JOINT SCHOOLS WORKING COMMITTEE
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 28, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – A regular meeting of the Stafford County Joint Committee of the School Board of Stafford County and the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Meg Bohmke, Chairman, at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 28, 2025 in Conference Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Meg Bohmke; Deuntay Diggs, Co-Chair; Pamela Yeung; Maya Guy, Co-Chair; Alyssa Halstead, and Elizabeth Warner.

Also in attendance were William Ashton, County Administrator; Daniel Smith, Superintendent; Chris Fulmer, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer; Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator; Andrea Light, County Budget Director; Jason Towery, Chief Facilities Officer; Taylor Dunn, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors; and Melissa Hall, Clerk of the School Board.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to address that an item was added to the agenda the day before the meeting. She said that Item #5 had nothing behind it, and that the addition of this item violated the charter because the item was not added a week in advance. Ms. Bohmke then said that in the past members from both the Board of Supervisors and the School Board would add items on at the last minute, and that would cause a frenzy for staff to figure out what needed to be brought to the meeting. Ms. Bohmke recommended that Item #5 be removed from the agenda and added to the next meeting agenda and that both School and County staff should discuss the item.

Mr. Diggs said that Item #5 is a conversation between the two boards, so there is nothing to bring forward with the item or that staff needed to prepare. He said that the item was brought to him as a recommendation by the school board members.

Ms. Bohmke then said that she had been busy watching the Planning Commission meeting the previous day and attending other meetings so she did not have time to discuss the item with Mr. Diggs.

Ms. Guy said that the item was added at the last minute due to concerns raised by constituents, and that everyone knew the topic needed to be discussed. Ms. Guy said that she knew the addition of the item was outside of the charter but that she also discussed the addition of the item with Ms. Bohmke and that the item was only added with approval. She said that people were asking questions and it was important to discuss it. Ms. Guy said that the item could be moved to the next meeting as that's how things go, but she encouraged the committee to look at the topic.

Ms. Halstead said that she objected to Ms. Bohmke's request because the Committee has limited time to discuss things together and often spends the time at odds with one another, so since the community had asked for this topic to be discussed it was important to have it on the agenda.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would have a discussion with the Chair because she did not know what the item was about, and that she would disagree with the previous comments.

Mr. Diggs asked if Dr. Yeung had any comments at the time, to which she replied she did not.

AUTHORIZATION FOR A COMMITTEE MEMBER TO PARTICIPATE ELECTRONICALLY

All members of the committee were present in person, so there was no need to authorize electronic participation.

ITEM 1. APPROVAL OF DRAFT OCTOBER 24, 2024 MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Warner moved, and Dr. Yeung seconded, that the committee approve the October 24, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

ITEM 2. APPROVAL OF DRAFT APRIL 07, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Yeung moved, and Ms. Halstead seconded, that the committee approve the April 07, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Yeung asked if there could be discussion on the item that was added to the agenda and what the ramifications were for the item not meeting the charters requirements.

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said there were not.

Mr. Diggs said that he would like to clarify that the item is just a conversation about the two boards working together, and that it was not intended to be a "gotcha". He said that since it is just a conversation there is nothing to be prepared for ahead of time and nothing that staff needed to prepare.

ITEM 3.

REVENUE SHARING AGREEMENT

Daniel Smith, Stafford Schools Superintendent, thanked the Committee for being able to speak before them. He said that the presentation was a joint presentation around understanding revenue sharing agreements, what could be included, and to help the committee to move forward with or without a revenue sharing agreement. He said the meeting was about building a common understanding of what a revenue sharing agreement was.

William Ashton, County Administrator said that this was a culpable issue during the April budget process, and that multiple Board members reached out to him during the budget process, and how the Board members wanted to see what the process would look like for setting up a revenue sharing agreement with the schools. He said that this presentation was not created overnight, and that other organizations were looked to in order to create the best model for Stafford County. Mr. Ashton said that one of the most difficult parts of coming into his position was figuring out the budgeting process between the government and the schools, and that hopefully the revenue sharing agreement would help diffuse that situation. He said that the meeting would give staff the next steps to take.

Andrea Light, Chief Financial Officer, said that the organization had been working on the revenue sharing presentation for a long time. She said that this agreement is on how funding and revenue is shared, and to help simplify the budget process.

Chris Fulmer, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer, said that the Schools looked at the current budget process and how a Revenue Sharing agreement would impact that. He said the current process involves the schools creating a budget and then that budget being sent to the Board of Supervisors for commentary. He said a revenue sharing agreement helps to create a more informed budget, with more predictability and alignment with the county.

Mr. Fulmer then said that the presentation is to lay the foundation for what an agreement would look like, and that the presentation would showcase which county revenues would be in the revenue agreement. He said that the agreement would need to lay out what will go inside of it from local revenues, along with looking at existing revenues or revenues going forward. Mr. Fulmer said the agreement could be separated to include carryover funds, and what percent of carryover funds would be available for the schools to use.

Ms. Light said that the Board may want to consider what services are already shared when preparing the agreement. Ms. Light said that all schools use school resource officers and the board would need to consider to include them in the agreement. Ms. Light said that if there was a lack of federal funding in upcoming years, this would need to be considered in the revenue sharing agreement, and to consider what would happen if significant changes in enrollment occurred. Ms. Light then said the board would need to consider a revisiting process to bring it back to the board.

Ms. Light said that there are a lot of benefits and challenges and that the presentation listed some of them. She said that schools had easier long-term planning, but that the revenue sharing agreement may not meet those long-term plans. She then said that the agreement would help to allocate the funds, but that there are debt allocation considerations to keep in mind.

Mr. Fulmer then said that the agreement would provide more transparency to the overall funding for the school division. He said that currently people think that percentages are both too high and too low, and the agreement would give constituents clarity on this. He then said the agreement would exclude all state and federal funding, and that both the Schools and the County feel funding increases and decreases. Mr. Fulmer stated that one of the challenges is the inability to move money year to year since revenue is always being shared.

Ms. Light then showed a draft slide of categories of county funding sources and talked about which ones would and would not be shareable. She said that there are certain funds that are required to be used by county services such as the Sheriff's Office. She invited the board to look through the slides and see which ones would not be shareable.

Mr. Fulmer then showed some other localities that the school board used as comparison to Stafford County and which of those localities had a revenue sharing agreement, such as Prince William County Public Schools. He said that a couple of Stafford County's neighbors do not have agreements. Mr. Fulmer said that he was looking for feedback from the committee to develop a timeline and that the upcoming budget would not be targeted to include a revenue sharing agreement.

Supervisors Bohmke and Yeung yielded their comments to the School Board.

School Board Member Alyssa Halstead asked for clarification on slide #9 of the presentation on whether or not the funding sources would be piecemeal or just one option.

Mr. Fulmer said that the slide was just representative of the work going into the agreement, but that some of the sources on the slide would be part of the agreement, such as carryover funds. He then said that a revenue sharing agreement could delineate what percentage of certain funds would be dedicated to the schools, and the agreement could determine what would happen to carryover funds. He said that the schools would look to other revenue sharing agreements to see what this process looks like.

Ms. Halstead then asked if the current structure of presenting the school budget would be in place.

Mr. Fulmer replied that it would.

Ms. Halstead then asked if it made sense for SROs to be included in the agreement yet.

Ms. Light said that had not been considered at this point, but it could be provided to the board in the future. Ms. Light said that the boards could start small or large depending on their wants.

Ms. Halstead then referred to slide #11 and asked for clarification on property taxes and rollback taxes.

Ms. Light then said that rollback taxes were a part of property taxes that had to be paid back, and that they were not a large part of the budget, only in the amount of a quarter million dollars, but that this amount was dedicated Purchase and Development Rights in Board policy, and the board could discuss the potential of them being included in a future agreement.

School Board Member Elizabeth Warner said that the budget process appeared to be contentious to school board constituents, and that she understood budget limitations, but that the unpredictability of the budget process left the schools blind. She then said that the budget process creates a lot of tension, and that a revenue sharing agreement would link the schools and county together no matter the economic state. She said that in speaking to other localities, that the predictability was greatly appreciated by their schools. Dr. Warner said that one challenge was not knowing what the federal government was going to do, so if an agreement could be reached, this tension would be lowered.

Dr. Warner said that there are a lot of things to consider, and that it should start to be manageable, but it should grow in the future.

School Board Member Maya Guy agreed with Dr. Warner about the tension that the budget process created, and that an agreement would lower the tension in the process. She said it is difficult to listen to constituents' concerns about the budget. She also agreed that the agreement could start small, and new money would be easier to understand and digest. She said there is not the desire to take more than the schools need, and that it is difficult to budget when the schools do not know the board's budget. Ms. Guy then said that the schools also don't know where and when state and federal funding come from, and that the schools just want an easier process.

Dr. Warner said there was a collective lack of understanding between both boards about the others budget situation, and that the lack of understanding drove tension, especially about grant funding. She said the agreement would increase transparency on both sides of the street.

Supervisor Deuntay Diggs said that for him the big piece of the agreement would be the formula, and getting that right. He said that in his conversations with the board there is the appetite to bring down the temperature, and that his job is a leader is to bring that down as much as possible. He agreed with starting small.

Supervisor Pamela Yeung said that she recalled this item was brought up with the Board of Supervisors earlier in the year, and that she was glad that it was on the agenda the day. She said she was aware of what the schools were doing budget wise, and that there were multiple months to prepare for the budget. She said there would be infighting about the budget, and that the whole fiscal picture needed to be considered, and that it shouldn't be hurried. She said that the 1% sales tax needed to be secured for the schools, along with COCA. She said that actions in D.C. would affect the schools in the future. Dr. Yeung then said that the issue with the veterans' tax relief was bleeding money from the schools, but it was important to maintain that relief while finding a way to maintain funding.

Supervisor Meg Bohmke said that this was a very dynamic process throughout Virginia, and that it was unfortunate that it pitted the boards against each other. She shared a saying from VACO that there could be no state reserve until the schools are funded. She said that the revenue sharing agreement conversation is a good one to have, but that the devil is in the details. Ms. Bohmke said that there should be a 10-year lookback. She then said that there should be a look into what the funding situation in the past would have been if the agreement had been in place earlier. Ms. Bohmke said Delegate King did the county a disservice by not allowing COCA out of committee. She then said the state moves Stafford in and out of Northern Virginia when convenient. Ms. Bohmke said that the revenue sharing agreement would entail a lot of financial analysis. She then said that she did not believe the schools' CIP needs should be in the revenue sharing agreement, and that they should maintain their own funding sources for that. She concluded by saying that her biggest concern was the disabled veterans' amount, and that data center funding would not be coming online for a while.

Mr. Diggs asked staff if there was a response to the letter sent to Delegate King.

Mr. Ashton said that staff did not get a response.

Mr. Diggs said that there was an understanding coming into the agreement that there was a way things had always been done. He said that the situation with the tension needed to change.

Ms. Guy said that she believed everyone's positions were valid and that a 10- or 15-year lookback was a good idea. She agreed with Ms. Bohmke's analogy about funding, but noted that the schools only had one funding source, and that was the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Guy noted that the schools could not call a bank for help, and that the reality was that the schools don't fund anything themselves, and that shortfalls could not be covered in the same way the county does.

Dr. Warner said that she wanted to set a baseline, with an increasing agreed upon amount in the future. She said that she was worried about relying upon COCA in the future, and that she had received information that it would not succeed in the future. She said that COCA was contentious at the state level, and that it was important to set a baseline for predictability moving forward.

Ms. Halstead agreed with Dr. Warner, and that she had heard that the schools were being blamed for an increase in property taxes this budget cycle, and that she believed this was misinformation. She also concurred with Dr. Warner about relying on COCA and that it was unreliable. She said that other localities have funding needs as well, and that asking other localities to vote for more funding for Stafford would be difficult. She noted that delegates in the general assembly said that COCA would not pass. Ms. Halstead said that a revenue sharing agreement would go far in getting COCA passed in the general assembly and provide goodwill to other localities to show how far Stafford was working.

Dr. Yeung noted that the state was moving away from COCA and that the next item behind it was the 1% sales tax, and that the board would continue to fight to make sure that funding arrived.

Mr. Diggs said that next steps would include the agreement coming back before the board in the new year.

Dr. Yeung said that she would like a work session on the item.

Mr. Diggs agreed, and said that he would like to see it in January or February.

Mr. Ashton said that if it was brought up in the new year there would be scheduling conflicts, so he would like to see it earlier so that staff could begin to look at models and address concerns of the two boards.

Dr. Smith said that if the process began too late, that the agreement could not begin until FY2029, and that there is a lot of work to be done on it.

Mr. Diggs asked when the item could come before the Board in a work session.

Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator, said that it depends on time available due to budget presentations and issues with data centers.

Mr. Diggs said that the board needed to get on the same page, and that it did not need to be a large item. And that the Boards could work with staff.

ITEM 4.

DAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Ms. Krauss said that there were some questions about the day school program, so some high-level information was put together to answer those questions. She said this program started in 2008, and with discussions about addressing special education needs. She also said that at the time, the state wanted more educational treatment for those children from the community. She said that the county obtained a grant to create the current day school, and then the Schools and the County got together to determine how to share the costs. Ms. Krauss said today's presentation to the Committee is really outlining the why, and that the County is focused on keeping children here while being cost-effective and at the same time, developing programs for children who have developmental disabilities.

Ms. Krauss shared a story that there is a pyramid with a lot of rungs and that day schools were in the least restrictive rung. She stated that the public day school was about creating personalized education for these students, by collaborating with parents so that these students could be educated in the county. She said that in the past there were not a lot of private day schools in the county, and while that number has gone down, there are still some students who leave the county for education.

Ms. Krauss then introduced Dr. Ann Bueche, and she said that the Stafford day school gave the county the capacity to serve 42 students with disabilities. She stated that the day school had four classrooms for varying levels of needs. Dr. Bueche also noted that a second day school operated out of Stafford High School and could support 18 students. She then noted that the Phoenix Center could support up to 10 day school students at a time.

Ms. Krauss then addressed funding and said that the County was originally getting $582,000 in funding. She said that the costs changed over time, and in FY2022 the funding rose to $874,000.

Dr. Bueche stated that there are 18.5 positions funded by the MOU, with 24.5 positions existing, and at the Stafford Day School, one position out of eight was funded.

Ms. Krauss said that she wanted to show the differentials in play, and that cost was not the only factor in play, and that they took the funding costs from the day schools and calculated what they would be in private schools. Her attached presentation compared these costs. She then opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Bohmke said that the public day school program was excellent and allowed students to be educated in Stafford County. She asked why it costs more to educate students in the county than sending them to private day schools, and asked why the item was on the agenda.

Mr. Fulmer said there were questions about the program each budget cycle, and that this presentation would answer those questions. He then said for the budget questions, the transportation costs are not captured in the budget computations, and they would raise the estimate. Additionally, he noted that the computations were only averages. He said that some students would cost more, and some would cost less. Mr. Fulmer also noted that there was legislation that prevented the rise in private day school costs.

Ms. Bohmke noted that the cost a few years prior was only $75,000.

Ms. Krauss explained that there was a three-year sunset that saw gradual price increases, and unless there was legislation introduced there would likely be more increases. She then noted that there were attempts to analyze transportation costs, but it was very difficult due to factors such as gas prices.

Dr. Yeung said that she supported the Heather Empfield Day School and that she helped out at the location. She noted that she had talked to Ms. Krauss about a regional approach because there is more funding available.

Ms. Krauss said that there is the potential for more funding at the regional level, but it is not guaranteed. She said that it would depend on the state giving the county money to run a regional program.

Dr. Yeung noted that this would be an opportunity if the Board wishes to pursue it. She then asked what the Schools were looking for regarding the public day schools.

Dr. Smith said the presentation is only educational in nature and the Schools are not looking for more funding, and just making sure everyone is educated. He said that the Schools have not looked into the budget for the next year regarding public day schools.

Ms. Krauss then said that one of the asks was looking into a bigger day school with more students, but that there are a lot of pressures on the CIP that push that ask down the road. She noted that a bigger Day School would be a future want.

Dr. Yeung said that this should be something to focus on in the future.

Dr. Warner said that there is a huge difference between public and private day schools, and the education in private day schools is not necessarily what every student needs. She said that the plan is to incorporate the day school into the new Rising Star school. She also wanted to look into other funds that would be available for construction, and that it was an opportunity for the program to be evaluated to be more sustainable for the county to support.

Mr. Diggs asked if there were any safety concerns with moving students to the new Drew Middle School (DMS) site versus their current location.

Dr. Warner replied that there weren't any safety concerns, but it is uncertain at this time where those Day School students will be going.

Ms. Guy said that consolidating would allow the population to grow together.

Dr. Bueche said there was a gap in services for middle school students, and there were questions about how to fill that gap.

Ms. Krauss said that in the last budget there was a financial proposal, but due to constraints it was eliminated. She said that looking at the listed students there was a cost analysis done, and that middle school students would be addressed when the budget allowed.

Ms. Halstead asked if there was a joint committee about day schools.

Ms. Krauss said that the committee had existed, but it had broken down into a staff-staff relationship.

Ms. Halstead said it would be helpful for the boards to get a memo of updates on what staff say to one another. She then asked about the makeup of expenditures and how much the school systems paid, and whether or not insurance paid for any of it.

Mr. Fulmer said that the state paid for several hundred thousand dollars of the funding, but most of it was the schools.

Ms. Halstead asked for a detailed breakdown of the funding.

Ms. Krauss said that the CSA program covered students' IEPs and that the county was not responsible for it.

Ms. Halstead asked what the increase was in public and private day students in total. She said that it would helpful to have a year-over-year growth data so that the county had an idea of the demand for the schools.

Ms. Krauss noted that for the day schools, the issue was capacity, that the number has grown since 2008, and that with transfers it was closer to 120 students. She noted that the year total of 78 has been consistent year-over-year.

Ms. Halstead voiced concerns about the capacity of public day schools versus private.

Dr. Warner asked if it was easier to transfer students between settings, or if that was not relevant.

Dr. Bueche said it was easy to move students between levels as needed.

Ms. Bohmke asked Mr. Fulmer how much the state gave the Schools for day schools.

Mr. Fulmer said that the funding number provided was not only for day school students, and the amount for each student broke down to $9,000.

Ms. Bohmke then asked about the nursing situation at the schools as there was previously only one nurse between a middle school and the day school.

Dr. Bueche noted that there was still only one nurse, but that there were no concerns.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the expense of a nurse would be split or only for DMS, and Mr. Fulmer said that only DMS would absorb the cost.

Ms. Guy said she was very interested in regional day schools. She asked if there was guaranteed funding for a regional day school.

Ms. Krauss said she had heard that it was a formulaic process based on size and population, and that these regional programs got a lot of money, and that new programs had a hard time breaking in, as current programs got all of the money.

ITEM 5.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL BOARD COOPERATION AND BEST PRACTICES

Ms. Halstead said that she wanted to make sure the concerns of her constituents were heard, and that there was a lack of cooperation between the boards, and that there was a lot of speaking over one another during joint meetings. She said that she had asked for this item to be added to the agenda because there had to be another way, because it seemed that every time a bridge was built, an old one would be burnt. She gave an example about a dog park near Margaret Brent Elementary School. She said that there had not been any conversation from the Board of Supervisors with the School Board about the parks placement or the effects it would have on the school and any dangers it would have.

Ms. Halstead said that the dog park invites security risks for elementary school students, and that people could take photos of school children or notice patterns. She noted that while being able to access the school from the park seemed innocent, it posed a safety risk for students being excited to see animals and getting in the way of vehicles. She said the public was not offered the opportunity to comment on the park. She asked that there would be cooperation to ease these concerns. She suggested that the park not be open during school hours. Ms. Halstead then said that there had to be a better way forward in the future. She said that there had to be a better place for a dog park than outside of an elementary school.

Ms. Halstead concluded by saying that her constituents expected her to work with the Board of Supervisors and to get results.

Dr. Warner said that every time the two boards talked some concerns were alleviated, but that the County did not think about the schools and overlooked how it might affect transportation or security. She also asked for heads up in regard to construction projects that would affect getting students to schools.

Dr. Yeung asked Ms. Halstead if School Board Member Sussan Randall was on the Parks and Recreation Commission at the time when the park was proposed. Dr. Yeung asked who from the Schools would have been on the committee so that they could have taken note and raised concerns.

Ms. Halstead said that the last conversation about this was in December 2023, and that the change in park directors has left some consistency to be desired, and that the joint committee meeting was a perfect place to bring the issue up. She said that the park's entrance could bring forbidden items to school property due to its location.

Dr. Yeung said that vaping as an issue came down from the state in 2024, without consideration for the schools, so she noted that there are certain things that slip through without conversations.

Ms. Bohmke said she appreciated the issue being brought up. She did not believe the issue was a policy issue that needed to be brought up, and that changes in staff could have caused the issue. Ms. Bohmke said that the issue likely never crossed the mind of the School Board member who represents that district, and that it was not an issue that rose to board level. She then gave an example of the R-Board having issues about space for waste, and that it led to the R-Board giving presentations just as an update. She said that if someone is not sharing information, the whole board ends up uninformed. She suggested a change to the bylaws for a public update.

Ms. Halstead appreciated the sentiment, and said that staff does as staff is directed to do. She said that in this case the Supervisor for that district should have reached out to the School Board member to tell her that there was a dog park being put in. She also noted that Hartwood residents used the park and attended the schools. Ms. Halstead noted that if the joint conversations were not being had now, they needed to be had in the future.

Ms. Bohmke replied that a new board in the next year might not know to call their School Board member of any issues.

Ms. Halstead said in that case that onboarding should cover that to make sure any new board members know that.

Ms. Bohmke agreed.

Ms. Halstead suggested that the hours of the park be adjusted so that it was safer.

Ms. Bohmke said that Facebook posts have been unfortunate and that they have created some of the damage between the Supervisors and the School Board.

Dr. Yeung asked if there was anything that could be done with the road, or if it was a done deal.

Mr. Ashton said that he inherited this project from his predecessor, and that he spoke to Dr. Smith and agreed to change the hours to a 9:00 a.m. opening time, and he asked staff to create an engineering report on the right-in/right-out situation with people going to the park.

Mr. Diggs said that he gets complaints about board behavior from other members and members of the public, but he cannot control what people say. He then said he should try and do a better job of monitoring during meetings so that things do not get out of hand. He said that he did like that the new superintendent and the county administrator were working together well. He said that he has conversations with the School Board Chair to work together. He said that it was important to be mindful of constituents wants but that it is impossible to control how constituents feel about decisions.

Ms. Halstead said that she wanted to work better together and appreciated the ability to come together, and that the boards should put everything out in public, and that it is important to feel uncomfortable and to listen to others.

Mr. Diggs said that his position depends on him conversing with others no matter his opinions on an individual or a topic.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

William H. Ashton, II
County Administrator