

STAFFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION MINUTES
November 6, 2025

The meeting of the Stafford County Historical Commission on Thursday, November 6, 2025, was called to order at 3:00 PM by Anita Dodd in the ABC Room of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Frank White, Jane Conner, Emma Dietrich, Anita Dodd, Martha Newton, Robert Orrison and Callie Knight

MEMBERS ABSENT: There were no absentees.

STAFF PRESENT: Nancy Kotting, Crissy Kendall, Harriet Donkoh

GUESTS PRESENT: Elena Prokos

CALL TO ORDER:

Ms. Dodd called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Roll was called and there was a quorum.

VOTE TO ACCEPT/AMEND AGENDA

Ms. Kotting requested adding a discussion of a letter of support from the Historical Commission for the county-wide cultural resource survey under New Business.

Ms. Dietrich made a motion to accept the amended agenda. Ms. Newton seconded the motion. Motion passed, 7/0.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Elaina Prokos, a retired teacher from the Rock Hill District, was present. She is a member of Protect Stafford, a group of citizens who want to be knowledgeable and proactive about responsible data center placement in the county. The group intends to share its research with fellow citizens and elected officials in the county.

She said she understands that four sites have archeological sites, Stafford Technology Center, Sisson South Forest Hill and Blaisdell.

The group wants to be knowledgeable and educated about how the data center projects will affect important history. They would also like to be informed of how involved the Historical Commission and the Architectural Review Board are in the application process and if citizens would have a say in recommendations for historical preservation in or near potential data centers.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Welcome and Introduction of New Members – Overview of Current Activities

Mr. Orrison, whose wife is from Stafford, moved here about a year ago. He works for Prince William County and oversees the county's Historic Preservation program, which manages 15 historic sites.

Ms. Knight graduated from University of Virginia this summer. She did a fellowship in the Youngkin administration focusing on commerce and trade. She'd like to go to law school and the reason she's interested in this commission is because she has deep family roots in Stafford and it's very important to her that Stafford maintains its historical integrity.

Ms. Kotting introduced herself to the new members as the Cultural Resource Specialist for the county, who oversees all the cultural resources in Stafford County and is staff support for the Architectural Review Board and the Historical

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Commission. She's public facing and the go-to-person for every call about anything above ground over 50 years old and anything under the ground.

She gave a brief update on some of the major ongoing projects in the county which includes updating the county wide survey. She mentioned that as a certified local government, it's imperative that we do that in part to sustain that recognition. The Department of Historic Resources (DHR) recommends that county-wide surveys be conducted every 10 years as this is vital for her work in development review. The information she uses to assess potential historic resources on proposed development sites largely comes from a 1992 survey—unless developers have conducted and provided a more recent survey, she's essentially operating without current data. Without updated information, she cannot responsibly approve plans that may impact unknown historic resources, highlighting the urgent need for a new survey.

The Counting House, a significant historic resource in Falmouth district, is scheduled for Board review on November 18, 2025. After an extensive Request for Proposal process, the Board was requested to transfer the property to a private party for rehabilitation, and it is hoped that this is approved on November 18, 2025.

The Grizzle Building, another county-owned property adjacent to the Falmouth Cemetery, is also under consideration. The Historical Society is interested in exploring its use as a museum. This is a major project, as many of our historic resources are concentrated along the Rappahannock River, and we are working to create greater connectivity for tourism purposes.

Stafford County has a database of over 400 cemetery sites manually surveyed by our cemetery committee over the years. However, only a few have been uploaded to the state system. Stafford County currently lacks the resources to update the VCRIS system but doing so would help developers and their consultants access this vital information directly.

Ms. Kotting said Historic Overlay Districts remain a key tool for protecting historic resources through zoning reclassifications. Several overlays were established in 1985, but very few have been added since. The Architectural Review Board is tasked with identifying new candidates to refer to the Board of Supervisors. One such case, Sherwood Forest, was recently presented but has been postponed until January due to an active data center development plan for the area. With changes in requirements for data centers, progress has been slow.

2. Payne Morgan Cemetery- Approved Grading Plan Amendment Request

Anita Dodd stated that the Payne Morgan cemetery is located on a single lot which was undeveloped at the time of our initial survey but is now under development, with a house currently being built on the property. Neighbors have expressed concerns about the cemetery's preservation. Ms. Kotting conducted a site visit but was prevented from entering the property due to posted "No Trespassing" signs. The only person with permission to access the site is the environmental inspector for the project so she informed him and he visited the cemetery, took numerous photos, and found no evidence of damage to any of the gravestones. There have been two site plans submitted for this property and that every time a site plan is filed—whether for a single home or a larger development—it triggers the county's cemetery ordinance. The initial plan placed the house at the rear of the lot, but an amended plan moved it to the front. Both versions are in full compliance with the cemetery ordinance, including requirements for an access easement and appropriate buffering. Currently, there are no violations, and the property owners are expected to continue adhering to Stafford County regulations.

3. Request for Letter of Support

Ms. Kotting has submitted a budget request for an updated county-wide cultural resource survey. She asked the Commission if they would be willing to submit a Letter of Support to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Dietrich motioned for the letter of support to be written. Jane Conner seconded the motion. Motion passed, 7/0. Anita will write the letter for submission.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Bloomington Interpretive Content Project: Update

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Ms. Dodd discussed the progress and challenges of the Bloomington Interpretive Center project. She mentioned the discovery of thriving Chinese orange trees and the need for further work and collaboration. She also suggested setting up a work session in January to address the project's needs. Members agreed scheduling a work session for January 8th regular meeting.

2. Section 106 Review Underway for Falmouth Bridge Rehabilitation-Current Status

There was no update

3. Review of Bylaws including proposed revisions per county admin

Ms. Kotting proposed two revisions to the current bylaws. She would like to add language that recommends the Chairperson notifies the Board of Supervisors when a member has missed 3 consecutive meetings or more than 4 meetings in a year.

The second revision discussed was to add that if additions or deletions are made to the agenda prior to the vote to accept at the beginning of the meeting, that the updated agenda will be uploaded to CivicClerk at the conclusion of the meeting. Ms. Kotting will submit the proposed revisions to the legal department for review and the Commission will vote at the next meeting.

ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS BY THE PUBLIC

There were no additional presentations by the public.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There was nothing to report on.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE REPORT

There was nothing to report on.

REPORTS BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

Jane Conner wanted to welcome all the new members to the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Newton made a motion to approve the amended minutes from October 2, 2025. Mr. White seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Dodd adjourned the meeting at 3:30 PM