing would be visible on day one, but as the buffer grew, the plantings would frame the entrance. He said that since this buffer was the front door of their project, they wanted it to look great, and he believed it would.

Mr. Shaffer said that looking south from Hull's Chapel, they would see a small sliver of panels even as the buffer matured, but this was contextualized and sandwiched within the foreground and background vegetation, so they considered it a soft approach. He said that from the north, looking south directly on the project, they were fortunate to have topography and a buffer that would fully conceal this project from view over five to six years. He said that as Mr. Zuraf indicated, they were requesting relief from the strict application of the buffer requirements in the code.

Mr. Shaffer said that the special regulations allowed for flexibility when two conditions were met. He said that first, the adjoining property was actively farmed. He said that second, a viewshed analysis confirmed no visual impact. He said that they met both criteria and believed this modification was appropriate and justified. He said that he would next examine the area of relief from the drone and look to the east. He said that today the adjacent property was indeed active agriculture, with corn grown on this plot of land just this past growing season.

Mr. Shaffer said that to the northeast, there was a huge forested wetland that completely hid this project from view from Enon and the neighbors to the north of the project site. He said that images A and B attempted to reiterate that the combination of great distance and this vegetated wetland hid their project site. He said that when they saw that these preserved resources remained in place and hid this project, it seemed redundant to provide a buffer along the east property line.

Mr. Shaffer said that this also would project shade into their solar area, creating an issue for solar energy to meet the panels. He said that they requested relief from that requirement in the sense that an additional buffer would not further obscure this project from Enon Road and nearby neighbors. He said that to put it into context, the area of relief was approximately 10% of more than eight acres that they were preserving or planting. He said that he would pass it back to Ms. Romaine, but he would like to add a few final thoughts.

Mr. Shaffer said that firstly, they were committed to the long-term stewardship of this project, not only within the fenced area but also the open space conservation area. He said that they were committed to working with local emergency services to coordinate preparedness and response to potential emergencies. He said that as Mr. Zuraf indicated, they had submitted a decommissioning plan and financial bond, and they estimated that the bond for site restoration would exceed $167,000. He said that this estimate was arrived at through a third-party assessment.

Ms. Romaine said that this project would benefit multiple stakeholders. She said that it would provide monthly electricity bill savings, tax revenue, and utility investments that will not strain public resources like schools. She said that it would preserve the local area and provide stable revenue and ownership for their local landowner for years to come. She said that to summarize, she had been working on this project since she started at ESA four years ago. She said that their team had invested hundreds of hours and put their hearts into this project. She said that they valued feedback and appreciated the opportunity to share their work with the County. She said that this conclusion slide highlighted why they respectfully requested CUP approval tonight from the Board.

Mr. Diggs opened the public hearing. He asked if any members of the public wished to address this item.

Edward Davin, Falmouth District, said that he and his wife, Mary appreciated Stafford County's track record of achieving balanced development, and they saw the current request for a conditional use permit for the Enon Road solar farm as another opportunity for this Board to maintain that positive track record. He said that in their view, balanced development occurred when Stafford County attracted families as a place to live and attracted responsible businesses that benefited Stafford citizens as customers, employees, and taxpayers.

Mr. Davin said that when they applied these two criteria to the proposed location for the solar farm and considered the timing of tonight's vote, it was clear to them that a yes vote for the solar farm was a yes vote for balanced development. He said that two features of the proposed location related to balanced development. He said that first, it lay at the intersection of Enon Road and Truslow Road, two local roads that were well-traveled corridors among various residential and commercial zones of the County.

Mr. Davin said that second, it lay at the boundary between relatively well-developed properties to the south of Truslow Road and properties that remained considerably less intensively developed to the north of Truslow Road and to the east of Enon Road. He said that the key aspect of the timing of tonight's vote was that it offered this Board an opportunity to establish an important precedent at an early stage of what was expected to be a period of very active development of the properties lying to the north of Truslow Road and to the east of Enon Road.

Mr. Davin said that with respect to both its proposed location and the timing of tonight's vote, the Enon Road solar farm was a modest and moderate development that stood to benefit the future development of the nearby area, whether the upcoming development of that area proved to be primarily commercial/industrial or residential. He said that if the upcoming development of the property to the east and north of the solar farm proved to be commercial/industrial, the solar farm would provide a welcome buffer to the residential areas to the west and south of the location.

Mr. Davin said that with the upcoming development of the properties to the east and north of the solar farm proved to be residential, the solar farm would enhance the attractiveness and value of the resulting residential development by preserving and maintaining a tangible reminder of the rural character and history of the developed area.

Mary Hanson, Falmouth District, said that she and her husband still objected to this project, as it was simply too visible, unlike the one on Truslow Road. She said that a 2021 study in the Journal of Real Estate found that the visibility of solar projects could reduce nearby home values by 10%, which was a significant loss in equity and real estate tax revenue. She said that the power generated by this solar farm would be fed into the main grid, and households would need to apply for any potential discounts, with no guarantees.

Ms. Hanson said that given President Trump's recent pullback on green energy, new windmill projects were banned, and those on the eastern shore were being dismantled. She said that solar could be next, so she questioned why they were pursuing this project. She asked what would happen when the tax credits went away. She asked why were they using valuable farmland when the panels could be installed on commercial building rooftops, as advertised by this company's website.

Ms. Hanson said that North Stafford High was a great example of rooftop installation. She said that there were numerous commercial buildings in the county that could be suitable, and probably degraded land that could also be used. She said that a 2023 U.S. Department of Energy report estimated that there were 10 million acres of non-agricultural land nationwide that could be used for solar. She said that agricultural land used for solar could not be transitioned back to agriculture. She asked about water contamination in the nearby wetlands.

Ms. Hanson said that even with proper maintenance, leaching could occur into the soil and water during heavy rains or panel damage, as a 2021 Harvard study highlighted. She said that Popular Science Magazine cited four solar farms in Illinois, Alabama, and Idaho that were fined millions by the EPA and DOJ for stormwater management issues and polluting waterways. She said that a 2023 study from Environmental Science and Technology found that runoff from solar sites could spike groundwater toxins above safe levels, affecting wells and drinking water.

Ms. Hanson said that a solar farm consisted of inverters and wiring, which could be prone to issues such as loose connections, degraded insulation, lightning damage, rodent damage to wiring, inverter overheating, malfunctioning, and short-circuiting, all of which could spark a wildfire. She said that in 2019, a fire at a Tesla solar facility in Nevada raised concerns about equipment-related risks. She said that same year, a short-circuit in a panel caused a wildfire.

Ms. Hanson said that in 2020, a fire at a solar facility in California was caused by an inverter malfunction. She said that recently, there had been numerous wildfires nationwide reported in the news, which were difficult to contain and resulted in millions of dollars in damages. She said that who was responsible for the cleanup was not specified. She said that the reality of the situation was evident, as the proposal included special fire training for their brave firefighters. She said that she urged the Board not to take a chance on this happening in their community. She said that it was not worth the risk.

Clayton Hill, George Washington District, said that he was a resident of the Chatham precinct. He said that he was honored to be there to discuss this project, and he said that he was in favor of it. He said that one reason for his support was that the increasing demand for energy across the country was a pressing issue, and he said that this project was one way to help meet that demand. He said that according to a Pew Research Center survey, approximately 78% of Americans desired more solar energy.

Mr. Hill said that a key strategy in promoting these energy applications was to engage with local residents and understand the personal impact it had on them. He said that by implementing this project, residents could expect to see reduced costs in their area. He said that it could also provide low-cost energy to applicants, directly benefiting their community. He said that this approach aligned with reducing energy requirements in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

Diane Shea, George Washington District, said that she was a resident of the over-55 community of Celebrate in South Stafford. She said that she spoke today on her own behalf, not as a representative of the Celebrate community or the Board of Directors. She said that she recently learned about the Enon Road Community Solar Preserve and its potential to benefit eligible residents. She said that the program allowed eligible residents to save 10% on their electricity bills without the need to install solar panels on their roofs. She said that she believed that many residents of Celebrate could benefit from this project, regardless of their income level.

Ms. Shea said that she was particularly concerned about the high medical costs faced by many residents with disabilities, who relied heavily on electricity-operated equipment to maintain their health and well-being. She said that these individuals often had significant monthly electricity bills, which could be a substantial burden. She said that she urged the Board to approve this small solar energy preserve, as it would provide a more affordable electricity bill for residents who qualified. She said that she was confident that their constituents would be grateful for this opportunity to reduce their energy costs.

John Firrell, Falmouth District, said that he lived in the Falls Run community, not too far from Enon Road. He said that he passed by the site very frequently. He said that first wanted to thank the Board for their service and acknowledged that making big decisions could be challenging. He said that he believed they should begin with a foundation of facts and then used their vision for the community's future to make informed decisions. He said that if he were in their position, he would consider the following factors.

Mr. Firrell said that he would focus on the net benefit to the community, particularly the free electricity generated from the sun. He said that although there were initial capital costs, he believed the community would benefit from the tax revenue and lower electricity costs for low-income residents. He said that he appreciated the company's efforts to address the previous proposal's concerns, mainly visibility, and he thought they had done an excellent job in overcoming those obstacles. He said that he believed a vote in favor of this proposal would send a strong message that Stafford was a forward-thinking community that prioritized its constituents' needs and was committed to thinking about the future.

Suzanne Firrell, Falmouth District, said that her husband had listed most of the reasons she was supportive of this project, so she would not reiterate those. She said that something that initially impressed her about this project was the effort to conserve the property as much as possible. She said that her sister-in-law, a conservationist, had reviewed the plans with her, and although she was not a fan of solar farms in England due to limited land, she saw no conservation concerns with this particular plan. She said that in fact, she thought it was a great idea and wished that more land was available in her own area for similar projects.

Ms. Firrell said that as someone who frequently walked through the area with her dog, where the future Musselman Park hopefully would be. She said that she was looking forward to the extra planning and the presence of the solar farm. She said that she also appreciated the protection of the wetlands. She said that she hoped the Board would consider voting in favor of this project.

Susan McCormick, George Washington District, said that she was a retired environmental engineer, and she resided in the Celebrate by Del Webb community. She said that she was not speaking on behalf of the community. She said that she was speaking in support of the Enon Road Solar Project. She said that solar farms, in general, have numerous environmental benefits. She said that they harness the Earth's most reliable and abundant energy source, the sun, providing energy for free. She said that they did not produce carbon emissions or have other adverse environmental impacts. She said that they do not require water, conserving their most precious resource. She said that they did not produce noise or odors.

Ms. McCormick said that they were low maintenance and supported a pollinator-friendly habitat, allowing wildlife to coexist in the same space. She said that the Enon Road solar farm, developed by ESA, would occupy approximately 16 acres of a 36-acre parcel and will provide numerous local benefits, in addition to the general environmental benefits she just mentioned. She said that ESA's partners would own and maintain the project for its 35-year life, paying annual taxes to the County.

Ms. McCornick said that they would lease the land from the current landowner, who would still be able to farm the land not used by the solar farm, preserving their rural landscape. She said that existing barns, wetlands, and forested areas would also be preserved. She said that ESA would provide a decommissioning bond to the county prior to construction to cover the financial costs of removing the system after its 35-year life.

Ms. McCormick said that they will provide a right-of-way along Enon Road that would assist the County with future roadway expansion. She said that they would upgrade the local electrical grid with over $1 million, and this project would require no new transmission lines. She said that they would establish a 50-foot wide landscape buffer around the solar farm, featuring native plant species, including evergreen trees, small trees, shrubs, and ground cover under the solar panels.

Ms. McCormick said that this buffer would be pollinator and wildlife friendly, composed only of native species. She said that the permanent trees would be six feet tall when planted and would grow high enough within a few years to conceal the solar farm from neighbors and the road. She said the vegetative buffer exceeded the requirements of the County ordinances. She said that anti-reflective coating would be put on the panels so no glare would be produced. She said that there would be no increase in ambient temperatures to the neighboring properties, and there would be no adverse impacts to the values of neighboring properties.

Ms. McCormick said that as an environmental engineer and a local resident, she wholeheartedly supported the Enon Solar Farm project, and she hoped that the Board would too. She said that one final point was that with data centers coming online, they required all available energy sources, including oil, gas, solar, and wind. She said that data centers consumed energy at an alarming rate.

Steven Jones, Aquia District, said that he owned the farm that was the subject of this conditional use permit. He said that he would like to provide the Board with a history of his interactions with the County over the last 21 years regarding this property. He said that in 2004, he submitted a use permit to build light sport aircraft in his barns and operate a private airstrip to occasionally fly completed airplanes to Stafford Regional Airport. He said that his request was denied by the Board due to Gary Snellings' no-go vote and his statement that the project would create too much noise.

Mr. Jones said that with that concept dead, he signed a sales contract with Ryan Homes for $1.5 million to build homes. He said that however, Mr. Snellings convinced Ryan Homes that he would not support those developments, and they backed out of the deal. He said that in 2005, he sold 12 acres to the County to build Musselman Park. He said that during the process of closing, the County attempted to force him to dedicate one paved acre of Enon Road that was on his property.

Mr. Jones said that Jeff Harvey, the Planning Director, negotiated a compromise, and they agreed to consummate the deal without the paved driveway, with the County committing to continue the Enon Road improvements. He said that in 2006, H.H. Hunt signed a $3.5 million contract to build apartments on the remaining 36 acres at almost $100,000 an acre. He said that H.H. Hunt worked for years to gain support for that project, but unfortunately, it was Mr. Snellings' obstinacy that caused them to back out of that deal.

Mr. Jones said that he owned half of Enon Road, and Stafford did not have the right of way on that property. He said that he also recalled that in his letter to Mr. Snellings in 2022, he mentioned that he had recommended that they not purchase his property when they upgraded Enon Road. He said that the Board members had the opportunity today to release the Gary no-go grip on his farm and do what was best for the County. He said that by approving this project, the County would gain the right-of-way for two and a half acres, which would provide a valuable asset for future growth, valued at almost $250,000. He said that it would also provide low-cost revenue and help the community immensely.

Linda Musselman, Hartwood District, said that over the past couple of years, she had the opportunity to address this issue multiple times before the Board and the Planning Commission. She said that this application was denied by the Board in October 2023, reapplied for in May 2024, and then underwent a public hearing with the Planning Commission in February 2025. She said that despite the revisions, she remained opposed to this project. She said that the proposed 14-acre farm site was located in a residential area, directly across from Hull's Church, and abutted the County park, which was currently under development.

Ms. Musselman said that the area, known as The Meadow, featured unpaved trails and was a quiet, residential space. She said that the 183-acre solar farm approved in 2023, operated by Solar of Santa Monica, was situated off of Truslow Road, out of sight of residences and was expected to provide energy for 660 homes through the Dominion solar energy program. She said that the proposed 14-acre site was only expected to provide energy for 600 homes, so there was a discrepancy.

Ms. Musselman said that she was particularly concerned about Condition 3, which involved 22 acres designated as rural conservation. She said that in her opinion, these 22 acres should not be included in the CUP if only 14 acres were to be used for the solar farm. She said that the remaining 22 acres should be left as A-1 zoning.

Ms. Musselman said that she would also like to inquire about the location of a sign, in case of emergencies. She said that she respectfully requested that they deny this application, despite its compliance with the comprehensive plan. She said that she believed it was inappropriate to locate a solar farm in a residential area with nearby homes, a church, and a park. She said that she appreciated the availability of the CUP for residents to provide input. She said that if the Board decided to approve this application, she requested that the CUP be approved for the 14-acre site only, without removing the buffer area on the east side.

Mark O'Quinn, Hartwood District, said that he strongly opposed the proposed solar farm on that property. He said that from the outset, he had concerns about this project, and he believed it would open up a Pandora's box of issues. He said that if the solar farm was approved, the adjacent property had already been discussed for a data center. He said that there was a meeting at the community center, and Mr. Jones mentioned that if the solar farm was built, he planned to rehabilitate the barn and establish a metalworking school.

Mr. O’Quinn said that during their previous meeting with Jason, they asked about the conservation areas and whether there would be guarantees to the residents. He said that he refused to answer that question, so it seemed like they would get one spot and then try to expand into the other two spots or something.

Mr. O’Quinn said that he believed this project was shaky and would not provide the significant energy benefits claimed. He said that it was ironic that several people had spoken up against this project, despite not even being from the Hartwood District or having a vested interest in the area. He said that the State of Virginia offered excellent programs for residents who wanted to install solar panels on their homes, which could increase property value and provide energy savings.

Mr. O'Quinn said that in contrast, taking agricultural land for a solar farm was not an efficient use of resources, and it would be better suited for growing crops like corn, soybeans, or wheat. He said that he feared that this project would become a recurring issue, with them constantly debating its merits. He said that he suspected that Mr. Jones was receiving grant money, which was taxpayer money, and they, the residents, did not want it. He said that he questioned the value of investing in something that did not align with the community's overall goals.

Natalie Loeffler said that she apologized for not knowing her district. She said that she believed that this project would bring a welcome respite from the projected tripling of electricity bills in the next few years, primarily due to the expansion of data centers. She said that personally, she would prefer to see this land utilized for solar power rather than the potential for it to be used as a data center site. She said that as a conservation biologist, she appreciated the environmental considerations that were taken into account, in addition to her general support for clean energy projects.

Molly Denham, Hartwood District, said that she stood up last time and voiced her support for this solar project when it was first presented. She said that she continued to voice her support for them. She said that these developers have made significant efforts over multiple years to address local residents' and County concerns. She said that she had the opportunity to discuss their plans with them in her home and in public, and they were genuinely committed to providing more affordable power to low-income members of their state. She said that in contrast, this Board often approved CUPs that did not provide adequate support to the community or demonstrate sufficient care for the individuals affected.

Ms. Denham said that the developers had gone to great lengths to accommodate previous concerns, and she was disappointed that this level of scrutiny was not consistently applied to all applications, particularly the truck stop of Route 17. She said that while not all applicants may benefit, she was confident that those who were approved would be grateful for a lower energy bill. She said that she still supported this project, just as she did last time.

Alane Callander, Falmouth District, said that she gathered that they no longer needed to provide their addresses. She said that she had been attending these meetings for several decades and always had to provide her address. She said that anyway, she found some very interesting comments tonight, very well thought out and appreciated. She said that she appreciated the effort this group had put into responding to the concerns of citizens in the area. She said that she believed that this project was a great idea and hoped it received unanimous support tonight.

Ms. Callander said that it was time Stafford invested in solar energy. She said that she thought that this project was less risky than many other projects that came before this Board. She said that someone mentioned that everyone could install solar panels on their own homes if they wanted to. She said that she had someone assess her house for solar panels, but unfortunately, they had too much shade due to their trees, which she loved, but ultimately meant they could not have solar in her home. She said that this project offered an opportunity for people to benefit from solar energy even if they did not install panels on their own home.

Ms. Callander said that she liked the fact that the project preserved the wetlands and natural environment, including a wildlife corridor, which was unusual for industrial projects. She said that she thought it was time Stafford moved forward with this project, as it was a small installation and a good opportunity to try solar energy. She said that additionally, she would like to acknowledge the landowner who had been trying to get something approved for a long time. She said that she hoped the Board would unanimously support this project.

Robert Benson, Hartwood District, said that the maps that had been provided appeared to have a small notch in them, and that notch delineated his property. He said that this project would indeed be situated in his backyard. He said that he believed it was a fantastic idea, far superior to housing developments or data centers, as it benefited the County without taking anything away. He said that it gave back to the County.

Kristen Maxson, Falmouth District, said that they used to be a farm community, but now they were an industrial community. She said that there was a significant difference. She said that they were a targeted group, so they may be better off not sharing their addresses. She said that what was disturbing was that the data centers did not receive the same treatment as the solar presentation, which had gone through many trials. She said that it was not fair, and it was clear why it had been rejected.

Ms. Maxson said that the group stated that they intended to flip the project, raising concerns about ownership and the small groups trying to provide businesses in Stafford. She said that they could not just rely on big developers; they needed to be more in tune to that. She said that Loudoun County had 155 data centers, while Stafford had 26 in development. She said that they should not sell out to the lowest bidder, whether it was 40 cents or 20 cents. She said that they should prioritize the public interest. She said that in 2022, the public did not have an industrial word in the description, only a dollar figure in the budget.

Ms. Maxson said that this was new for them. She said that she was concerned about the housing. She said that they typically valued an acre at $10,000, but the report for the proposed project valued it at $2 million for 35 acres. She said that she was also concerned about the public's perception of this project, particularly on Route 17. She said that the public was disturbed by the lack of transparency. She said that she would like to clarify the distinction between public and private spaces. She said that for example, a recreational business campus, public parks, public schools, and commercial spaces needed to be clearly defined. She said that in this area, a warehouse was taken by the road and converted to commercial use, highlighting the need for careful planning.

Emily Cline said that she resided near the potential solar panel farm, which would be situated on two sides of her property. She said that she was in support of the project. She said that she believed that the company, ESA, had made a concerted effort to minimize the project's visibility and preserve the land. She said that she was aware that there was potential for the data centers to be located on the opposite side of the water tower. She said that if this project did not receive approval, she feared that the data centers could expand to encompass the entire area, effectively surrounding it.

Ms. Cline said that for her, she was firmly in support of the project. She said that she would like to see it maintained in its rural setting. She said that she believed that solar energy was a clean and essential resource, particularly in light of the growing need for data centers in their area. She said that she was in support of the project, and she hoped that the Board would vote to approve it.

Mr. Diggs closed the public hearing. He asked if the applicant had any responses to public comment.

Mr. Shaffer said that for the record, regardless of their stances in support or opposition for this project, he appreciated the citizens sharing their opinions. He said that he was glad to address any particular questions from the Board.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had a question for Mr. Zuraf. She said that on the presentation, it was shown that a fence would be installed surrounding the solar panels in both areas. She asked if it was a County requirement or something just included in the application plans.

Mr. Zuraf said that the fencing was a County requirement.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the applicant had heard any concerns about the aesthetics of the fence. She said that it looked very ugly to her, so she was wondering about the potential of including trees rather than require the fencing.

Ms. Romaine said that they agreed with that 100%. She said that the fencing was required due to a national electric code requirement. She said that they were proposing woven wire fencing instead of chain link fences. She said that however, they were required to install fencing for safety.

Ms. Vanuch said that there were two types of panels being used on the property, some of which contained PFAS and PFOA, while others did not. She said that she would like to be informed which type of panel would be used on the property.

She said that their polysilicon panels, being silicon-based, did not contain PFAS or PFOA.

Dr. Yeung said that one of the questions she had was already addressed, but she had additional ones that came up regarding installing solar panels on rooftops and the application process. She asked if the applicant could provide some information on how residents would be eligible for this program, as they mentioned earlier that it is intended for low-income households. She said that she was curious to know how far the low-income designation extended.

Ms. Romaine said that the program was open to Dominion Energy customers, so if one was a low-income customer within the Dominion Energy territory, the customer was eligible, regardless of their location within the project area. She said that the electricity benefits would be most relevant within the project area where they will be upgrading the local distribution line to the substation to accommodate the project's power needs. She said that this would involve mostly minor equipment upgrades to the lines, rather than major upgrades.

Dr. Yeung asked if the applicant could provide more information on how they had a lease with the landowners and also a contract with Dominion.

Ms. Romaine said that yes, their contract with Dominion was to connect to their power lines.

Dr. Yeung asked if they would be raising rates on individuals they would be serving.

Ms. Romaine said that no, they would not be raising the rates to the residents they served. She said that in fact, it would result in customers saving more on their electricity bills. She said that if Dominion raised their electricity rates, the saving potential for those subscribing to the project would be greater.

Dr. Yeung asked if they had potential benefits for the nearby residents if they would like to be a part of the savings.

Ms. Romaine said that once they reached that point, if they obtained subscribers for the project, they would have the potential and it would be their goal to market to the surrounding community to identify potential subscribers.

Dr. Yeung said that when they discussed working with the community, this was what it looked like to her: providing assistance to those living in the vicinity, not just low-income residents, but also long-time residents. She said that her final question concerned the buffers. She said that one side had shade, and they would like that area removed.

Dr. Yeung said that in her view, it was essential to have trees throughout the surrounding buffer area to enhance its aesthetic appeal. She asked if part of the plan was to ensure that the area outside the link fence was also landscaped with trees.

Mr. Zuraf said that yes, the plan did show a 50-foot buffer surrounding the site, as previously mentioned. He said that the applicant was requesting to waive this buffer along the eastern side, which was located on the side without any homes.

Dr. Yeung asked if people lived on that side.

Mr. Zuraf said that no, there were no homes on that side of the parcel.

Mr. English asked what the range was for people to receive reduced electricity bills.

Ms. Romaine said that to clarify, any Dominion energy customer could apply for the savings program.

Mr. English asked a Stafford resident with Dominion had expressed interest in tapping into the savings, they could.

Ms. Romaine said that was correct.

Mr. English said that he had a lot of reservations about this. He asked what the land would be like when they decommissioned the project in 35 years. He said that he was concerned about the long-term effects of those panels being on the land.

Ms. Romaine said that as Mr. Zuraf mentioned in his presentation, the land was gradually sloped so they would not need to perform grading to make it flat. She said that a significant advantage of smaller projects was that soil compaction was not required for construction. She said that unlike larger projects, they did not need to flatten the land or make it even. She said that they could pile and drive the piles into the ground during construction, which was similar to the process used now. She said that when constructing the project, they would drive the piles into the ground and incorporate stormwater features for runoff. She said that similarly, when decommissioning the project, the piles were removed and the holes were filled.

Mr. English asked how deep the holes were.

Ms. Romaine said that they were between six and eight feet.

Mr. English said that there had been mention of noise mitigation, but he had been unaware that any noise would be generated. He asked what the source of the noise would be and how that would be addressed.

Ms. Romaine said that the noise was a hum, similar to a dishwasher, and it was originating from the transformer or inverters. She said that they were utilizing very small inverters that produced a low, almost imperceptible hum. She said that the solar panels themselves did not generate any noise, and they would not produce noise at night, as the inverters and transformers were not operational during this time. She said that the only noise that was present was coming from the inverters or the transformer pad, which was located more than 400 feet away from any residential homes or roads.

Mr. English asked if, hypothetically, they were to exceed required noise levels, how the project would mitigate that.

Mr. Shaffer said that if there was a noise nuisance, the County would take the same action against this property as they would against any other property. He said that the County had noise level requirements, with a maximum of 60 decibels permitted during the daytime for residential areas. He said that he believed the noise level was lower at night.

Mr. Shaffer said that if a neighbor experienced a nuisance, they could follow the same course of action to bring the property into compliance with the noise ordinance. He said that it was their responsibility to ensure they became compliant and provided relief to neighboring properties. He said that they expected that would not happen, because they expected to meet code requirements at their fence line, which was 75 feet from the property lines. He said that they had placed the equipment at a distance of at least 400 feet from neighboring properties or the roadway.

Mr. English asked if there would be any danger from panels being damaged, such as during a severe weather event.

Mr. Shaffer said that there was certainly a cleanup process and a replacement process.

Mr. English said that in 35 years, the solar panels would be like used tires, and they needed to consider what would happen to them. He said that he also had an issue with the proposed decommissioning plan. He said that they had allocated $167,000 for the expenses associated with decommissioning, but he was concerned that the estimated cost of decommissioning could increase to $250,000 in 20 years. He asked how they would address an increased expense like that.

Mr. Shaffer said that based on historical trends, they should expect prices to increase over time. He said that as a result, part of the condition of approval required that every five years, a third-party engineer was used to recertify the decommissioning bond. He said that this engineer reviewed the market for recovery and recycling, and then determined and updated the price. He said that this third-party engineer must be certified in the State of Virginia.

Mr. English asked who would be in charge of that if their business closed or left in five years. He said that he was using hypotheticals to make this point, as he did not like to speculate. He said that he was wondering if, in the future, when the business closed, the $167,000 would be left behind, and it would be unclear who would be responsible for covering that cost.

Mr. Shaffer said that the security bond came into play here. He said that the security bond in place would cover that cost. He said that he believed that there was some flexibility in the estimates to account for inflation. He said that for example, if, in year one, it was anticipated that inflation would be a factor, and that was factored into the surety bond, it should ideally cover the five-year span.

Ms. Bohmke said that there was a solar facility approved in the Falmouth District a couple of years ago, and she had asked about the long-term plans for tat facility. She said that similarly, she would like to inquire about whether the facility would be maintained by ESA in perpetuity or if it would be sold to Dominion Energy. She said that she was not particularly concerned with the outcome, she simply wanted to understand the intentions behind the decision.

Ms. Romaine said that ESA would keep the project, yes.

Ms. Bohmke asked if ESA was still holding their other projects in Virginia or out of state.

Ms. Romaine said that no, they were not holding those assets. She said that they had worked on three projects in Virginia, three operating in southern Virginia and a few others under construction.

Ms. Bohmke asked if ESA was holding the other Virginia solar installations or if they had sold those to Dominion.

Ms. Romaine said that they did not sell to Dominion; it was a solar operator running those projects. She said that Dominion was not allowed to own or operate these projects.

Ms. Bohmke said that her concern was that while she appreciated their willingness to set aside 13 acres of land for conservation, she worried that in seven years, they may decide to expand the facility and install additional solar panels on that site. She asked if they could take the land out of conservation and use it for solar installation.

Mr. Zuraf said that if they wanted to do that, they would have to go through this entire process again and amend the conditions in order to release that condition and use that area.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was concerned about the intermittent streams, particularly those individuals who relied on well water, since contaminants could potentially flow into their watershed. She said that she wanted to emphasize that it was impossible to guarantee there would not be any contaminants. She said that as an elected official, she would not make such a statement. She said that however, she appreciated their attention to the degradation and soil stabilization during the site plan review.

Ms. Gary said that she appreciated those who stayed to speak from the public well beyond the expected time for this topic. She said that she was reviewing the fencing, as she recalled there was a question about it. She said that it was located very close to the project and behind the trees. She said that she just wanted to verify that that what she saw correctly in the visual. She said that she had another question that would be relevant to the attorney as well, if the applicant was open to it.

Ms. Gary said that it appeared that the County was initiating this review every five years for the bond, specifically the decommissioning bond. She said that her concern was whether they could implement a more automatic process, such as an escalator, to trigger this review. She said that she was concerned that if they did not establish a clear process, a future Board might miss the review, and they might miss out on potential interest or benefits that could have been gained from reviewing the situation.

Mr. Shaffer said that an escalator would be included in the initial estimate. He said that the real issue was that they had to perform the recertification every five years. He said that if they had an outdated security bond, they would be in violation of the code and their CUP would be at risk of being revoked.

Ms. Gary asked if it was also a requirement of the applicant in order to maintain the conditional use.

Mr. Shaffer said that was correct.

Mr. Zuraf said that from the County's perspective, they had security staff in place who would be tracking and managing the secured items once this facility was established, ensuring that there was adequate oversight and control.

Ms. Gary said that staff was the continuity, and they truly appreciated them. She said that she had one additional question regarding the noise concerns that had been previously discussed. She had raised decommissioning questions from an early stage, and she recalled that there had also been a discussion about wildlife. She said that she was wondering if there was a level of noise that would be so severe that it would deter wildlife from inhabiting the area, even with the presence of noise-reducing measures. She said that she was inquiring whether the noise would be significant enough to impact the local wildlife, or if it would it be minimal and not affect people's lives nearby.

Ms. Romaine said that no, it would not be disruptive. She said that she wanted to reiterate that the distance between the people and equipment would minimize the effects of the noise.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-44.

Ms. Allen said that initially, she had supported this project. She said that as a solar owner herself, she was well aware of its significant benefits. She said that as someone who strongly believed in clean energy. She said that her neighbors, who were relatively close to the proposed site, had not expressed any concerns. She said that she had been able to generate a substantial amount of electricity from her own solar panels, which had reduced her household's electric bill.

Ms. Allen said that recently, she had driven through South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina, and observed numerous solar farms in towns, demonstrating the potential for this project to generate revenue. She said that she would have likely asked the Commissioner of Revenue about the current tax revenue collected from this property versus the projected revenue from this project. She said that in itself, this project represented a significant upgrade. She said that the majority of residents had not expressed any issues with the project, and she believed it was actually a slightly better upgrade than what was initially presented.

Dr. Yeung said that she had already asked the question earlier, which pertained to the decommissioning plan. She said that she had discussed the conversion clause, restoration of the land, and escrow funds. She said that she had also asked a separate question about Dominion and that they were not planning to use this as a substation for a data center. She said that the answer was no. She said that to clarify, they would need to return to the Board to include that clause.

Mr. Diggs said that in terms of his position, he intended to support the project after considering all the information presented. He said that one constituent had succinctly put it: if 15 families could benefit from this project, it was worth it. He said that they had discussed the rising costs, tax rates, inflation, and the impact on food bills. He said that this project could provide assistance to those in need across their community.

Mr. Diggs said that the applicant had made significant efforts, including improvements to the project and a commitment to listening to constituent concerns. He said that as a matter of fact, Mr. English and he had recently attended another meeting on this project, and he had been closely following its development.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was important for the public to be aware that everyone in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including herself, who attended a small data center town hall last night, was contributing to the electricity costs for data centers. She said that therefore, if anyone believed they were not paying for it, they were incorrect. She said that they were all contributing to the costs of powering those centers. She said that looking at this project, the savings offset the costs to the families who would all be paying for the data centers. She said that consequently, they may not end up benefiting from the savings, but they may avoid increases.

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

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed resolution R25-92.

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

Mr. Diggs asked Ms. McClendon how the Board should address the applicant's request to remove the additional buffer on the eastern side of the property.

Ms. McClendon said that when the Board adopted the first resolution R25-44, it included the additional buffer. She said that if the Board's intention was to remove that, they would need to revisit the motion and revise it to exclude the buffer.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to reconsider Proposed Resolution R25-44.

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

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-44 with the removal of Condition 2, dated February 19, 2025.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the request for removal of the buffer came before or after the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Mr. Zuraf said that this request was presented to the Planning Commission as part of the information the Planning Commission considered. He said that as a result, the Planning Commission made their approval recommendation with the full buffer.

Ms. Allen said that she withdrew her motion.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-44.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (5) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, Gary, Yeung
No: (2) English, Vanuch

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 22. COUNTY ADMINISTRATION; CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO APPLY FOR RENEWAL OF A VIRGINIA OPIOID ABATEMENT AUTHORITY COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP GRANT AWARD FOR MOBILE MEDICATED ASSISTED TREATMENT AND CRISIS STABILIZATION FOR OPIOID ABATEMENT

Ms. Bohmke motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve of Proposed Resolution R25-67.

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

ITEM 23. BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT; CONSIDER BUDGETING AND APPROPRIATING FUND BALANCE RESERVES SET ASIDE DURING THE FY2025 BUDGET PROCESS FOR UNPLANNED SCHOOL MAINTENANCE REPAIRS

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Ms. Allen, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-86.

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

RECESS

The Board recessed at 9:01 p.m. and reconvened at 9:14 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM 24. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; CONSIDER APPROVING ADDITIONAL SAFETY/WEDGE-WIDENING PROJECTS FOR FY2026 AND FY2027

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-84.

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

ITEM 25. CAPITAL PROJECTS TRANSPORTATION; AS PART OF WORK SESSION FOLLOW-UP REGARDING SMART SCALE ROUND 7, CONSIDER AUTHORIZING TASK RODERS FOR STUDIES OF GARRISONVILLE ROAD AND WARRENTON ROAD AND BUDGET AND APPROPRIATE THE FUNDS

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-82.

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

ITEM 26. BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT; CONSIDER BUDGETING AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS TO THE SCHOOLS HEALTH BENEFITS FUND TO COVER INCREASED AND UNANTICIPATED HEALTH BENEFITS EXPENDITURES

Andrea Light, Chief Financial Officer, said that Mr. Fulmer was also available to answer any questions the Board may have. She said that the schools were requesting budget and appropriation of funds due to the increase in their health benefits costs. She asked the Board to please note that these funds were not taxpayer dollars.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had called Mr. Ashton and asked some questions, which she assumed Ms. Light was aware of. She said that he would like to clarify the three pots of money. She asked if anything was coming out of OPEB.

Ms. Light said yes.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had assumed that once they entered OPEB, those funds would be used to cover future health benefits for current and future retirees.

Ms. Light said that they did have current retirees who were receiving health insurance coverage. She said that she would ask Mr. Fulmer to clarify this, but the setup and structure were similar to theirs for the County, allowing them to draw down those funds to support their current retired employees.

Ms. Bohmke asked if it was in the OPEB trust.

Ms. Light said yes.

Ms. Bohmke said that she understood. She said that regarding compensation and benefits, those were two separate pots of money as outlined in the resolution.

Chris Fulmer, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer for Stafford County Public Schools, said that Ms. Light explained that the $2.1 million being pulled from their OPEB trust fund was being used directly to pay current retirees' health insurance reimbursements. He said that they were actually moving these funds into their operating fund to make the reimbursement process cleaner.

Mr. Fulmer said that also, they were using approximately $1 million from their current compensation and benefit savings in their operating fund. He said that he had previously provided a mid-year update to the School Board, which projected about $2 million in compensation and benefit savings for the current year. He said that to avoid depleting these savings too quickly, they were using only a portion of the available funds.

Mr. Fulmer said that they were utilizing a reserve fund balance of $4.5 million in their health benefits fund, which was sufficient to cover the initial increase in health benefits. He said that with the recent increases, they needed to supplement this reserve with savings from three other revenue sources to cover the remaining increase in the health benefits fund this year.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was thinking the transfer from the operating fund was for compensation and benefits and was from leftover funds. She asked if it was coming from their current operating budget.

Mr. Fulmer said that yes, it was from the current year.

Dr. Yeung said that for the audience's benefit, she would like to inquire about how this year's data compares to previous years. She said that Mr. Fulmer had previously provided her with an answer to this question, but she would appreciate it if he could elaborate on the differences for the benefit of her colleagues and the audience.

Mr. Fulmer said that to provide some historical context, over the last eight to ten years, they had performed exceptionally well in their health benefits fund, consistently achieving increases below the national market average. He said that typically, the market average for health insurance increases was between 15 to 20% nationwide. He said that they had managed to keep their increases in the single digits each year.

Mr. Fulmer said that as a result, they had built a substantial reserve in their health benefits fund. He said that recently, however, they experienced a 20% increase in mid-year, which they had already projected for the rest of the school year. He said that they had discussed this with their insurance provider and were cautiously optimistic that this rate may level off by the end of the year.

Mr. Fulmer said that while their initial projections indicated a continued rise, their weekly claims payments had shown a slight dip followed by a rebound in the next month. He said that as a result, they anticipated some fluctuation in the coming months. He said that their goal was to end the year with a better outcome than currently projected.

Dr. Yeung said that she would like to know more about the criteria used to arrive at the $6.5 million estimate. She said that she would like to know what factors were considered, such as the number of claims, to better understand the basis for this figure.

Mr. Fulmer said that they were examining their total expenditures for the first six months of the year, and that was where they had seen an increase. He said that as of December 31, they already had a deficit of approximately $3.8 million, from July 1 to December 31. He said that when they projected this out for the rest of the year, their total expenditure was expected to exceed $8 million. He said that they had previously planned to use their fund balance to cover this shortfall, which was why the appropriation was only for $6.5 million.

Dr. Yeung asked if circumstances changed in terms of their funding deficit of $12 million, would they be able to utilize these requested funds for other emergency situations or operating expenses?

Mr. Fulmer said that they could only utilize these funds to pay for retiree benefits, as they were OPEB trust fund dollars being tapped into. He said that the other savings, as previously mentioned, were coming from their operating funds, which were already being used to help cover this expense. He said that the OPEB trust funds were restricted, as Ms. Bohmke had pointed out, to only be used for retiree benefits.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-93.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

ITEM 27. UTILITIES; CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO EXECUTE A WATER AND WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE AGREEMENT WITH SI NVA07CAMPUS, LLC (STACK) RELATED TO THE STAFFORD TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS (STC) DATA CENTER PROJECT

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that he was present today to discuss the Water Infrastructure Agreement between Stafford County and Stafford Technology Campus. He said that to provide some context, he would briefly outline the timeline. He said that in January 2024, the Board approved the first rezoning for a data center at Potomac Church, which was an AWS data center. He said that as part of this rezoning, a water infrastructure agreement was required, which provided the foundation for their reuse system, including the facility at the Aquia Wastewater Treatment Plant and distribution to Potomac Church and Stafford Technology Campus, if the County chose to do so.

Mr. Edwards said that approximately seven months later, they brought the Water Infrastructure Agreement back to the Board, which they approved. He said that following this, the Stafford Technology Campus was approved, and they began planning the necessary improvements. He said that the Stafford Technology Campus was approved, and they began planning the necessary improvements. He said that one of the conditions of the rezoning was the completion of a Water Infrastructure Agreement.

Mr. Edwards said that seven months after the initial agreement was approved, they brought the second Water Infrastructure Agreement back to the Board. He said that he wanted to point out that the improvements for both sites are consecutive and will work together seamlessly. He said that the approval of both water infrastructure agreements would enable a reuse system that can serve both sites, as well as other sites throughout the County.

Mr. Edwards said that he would like to point out that action from the Board was required on this item today. He said that with the rezoning, it was clear that the Board had concerns about allowing data centers to connect, so staff addressed this in the proffers, which allowed them to take up to one million gallons per day. He said that one of the key areas they wanted to focus on was protecting potable water, going beyond just allowing a one-million-gallon allocation to be used quickly.

Mr. Edwards said that to address this, Stafford Technology Campus had agreed in the WSA to install utility infrastructure that would give the County control over the amount of water used on their site. He said that this was a more favorable arrangement than imposing a penalty for exceeding the one-million-gallon limit, as it allowed them to actually manage the water usage.

Mr. Edwards said that the second aspect they considered was that the water usage would not be immediate. He said that instead, it would be a gradual, controlled increase to the one-million-gallon limit. He said that for the first building, the County would require the developer to complete all necessary potable water improvements and design the reuse system. He said that this would also apply to the previous Water Infrastructure Agreement, ensuring that the entire reuse system was designed and functional.

Mr. Edwards said that the water allocation would be phased in over time, with the first 200,000 gallons per day available after the first three meters were completed. He said that the next four to five meters would be based on construction milestones for the reuse system, taking into account the entire system's functionality.

Mr. Edwards said that this meant that the second meter would be connected when the project broke ground, with subsequent milestones tied to 25%, 50%, 75%, and so on. He said that if the project failed to meet these milestones, a fail-safe mechanism would be triggered, requiring a study to determine how to recover the lost water.. He said that one of the agreements reached was that they would limit the number of water meters or buildings.

Mr. Edwards said that until they provided the water back to them, they would have control over ensuring the reuse system did not fail. He said that they had brought the drought management plan back to the Board about two months ago, citing concerns about how data centers interacted with drought emergencies. He said that as a result, they had included a provision in the water services agreement that specifically addressed drought emergencies.

Mr. Edwards said that the County could discontinue water service in such an emergency. He said that they additionally had imposed a high usage penalty of $1 per gallon, so if they continued to take water, they could charge them a significant amount. He said that the final section discussed infrastructure, which included the water and sewer improvements and a $32 million contribution to the Aquia Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Mr. Edwards said that notably, they had included provisions in the WSA that were not initially proffered, such as an availability payment to reimburse the Utilities Department for construction costs related to the reuse system. He said that the water and air rates were also broken down into two categories: a demand charge and a water usage charge.

Mr. Edwards said that the demand charge covered employee costs, while the water usage charge covered chemicals, electrical, and other expenses. He said that the data centers would pay the demand charge for all their buildings at the onset of the reuse system, allowing them to staff the system without impacting ratepayers.

Ms. Vanuch said that it appeared that they were permitted to build five facilities, and then they capped it at five for a daily water usage of one million gallons. She said that she wondered what would happen if the facilities were never expanded beyond the initial five, and the water demand remained at or below one million gallons per day.

Mr. Edwards asked for clarification.

Ms. Vanuch said that for water consumption, if they were committing to providing one million gallons of water per day, she wondered what would happen if they decided to limit the number of data center buildings to five, and therefore, no longer required the full amount of water.

Mr. Edwards said that they still needed to convert to reuse water, which would take them off potable water. He said that if the reuse facility did not move forward, that situation was outlined in the third bullet point. He said that for example, if they used one million gallons per day and decided to build all air-cooled buildings, they would then encounter the 15 water meter cap. He said that if their goal was to build 22 to 23 buildings, but they would not be able to construct the necessary potable water improvements until they could reclaim the one million gallons they were currently using.

Ms. Vanuch asked if Mr. Edwards could repeat his last point.

Mr. Edwards said that they would be limited to constructing 15 buildings, as a single water meter represented a building. He said that without the infrastructure in place, they would not be able to build more than 15 buildings until they could provide the county with its one million gallons of potable water. He said that if the reuse system was not implemented, they would need to build potable water improvements to meet the County's daily needs of one million gallons, including raw water, transmission, treatment, and all associated systems. He said that he believed the deadline for having everything in place was 2032.

Ms. Vanuch said that she wanted to reiterate this point because she knew Mr. Edwards had a strong technical background, and she appreciated that. She said that she wanted to ensure she understood it correctly. She said that for the public's benefit, since this was a key reason she had voted against the project initially, he was telling her that regardless of the efforts made, by 2032, staff would have worked with the parties involved to find a solution, ensuring that the County would not be obligated to provide one million gallons of water per day by that year.

Mr. Edwards said yes. He said that one of the things he thought was crucial within the first 30 days was that they completed the study. He said that the study required funding to identify how the reuse facility would be accomplished. He said that if they got three or four years out and they would not be able to take over construction of the reuse facility; instead, they would have to initiate those improvements.

Dr. Yeung asked if Mr. Edwards could briefly explain the technicalities regarding the purple pipes, potable, and non-potable.

Mr. Edwards said that to clarify, potable water was the water that came out of their water treatment plant, while non-potable or reused water was the processed wastewater that came out of their wastewater treatment plant. He said that this wastewater was often referred to as the "purple pipe" due to the actual purple pipes used to transport it. He said that it was essential to note that the purple pipe was not intended for drinking water and should not be connected to, as it contained treated wastewater.

Dr. Yeung asked if they had a written agreement regarding making the non-potable water drinkable, and if not, where that water would eventually be released.

Mr. Edwards said that currently, all of the treated wastewater was discharged directly into Aquia Creek. He said that instead of discharging it there, they would pump it to their site, where it would be used for cooling purposes. He said that the treated wastewater would then be pumped back to their wastewater plant, and this cycle would continue. He said that at present, in the State of Virginia, there were no instances of wastewater being discharged directly into a water plant, so this option was not currently available.

Mr. English asked what Mr. Edwards meant by “give it back.”

Mr. Edwards said that to clarify, if they built a single facility using 200,000 gallons of water per day, that amount was typically allowed before the reuse system began construction. He said as, they had invested in potable water improvements, they needed to find a way to build treatment infrastructure for raw water that could handle 200,000 gallons per day. He said that in essence, they needed to increase the County’s capacity by 200,000 gallons per day to make them whole.

Mr. English said that they would have to build infrastructure for the County, which was what they were doing.

Mr. Edwards said yes. He said that it was likely more expensive than constructing the reuse system itself, which was a significant motivator for ensuring the reuse system was built.

Mr. English asked if they would be able to drill a well and use groundwater.

Mr. Edwards said no.

Mr. English said that he wanted to clarify that. He said that he wanted to make sure everyone understood the data center could not drill to use as a source of water for cooling.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Mr. Edwards could explain the infrastructure being built as part of their Capital Improvement Plan, which was part of the bridging.

Mr. Edwards said that there were two major capital improvements that he would like to highlight. He said that one of the significant projects completed about 10 to 15 years ago was the Lake Mooney Water Treatment Plant. He said that as part of their ongoing efforts to improve the water infrastructure, they had been working on a major pipeline project that aimed to extend the water supply from Lake Mooney all the way to North Stafford.

Mr. Edwards said that they had completed approximately two-thirds of the pipeline. He said that the remaining section, which was about a mile long, would be constructed by the data center. He said that to ensure the water supply remained stable, a large water booster station would be built along Centreport Parkway. He said that this project had been agreed upon and would be constructed simultaneously with the pipeline.

Mr. Edwards said that another major improvement was the Centreport area, where they currently had a small pump station. He said that to address the growing demand, a new, larger regional pump station would be built to handle existing flows, as well as new flows from the Centerport site. He said that two new pipelines would also be constructed: one to serve the Little Falls plant, located south of the Rappahannock, and another to send wastewater to Aquia Treatment Plant for reuse. He said that the total cost of these improvements, including the contribution to the Aquia Wastewater Treatment Plant, was estimated to be around $60 million.

Ms. Bohmke said that she understood the goal was that as buildings were brought online, the reuse system would be built.

Mr. Edwards said that was correct.

Ms. Bohmke said that there were thresholds outlined in the document, with specific requirements for the number of CWI meters to be installed at each stage of the project. She said that for instance, the provider was required to issue a minimum of one CWI meter, and then incrementally increase the number to a maximum of five.

Ms. Bohmke said that everything said “shall,” except for under item six, the provider would consider issuing an additional CWI meter, bringing the total to at least six, which occurred at a 75% completion point. She said that she was seeking clarification on the question Supervisor Vanuch had asked regarding reaching 2032, as at this point, they should have completed 75% of the purple pipe.

Mr. Edwards said that to clarify, in order to obtain the six-meter system, the provider must be 75% complete and obtain County permission to connect it. He said that as the provider, the County was responsible and must give permission. He said that the data center would be providing progress reports and meeting with the County officials. He said that a third-party engineer would be inspecting the project as it progressed, ensuring that the 75% mark was accurately reached.

Mr. Edwards said that as a result, they would be able to track the progress and confirm that the reuse system was being implemented. He said that if historically, the provider had used approximately 600,000 gallons of water, but their actual water requirements had been lower than projected, with the addition of the six-meter building, they had the option to keep the project moving, but ultimately, the decision rested with the County officials, which had the discretion to approve or deny the connection.

Ms. Bohmke said that, according to the weekly progress report on page six, STC would work with the provider to develop a weekly progress report format that tracks progress on the water infrastructure project. She asked if, despite their experience with previous projects, STC did not currently have a pre-existing document that they could use as a template.

Mr. Edwards said that they had been meeting with them every two weeks to design these improvements. He said that they had initiated this process early to get a head start on the design. He said that in his opinion, the primary goal was to ensure that this process continued, and they provided them with all necessary information to make an informed decision.

Mr. Edwards said that to verify this, they would also have documentation on their end, where their third-party engineer would document the same information. He said that this allowed them to compare the two documents and make a well-informed decision to protect the water as best they could throughout the process.

Ms. Bohmke said that they would be heavily reliant on their third-party engineer.

Mr. Edwards said that they would be utilizing a third-party engineer for some of the projects, and County staff would be involved in inspections. He said that they would have access to reports from the pipeline projects for comparison purposes. He said that to ensure accuracy, they were implementing multiple methodologies to verify the percentage of completion.

Ms. Allen said that this item was very similar to the last one the Board took up, so she did not see any issues with this one.

Dr. Yeung said that regarding the STC regulation, it aimed to help customers shield themselves from that cost. She said that she had asked earlier about the rate levels for various types of establishments, including homes, small businesses, distribution centers, and data centers. She said that she was aware that, for instance, most data centers used significantly less water than an average large office building, with 83% of them using the same amount or less. She said that she still believed that six of these buildings would have different rates. She asked what they were doing in this regard.

Mr. Edwards said that currently, the plan was for the first couple of years, they would still be charged at the commercial rate. He said that one important thing to remember was that they would have two or three water meters, using approximately 200,000 gallons of water per day. He said that he did not think it was feasible for them to charge a high usage rate, as this would be comparable to other water users in the County who were already using over 200,000 gallons per day. He said that to maintain consistency with the rest of their commercial users, they were aiming to keep the same rate for potable water. He said that once they transitioned to reusing water, they would establish a new rate for reuse water and would be charged accordingly.

Dr. Yeung asked how they planned to meet residential demand as they furthered these developments over time.

Mr. Edwards said that they hopefully would only be on potable water for a year or two, and they were nearing completion of their master plan, which should be finalized by the end of the summer. He said that in the short term, they had available water capacity, which was why they were allowing buildings to be constructed on potable water. He said that in the next couple of years, their plan was to transition from potable water to reuse.

Mr. Edwards said that the master plan also included a reduction in water use, as some large parcels within the urban services area would be using very little potable water and a significant amount of reuse water. He said that this reduction in water demand would result in a slight overall decrease in water usage throughout the County.

Dr. Yeung said that they definitely should have a plan to minimize impact. She said that she had a question regarding the stormwater issue in Stafford County. She asked if they had a runoff quality and quantity plan in place to address this issue and ensure they met the necessary standards.

Mr. Edwards said that Emily Torrey was the County's expert on that matter, but he would do his best to explain. He said that like all sites in the County, this would be subject to statewide stormwater erosion and sediment control regulations, which the County also adopted. He said that therefore, they would need to meet the same stormwater regulations as any other commercial building constructed in the state.

Mr. Ashton said that this was part of the site plan process that they would have to go through with the development services, and they would have to follow all the state and Chesapeake Bay regulations applicable to this site.

Mr. English said that he believed that Mr. Fulmer and his team had worked diligently on this project. He thought the applicant had been overly accommodating, and he thought a reasonable balance between their needs and theirs was necessary. He said that in his opinion, it was a matter of give and take. He said that once they reached the fifth building, he anticipated that they would likely switch to air cooling to save costs.

Mr. Edwards said that if their long-term goal was to reuse, certain data center providers had a preference for reuse, as it was also cheaper to operate. He said that he imagined that if they were building a reuse facility at the site, they would likely continue with the reuse of water, as it was a more sustainable option.

Ms. Vanuch asked Ms. McClendon if she had any concerns regarding the issues that had been raised by various Board members throughout the process.

Ms. McClendon she wanted to assure them that she and her staff did not have any concerns. She said that the Board's expressed concerns during this process had been thoroughly addressed by staff, who had invested significant time and effort to address each of them. She said that as a result, they believed that this proposal aligned with the Board's requests.

Ms. Vanuch said that she believed the Board needed to do a better job of transparency on some of these projects. She said that they received questions from residents, and when something sparked controversy on social media, the Supervisors all scrambled to reach out to Mr. Ashton, trying to recall the details. She said that it was unclear what to do in these situations.

Ms. Vanuch said that perhaps a clear project status update on the Utilities website, once the project is approved, would be a solution. She said that a monthly update that outlines the current status compared to the agreed-upon plan would allow residents to access a single, reliable source of information. She said that this would enable them to address resident inquiries directly and demonstrate their commitment to transparency, rather than appearing to hide information.

Mr. Edwards said that they usually did not feature developer projects on their website, typically only County-owned projects. He said that he believed that this project was significant enough that they could make an exception and include it on their website.

Ms. Vanuch said that they would be building County infrastructure, so it seemed applicable.

Mr. Edwards said that once all the projects were live, they would have a dedicated webpage on their website that showcased all the different projects. He said that this webpage would allow users to view snapshots of each project, track their progress, and stay informed about the various initiatives.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would greatly appreciate the Board's support as they moved forward. She believed it would greatly benefit them with all types of projects, not just this one. She said that her final comment was to express her gratitude and to thank Mr. Edwards and Mr. Ashton. She said that she was a vocal opponent of this proposal at the time, as the water service agreement was not presented to them before they voted on it. She said that she knew that it required significant time and effort from Mr. Edwards' team.

Ms. Vanuch said that upon Mr. Ashton's arrival, he stated that he agreed with her assessment that they should have been briefed in closed session and should have had visibility into the agreements they were making. She said that she wanted to acknowledge their diligence in attempting to resolve all their issues, which was a challenging negotiation.

Ms. Gary said that this had been a lengthy process. She said that she was not taking issue with the comment, but she wanted to clarify Ms. Vanuch's statement about having visibility and information. She said that if she did not have the information, she would not have voted on it. She said that she wanted to emphasize that in terms of transparency for the public. She said that she wanted to highlight the benefits of this project, which extended beyond financial advantages.

Ms. Gary said that she appreciated the hard work of staff in bringing them to this point, as it would enable them to represent their constituents well and establish a long-term relationship with a company that shared their goals. She said that their joint meetings with the Planning

Commission had set a standard throughout the region for how to navigate these projects successfully. She said that this was another chapter in that process, and they would continue to do so. She would also like to address Dr. Yeung's concern about stormwater.

Ms. Gary said that as the Board may recall, they had recently sent a proposal to the Planning Commission to consider a tree canopy ordinance. She said that this was brought forward by her constituents in the Brooke area, who had experienced flooding issues. She said that given that this project was upstream of the affected area, they were working on a solution that would address these concerns as part of a larger strategy for addressing stormwater management throughout the county. She said that she was very much in support of this item. She said that she was glad that they had reached this point, and she hoped they could make meaningful progress together.

Dr. Yeung said that she appreciated staff and STC representatives for answering her questions during this process. She said that she would also like to thank Supervisor Bohmke for allowing her to participate in these meetings and ask tough questions. She said that it was a long process, and she was proud to say that they continued to care about the environment. She said that at the same time, they must ensure that they benefited the County and the community, and that they saw the positive aspects of this project.

Dr. Yeung said that she would like to follow up on Ms. Vanuch's comments, but she would like to take it a step further. She said that she believed that they had a lot of questions, but she was not sure if they had a way to contain them. She said that what she would like to propose is that they make the answers to these questions available to constituents, similar to the budget information provided by Ms. Light.

Dr. Yeung said that perhaps they could create a resource where people could go to see the questions and the work they had done so far. She said that they had put in a lot of hard work over the past year, and she would love to have that information accessible to the public, especially since this project was first brought back in 2023 when she was Chair of this Board.

Mr. Edwards said that he thought they could start by including a section on frequently asked questions on the website. He said that given that they were still about six months to a year away from heavy construction, they could initially focus on providing general information and then gradually add more construction photos and progress updates.

Ms. Bohmke motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-70.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to express her appreciation for the efforts of the County Administrators, particularly at the end of this process. She said that she had the opportunity to interact with Chris and Brian, and she had asked them tough questions, including what kept them up at night. She said that she had received thoughtful and genuine responses, which she appreciated. She said that the County Administrators' and staff’s passion and dedication to the community were evident, and she acknowledged the hard work that they and their team had put in on behalf of all of them. She said that after carefully reviewing the agreement, she believed it was a good one.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted to express his gratitude to staff for their hard work. He said that he also wanted to thank STC; he appreciated their business and the opportunity to work with them. He said that they could be challenging at times. He said that in any case, he believed they were all working together for the betterment of Stafford County. He said that he had mentioned before that this project would be transformative for their community, not just in terms of revenue, but also in policy and various other ways.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to extend her gratitude to their staff, particularly Chris and Brian, who had done an outstanding job in bringing this project together. She said that she also wanted to express her appreciation to their legal counsel, Ms. McClendon's office, for their instrumental role in ensuring that the Board's wishes were clearly documented and communicated. She said that their efforts had been invaluable in guiding them in the right direction.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to commend her and her attorneys for their dedication to this project, as well as STC, for being a willing partner in this agreement. She said that STC's investment in Stafford County was not only a financial one, but also a strategic one, as it enabled them to avoid costly upgrades to their infrastructure. She said that this partnership also brought a significant tax benefit, which they were grateful for.

Ms. Allen said that she appreciated STC's willingness to work with their staff to address their concerns and invest in their community. She said that with this agreement in place, they were one step closer to having all of their centers operational in the near future. She said that she would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work and dedication to this project.

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

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to go into closed session.

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

Resolution CM25-05 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Board desires to hold a Closed Meeting for (1) consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff regarding transportation impact fees, which is a specific legal matter requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel, and (2) consultation with legal counsel pertaining to opioid-related class action lawsuits, where such consultation or briefings in open meeting would adversely affect the litigation posture of the Board; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(7) and (A)(8) such discussions may occur in Closed Meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 1st day of April, 2025, that it be and hereby does authorize discussion of the above matters in Closed Meeting.

CERTIFY CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to go certify the closed session.

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

Resolution CM25-05 (C) reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE STAFFORD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS IN A CLOSED MEETING ON APRIL 1, 2025

WHEREAS, the Board has, on this the 1st day of April, 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 1st day of April, 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.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to approve R25-94, a Resolution authorizing participation in the settlement of opioid-related claims against the Henry Schein defendants and their related entities.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned its meeting at 10:52 p.m.

William H. Ashton, II
County Administrator

Public Comment Form

COMPLETE #120

CREATED

PUBLIC
Mar 18th 2025, 9:56:15 am

IP ADDRESS

216.103.158.7

*** Name**

Stephanie Mojica

*** Address**

29 Francis court
Stafford
Va
23554
United States

*** Email**

mojicasj@gmail.com

Election District

Garrisonville

*** Topic (please see the Public Hearings page for specific topics coming up)**

Against Tax increase

*** Online Comments:**

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the bos meeting to publicly speak. As a resident of Stafford County, I am against the increase on our real estate taxes. Money obviously isn't fixing the issues that are going on in our county. Please look into other solutions rather than continuing to over tax the residents of Stafford. Thank you.

Public Comment Form

COMPLETE #121

CREATED

PUBLIC
Mar 18th 2025, 5:22:06 pm

IP ADDRESS

172.226.142.156

*** Name**

Katherine Jacoby

*** Address**

309 Ingleside Dr
Fredericksburg
VA
22405
United States

*** Email**

KatherineCJacoby@gmail.com

Election District

George Washington

*** Topic (please see the Public Hearings page for specific topics coming up)**

Data Centers and Rezoning to Heavy industrial

*** Online Comments:**

I do not believe that a data center should go between route 17 and the Rappahannock river. There are at least three neighborhoods that would be negatively impacted. I worry about noise pollution, river pollution and the overall safety and well being of the children in the very close neighboring communities. While I recognize the need for data centers, I believe Stafford County has area that is further away from residences that will provide safer, less impactful alternatives. Thank you.

Public Comment Form

COMPLETE #122

CREATED

PUBLIC
Mar 24th 2025, 8:39:13 am

IP ADDRESS

72.158.132.41

*** Name**

Dr. Alicia Hunter

*** Address**

208 Hidden Brook Dr
Fredericksburg
VA
22405
United States

*** Email**

dr.alicihunter@gmail.com

Election District

George Washington

*** Topic (please see the Public Hearings page for specific topics coming up)**

Stafford County Public Schools Budget

*** Online Comments:**

If inflation is real for eggs, it's real for schools.

There's a common narrative right now: families are worried about the price of eggs. Inflation is real, and it's being felt in every household. But are we telling families to go line-by-line through their budgets to find "waste" and cut spending to the bone—while their income stays flat? Of course not. Because we know you can't cut your way to financial stability when costs are rising.

So why are we expecting our schools to do exactly that?

Just like a household cannot operate on outdated income, a growing school system cannot function on outdated funding levels. And yet, the public discourse remains preoccupied with speculation and rhetoric—about line items, about custodial contracts, about "waste." Let's talk about those things, yes—but let's also talk about the big picture. Where is the strategy? Where is the long-term vision?

The public wants answers to fundamental questions:

- What is the county's plan for increasing revenue?
- How are Supervisors working to learn from other counties, particularly those with strong fiscal management and educational investment?
- What steps are being taken to mitigate federal education funding instability?
- Why does the public narrative continue to frame education as an expense to be trimmed instead of an investment to be protected?

In Virginia, education is largely funded by county transfers—not state mandates. That means Stafford has a responsibility to its own children, its own families, and its own future. We have overdeveloped Stafford with the promise of strong schools and opportunity. Families moved here expecting Northern Virginia–level services, but now we're pulling back, citing fiscal conservatism without acknowledging the lack of foresight that got us here.

The community is frustrated not only by what's being said—but by what's not. We're stuck in a loop of speculation, without a clear plan for growing responsibly, funding equitably, and planning intentionally.

Let's move beyond political theater and get serious about strategy. It's time to pair accountability with innovation, fiscal caution with fiscal creativity, and complaints about spending with a real plan for revenue.

We owe Stafford families more than just rhetoric. We owe them results.

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COMPLETE #123

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PUBLIC
Mar 31st 2025, 1:39:06 pm

IP ADDRESS

108.45.96.170

*** Name**

Stephanie M

*** Address**

29 Francis Court
Stafford
Virginia
22554
United States

*** Email**

mojicasj@gmail.com

Election District

Garrisonville

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Increase on taxes

*** Online Comments:**

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PUBLIC
Mar 31st 2025, 2:23:35 pm

IP ADDRESS

172.58.240.55

*** Name**

Stacy Wilson

*** Address**

135 old cropps mill rd
FREDERICKSBURG
Virginia
22406
United States

*** Email**

slm99_uk@yahoo.com

Election District

Hartwood

*** Topic (please see the Public Hearings page for specific topics coming up)**

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COMPLETE #125

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PUBLIC
Mar 31st 2025, 2:24:44 pm

IP ADDRESS

216.103.158.129

*** Name**

Jose Mojica

*** Address**

29 Francis CT
Stafford
VA
22554
United States

*** Email**

mojicajlm@gmail.com

Election District

Garrisonville

*** Topic (please see the Public Hearings page for specific topics coming up)**

Raising Taxes

*** Online Comments:**

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