

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2025

CALL TO ORDER – A regular meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Deuntay Diggs, Chairman, at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 16, 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 William 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.

Mr. Diggs said that given the delay in their start time today, they would begin by addressing additions, deletions, and approvals of the regular agenda, followed by presentations from the public. He said that before proceeding, Supervisor Gary would lead them in the invocation, and Supervisor Bohmke would lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADDITIONS – DELETIONS AND APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR AGENDA

ADD ON TO ITEM NO. 10; PROPOSED RESOLUTION R25-306 AND ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

William Ashton, County Administrator, said that there was an add on to Item 10, Proposed Resolution R25-306, as well as additional attachments, were included in the packet in front of the Board and were also available for viewing in the agenda center. He said that the attachments included: Attachment 1, the Proposed Resolution R25-306; Attachment 4A, the project comparison sheet; Attachment 4B, the rules and regulations regarding the State Corporation Commission (SCC) process; Attachment 5A, opportunities to exercise legal authority; Attachment 5B, legislative changes; and Attachment 6, the Stafford County Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to approve the Regular Agenda with the additions as proposed by Mr. Ashton, and to move up Reports by Board Members to take place prior to Item 1, and move up Item 10 to take place before Item 3.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

PRESENTATIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Mr. Diggs read the rules of procedure for presentations by the public.

1. Christopher Kearns, Hartwood District, said that due to the recent development of the new Westlake subdivision in their area, their community's wells were going dry. He said that several community members, including elderly residents, had had to spend over \$20,000 plus a \$300 County permit fee to have new wells dug. He said that it was his understanding that County water and sewer services were currently available off of Route 17, but had not been tapped into their community.

Mr. Kearns said that they had spoken with their representative for the Hartwood District, who advised them to attend this meeting. He said that he had several community members who had had wells dug or were currently experiencing water issues. He said that some had even had pool companies come in to dump water into their wells to meet basic household needs. He said that he was deeply concerned that the community above this new development had not been considered in advance, and he did not blame the County specifically, but there had to be some issues resolved. He said that as a single-income household, he was unable to afford the \$20,000 cost of having a well dug for his family.

Mr. Kearns said that in fact, he had lived in this house for over seven years without any water issues. He said that he was bringing this matter before the Board to voice his concerns and those of his community, including the elderly. He said that the cost of \$20,000 was prohibitively expensive for many residents, and he feared that some may be forced to sell their homes due to the inability to afford the necessary wells. He said that he was very concerned that a small community would be left without water because no one had considered the potential extent of damages. He said that he hoped that they could work together to resolve this issue and find a solution so people did not have to leave their homes.

2. April Kearns, Hartwood District, said that she had dedicated 20 years of her life to this community, serving with her blood, sweat, and tears in fire and emergency medical services (EMS). She said that their entire street was comprised of individuals who had served in the military and law enforcement. She said that it was time that Clark Patton was taken care of, as the County had seemingly forgotten about them with the recent development. She said that she had seven spine surgeries, and she lived with multiple sclerosis and lupus. She said that she and her husband were struggling to make ends meet, and today, her entire street was here because they were dry from top to bottom.

Ms. Kearns asked when the County would help them and give them the help they deserved. She said that as taxpayers, they had contributed significantly to this community, yet they were being left behind. She said that a 90-year-old neighbor had to take out a second mortgage on her house to drill a new well, with a \$20,382.25 fee and a \$300 County charge. She said that it was ridiculous when that development that caused this crisis. She said that she had spoken with local attorneys, and she was proceeding with her case if the Board did not provide assistance.

She said that this was not just about one or two homes; it was about 12 households who were all here, and they needed help.

Ms. Kearns said that it should not be on them when the County allowed that community to go in and take the well from them. She said that it was not their fault and should not be at their expense, either. She said that they deserved to be treated fairly, just like the new community. She said that they deserved running water, not having to spend \$164 for five-gallon jugs of water at Giant. She said that they were here first, and their homes were older. She said that her house was from 1974, and the well had never gone dry - until now. She said that it was not a drought, and she had the evidence to prove it. She said that she hoped that they could see that they were a street that would not be forgotten, because they were Clark Patton.

3. Karen Fox, Hartwood District, said that she was here to respectfully ask the Board to give the Planning Commission more time, at least through the end of January, to review and recommend the Water, Sewer, and Reclaimed Water System Master Plan Resolution R25-221. She said that this request was not about delay, but about care and good process. She said that on November 6, the Board's referral started with the statutory clock, based on a 50-page document. She said that however, what the Planning Commission actually received shortly before their December 10 hearing was a technical report of more than 500 pages, inside a nearly 600-page packet.

Ms. Fox said that this Master Plan was not routine; it was a long-term roadmap that would guide Stafford County's water and sewer systems for the next 40 to 50 years. She said that a plan of that size deserved time to read, understand, and ask questions. She said that receiving the full report just days before the hearing did not allow for that level of review. She said that furthermore, under County Code, the Utilities Commission played an important role in reviewing system expansions and master plan changes. She said that because the Utilities Commission did not have a quorum, it had not yet met on this plan and would not do so until mid-January.

Ms. Fox said that this meant the Planning Commission and this Board were being asked to act without formal input. She said that at the December 10 hearing, Planning Commissioners raised clear and thoughtful questions, including concerns about the use of drinking water for data center cooling, even on a temporary basis. She said that these were not small details; they were policy choices that affected drinking water reliability in a fast-growing county. She said that those choices deserved careful review. The Planning Commission had made it clear that they were not comfortable being asked to recommend the adoption under the current timeline. She said that instead of rejecting the plan, they had chosen a responsible path, voting to defer and asking this Board for more time so both Commissions could do their jobs properly.

Ms. Fox said that as she understood it, no single project was being stopped by allowing this extension. She said that existing projects could continue under the current policies, and the reclaimed system remained in planning and design. She said that in that context, a few additional weeks was reasonable for a plan that would shape Stafford's future for decades. She said that for these reasons, she respectfully asked the Board to allow the Planning Commission to extend their deadline until at least the end of January. She said that giving them this time would strengthen the final plan, protect their drinking water, and build trust in a decision.

4. George Dunn, Hartwood District, said that his main concern was the well water situation on Clark Patton Road. He said that he was concerned that the recent subdivision development in the back had caused significant disruption to their wells along their street. He said that four or five of their wells had already been affected, and he was not sure how many of them could afford to maintain them. He said that he did not know about anyone on the hill, but many of them did not have the financial resources to keep their wells operational. He said that he wondered how they could solve this issue.

Mr. Dunn said that perhaps they could hold the developers responsible for any damage they caused to the ground. He said that if they lost their water supply, he believed the person or entity responsible for damage should be held accountable for the cost of repairs. He said that if the developers were causing the problem, why should the residents have to bear the financial burden of replacing their wells? He said that it seemed reasonable that the builders should take responsibility for their actions and fix the problem. He said that, in his opinion, those who created the problem should be responsible for resolving it.

5. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that regarding the December 16 work session, page 161 of 165, as stated in attachment 1, 4, 5, and additional attachments would be added to the Board meeting. She said that this provided a last-minute notice, preventing the public from reviewing the document over the weekend. She said that now, the document contained 402 pages, 237 of which were new pages, with no time for public review. She said that it was unknown if the public had been made aware of changes to item 10 concerning the Anna Kraken Loop. She said that regarding the water plan, she was wondering how it was that a 45-acre project was demanding the full submission of the Comprehensive Plan, when Stafford, Virginia, had 179,000 acres.

Ms. Maxson said that an application was delivered to the Planning and Zoning Department at the last minute, requesting an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. She said that the gravity sewer project required land across seven properties, and there was a concern about low land set aside for open space near neighboring homes on all sides. She said that this was discussed in the Commission meeting on December 10, 2025, which was one hour and five minutes long. She said that the water concerns in the Westlake neighborhood reflected that this large project never had a public announcement meeting for the public to hear.

Ms. Maxson said that it was only informally stated. She said that water concerns could be addressed through mining activities for certain projects, and the mining activities within Stafford were a concern to the Stafford community. She said that the federal wetland programs were frozen due to the federal government shutdown that began on October 1, 2025, and lasted until November 12, 2025. She said that this action was not fully disclosed and was planned and intended to be an emergency period. She said that the shutdown affected 13,000 Stafford residents.

Ms. Maxson said that at the December 2, 2025, the Board of Supervisors meeting, a formal Justice Department lawyer spoke out about the disregard of due process during this period, on October 19, 2025, during the shutdown. She said that the plan to cross the Rappahannock resource protection area (RPA), in the Lake Arrowhead neighborhood, was passed during the Chesapeake Bay Act.

6. Gordon Raines, Hartwood District, said that he was speaking in support of the individuals who lost their wells. He said that to date, he still had water in his well, but he had noticed that several wells across the street from him had gone dry. He said that the wells down the street from him were also dry. He said that his primary concern was about their water.
7. Jim Lafferty, Hartwood District, said that he had recently installed a new well just this past week. He said that he had gone about a month without water, but he had lived on this same house for approximately 40 years without experiencing this issue. He said that he was deeply concerned about the impact of the new housing development on their wells. He said that his neighbor's well had also dried up, and several others the same road was facing a similar problem. He said that it was tough to come up with \$20,000 for a new well all of a sudden, so they were seeking assistance to help solve this problem.
8. Martha Newton, Hartwood District, said that she would like to take this opportunity to express her gratitude to Ms. Bohmke for all that she has done for the County. She said that she had served the citizens very well. She said that she had a card and a gift for her, and she wanted to assure her that the gift was within the limits set by the Hatch Act, so she could accept it without any issues. She said that Ms. Bohmke had answered her phone calls and taught her so much, and she just wanted to thank her for that.
9. Brandon Hurley, George Washington District, said that he was an assistant professor at the Department of Geography and Environment at George Washington University. He said that recently, they conducted a multi-criteria evaluation for Stafford County. He said that the question was what could possibly be developed in the County. He said that they started by investigating what was not developable. He said that they identified Quantico as out of the question, County parks as out of the question, and then they used OpenStreetMap data to identify every building in the County and added a 500-foot buffer around those buildings.

Mr. Hurley said that from now until the entire County was developed, the areas left to develop would be similar to the provide map's layout in some manner. He said that to provide context, he had provided the current data center applications. He said that a multi-criteria evaluation was a method that combined separate subject matter into one layer, providing a general answer to questions. He said that it offered trade-offs between different types of priorities, aiming to give a solid, somewhat quantifiable answer about where to develop. He said that in this particular evaluation, they only considered environmental factors, including Intact Forest by DellaSala et al 2022 and Wetlands provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Hurley said that there were other factors to consider, such as historical and economic considerations, but he would focus only on environmental factors during his comment. He said that he would like to stress that areas on the map shown in green were considered poorly suitable, and areas in yellow and brown were considered more suitable. He said that he had sent links to the Board so they could view this map online, and they could zoom in and explore all of the different features. He said that he was happy to answer any questions, including extended periods, emails, and so on, about the methods. He said that this was their attempt to provide the County with quantifiable answers on where Stafford could be developed responsibly, taking into account conservation concerns.

10. Alyson Azzara, George Washington District, said that building on where her husband had left off, what they were looking at now was essentially a 3D map of Stafford County. She said that the small, spiky features that resembled trees were actually trees, derived from LIDAR satellite imagery. She said that they had sorted these trees to only show the tallest and oldest growth in the County. She said that they had found a publication from 2022, which was DellaSala et al. She said that everyone should have received a copy, as she had emailed it out. She said that what she wanted them to take away from this was that areas depicted in bright red were old-growth areas. She said that these should be considered prohibited areas for development, indicating that these were the oldest and most valuable areas to preserve.

Ms. Azzara said that as of now, Stafford County had only four contiguous old-growth forests remaining. She said that there used to be five, but STC was the fifth and had unfortunately been lost to development, so there were only four left. She said that she had also provided a map showing the land overlaid wetlands with forested areas in Stafford County. She said that then, they could identify their Most Critical Environmental (MCE) areas. She said that green areas were where development would cause the most harm, as they overlapped with critical wildlife habitats, waterways, and wetlands. She said that these areas were also important for wildlife corridors and endangered species.

Ms. Azzara said that the next map was essentially a cost-benefit analysis, but not in the traditional sense. She said that it looked at costs and benefits that were not always quantifiable in terms of financials. She said that when examining the potential harm, green areas were where the harm was too high to both communities and the environment. She said that when looking at the areas that were fragmented in yellow, brown, and light green colors. She said that these were non-contiguous forests that had been broken up over time due to human activities.

Ms. Azzara said that these areas lacked the essence of large, intact forests like the 100-acre wood or the 400-acre wood. She said that these areas were still important, but not as critical as the dark green areas, which were the oldest and most valuable. She said that when considering responsible development, it was essential to identify areas that were outside of the green areas.

11. Julia Lewis, Falmouth District, said that she would like to discuss the water situation at the Potomac Run Swamp. She said that the black area on the provided map represented 30 or more acres that used to be water, which suddenly drained away over a matter of weeks in September and October. She said that in November 2024, the swamp looked like this, and by November 2025, it had transformed into puddles. She said she was shocked to see the change when she drove past the swamp on her way to the landfill in October. She said that she had asked her friends who live nearby if this was a normal occurrence, and they all said no, they had never seen it like this. She said that she was puzzled by how a thriving swamp could drain so quickly, losing one to two feet of water in just two weeks.

Ms. Lewis said that to illustrate this, she used a bathtub analogy. She said that there were two ways to keep it full: either by using a stopper to prevent it from draining, or by having more water flow in to recharge it faster than it can empty. She said that the Potomac Run Swamp has several overflow drains, and it was clear that the water level was two feet below the surface. She said that two weeks ago, their County Administrator addressed the public's concerns about the empty swamp, implying it was the result of a drought. She said that however, she checked

the historical data for Stafford County at drought.gov and found that they were in a mild drought by September 30, with only 100 percent rating for a moderate drought by the end of October.

Ms. Lewis said that interestingly, even in the extreme drought of 2002, the swamp did not dry up. She said that she also looked at the rainfall data from climate.gov, which showed only 3.26 inches of rain in September while the swamp was draining. She said that while they were going into another drought cycle, it was clear that the facts did not support the idea that 30 acres of water disappeared in four to six weeks, especially when other nearby wetlands were not affected. She said that there must be another explanation. She said that she was concerned about the long-term impact on this vibrant ecosystem. She said that she was asking the Board to please get a second opinion from staff to find out what really destroyed this ecosystem. She said that their first opinion, just like the swamp did not hold water.

12. Jesse Adams, Aquia District, said that a concerned citizen reached out to their organization, waterwaycleanups.org, about the Potomac Run Road and the wetlands along that road. He said that they mentioned that the water levels looked low. He said that he did not give it much thought initially, as they had a lot of ongoing work. He said that however, after hearing more concerns, he decided to visit the site with his friend. He said that what they found was alarming. He said that he had never walked across a wetland before, and they cleaned up a lot of them. He said that he would like to point out that the water levels in the swamps next to their house, along Accokeek Creek, were normal.

Mr. Adams said that if they were in a drought, he imagined the water level reduction would be similar. He said that he then researched the Stafford Tech Campus and found the map they were currently viewing. He said that the highlighted yellow section showed the parcel with the wetland in question, which was approximately two to three feet low. He said that there were also intermittent and perennial streams that were impacted by the STC development, which would feed the recharge of this wetland. He said that he reviewed public records and found that a company had conducted a thorough study on the feeder streams' flow rates and impacts.

Mr. Adams said that unfortunately, they did not continue to monitor these flow rates and impacts during the project construction cycle, nor did they recheck them manually after the land disturbance was complete. He said that this was based on mathematical algorithms and historical data. He said that he requested the Board to investigate this matter urgently and conduct a thorough study of the hydrology and flow rates to ensure that they were not facing potential environmental issues in the next five to ten years.

13. Jeff Eastland, Rock Hill District, said that he, Elena Prokos, and Jesse Adams had created "the big board," a visual representation displayed the proposed data centers overlaid on election districts, waterways, and tributaries. He said that they had used this tool at National Night Out and their educational seminars at the libraries, and it had been very effective. He said that a picture was worth a thousand words. He said that it was one thing to discuss headwaters, tributaries, wetlands, and watersheds, but it was another to put one's eyes on the actual County and see how development and construction impacted it.

Mr. Eastland said that last September, he had taken pictures at the head of Potomac Creek, which showed the devastating damage from the Vantage Data Center clear-cut and adjacent townhome clear-cut. He said that the images he had shared with the Board, Planning Commission, and County erosion and runoff experts had received positive feedback from some of you and the Commission, but the County had dismissed it, attributing it to a drought. He said that that was not true. He said that water problems in this County were caused by climate change, increased consumption, and development.

Mr. Eastland said that the elephant in the room was the data center build-out, clear-cutting, and grading, which had caused significant damage to the swamp and tributaries. He said that the map provided by Jesse Adams showed the extent of the damage, including a 500-acre clear-cut and grading operation on top of the tributaries. He said that this affected not only the wetland but also the entire area; it was strangling the wetland. He said that they had some serious problems to solve in this County, and next year they needed some serious people to solve them. He said that he was here to fight for this place and he suggested they join him.

14. Peter Durant, Falmouth District, said that he came here for two reasons. He said that first, he wanted to thank Ms. Bohmke for her years of dedicated service to their County. He said that he had had the opportunity to learn from her, and one of the most valuable lessons he had taken away was the importance of knowing one's neighbors. He said that he had been consistently impressed by Ms. Bohmke's ability to recall the names, interests, and lives of those around her. She said that she always available to lend a helping hand, whether it was at 3:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. He said that he had been in awe of her dedication and commitment to their community.

Mr. Durant said that as they made recommendations and speeches to Ms. Bohmke, he believed they should all strive to understand and appreciate the exceptional qualities she represented. He said that they should acknowledge the unique advantages they had in Stafford. He said that when they turned on their faucets, water came out. He said that they lived in a part of Stafford where they took water for granted. He said that every one of them understood how important that was, so as they considered what was at stake, as they learned their neighbor's names and values, they all must remember the Meg Bohmke rule for Stafford: know your neighbors, understand what was important to them, care about them, and value their land, power, water, wildlife, and sensitive ecosystems.

Mr. Durant said that he believed they were undervaluing the assets they had in Stafford. He said that his concern over the next year was that the Board may be tempted to sell their County short in exchange for minimal gains. He said that while progress and development were necessary, they must balance these needs with their responsibility to protect their sensitive ecosystems. He said that he would always advise them to remember the Meg Bohmke rule: know your neighbors, learn their names, listen to them, and care about them.

15. Chris Steiner, Hartwood District, said that he was here to support his fellow neighbors, and they too were experiencing well problems. He said that his property bordered the Westlake property, where a water tower was planned. He said that since this issue began, they had problems with their well, including pumps, pressure switch components, and other issues. He said that they had replaced these components, but the water supply had been inconsistent. He said that he did not think much of it until he received a phone call this morning. He said that

he had noticed the well being dug on their street, and felt that he must ask the Board for some type of intervention. He said that he was not sure what the County could do, but he was wondering if they could look into this matter and get back to the residents.

16. Carrie Sobolik, Hartwood District, said that last week, she left the Planning Commission meeting feeling absolutely flabbergasted. She said that she was not surprised by the Water Master Plan itself, but by the way it was presented to the Planning Commission and the public. She said that at the November 6 Planning Commission meeting, a 50-page document was made available, but the full document, which was actually over 500 pages, was not shared until Friday, December 5, just before a meeting on Wednesday, December 10, where the Planning Commission was expected to act.

Ms. Sobolik said that this gave their Commissioners only five days, including two days of weekend, to review hundreds of pages of material. She said that considering that many of their Commissioners worked full-time jobs, and many residents were also busy, the expectation to digest such a large volume of information in that time frame, especially during the holiday season, was unacceptable and inconsiderate. She said that she was not here to criticize the Utilities Department, but in this instance, the process was neither transparent nor considerate.

Ms. Sobolik said that it felt like a last-minute delivery that discouraged close scrutiny, particularly concerning the inclusion of the purple pipe, a new element that clearly had significant implications for data centers. She said that she would like to know if the Utilities Department was the only one that agreed that the purple pipe should be part of the master water plan under Utilities control. She said that while it made sense, data center decisions involved multiple departments and required broader coordination.

Ms. Sobolik said that the Board, as well as the Planning Commission, had many challenges ahead of them, and data centers were not the only issue. She said that she requested that the Board allow the Planning Commission extra time to fully understand this plan and make well-informed decisions regarding the Master Water Plan. She said that given their hard work this summer, she felt compelled to come and advocate for them.

17. Theodore Patton, Hartwood District, said that he was here along with his other neighbors. He said that regarding the water issue, it appeared to be a pressing concern, as water was a problem across the County. He said that wells, ponds, rivers, and streams were all running dry. He said that he believed this was largely due to the extensive development in the County.

Mr. Patton said that he was here in support because his well had been running dry. He said that he had been a homeowner for approximately eight years, and he had never had a problem with his well until about a year ago. He said that Westlake began development around a year and two years ago. He said that he was simply here to express his opinion. He said that newer wells, typically ranging from 200 to 300 feet, were experiencing issues. He said that in contrast, their wells, which were older and typically between 30 and 60 feet deep, were also experiencing problems. He said that his well, which was 60 feet deep, was considered a deep well.

Mr. Patton said that he believed that if a well was drilled deeper, it could potentially dry out shallow wells. He said that furthermore, if a well was drilled in the same vein, it would dry up

the surrounding wells and could result in a \$20,000 bill. He said that he was here to voice his opinion, and he was concerned that the County's pockets were filling up while residents were still scraping pennies together to find some water.

18. Julie Patton, Hartwood District, said that her last name was Patton; her husband's grandparents had a farmhouse on this property, and it was still standing. She said that they had elderly aunts and uncles on the street in addition to their other elderly neighbors. She said that she was thankful that she received a call today about this Board meeting and discussion was being held that so many of her neighbors were here to support. She said that there were over 12 neighbors on the street who were losing water, including her son Theodore. She said that she had lived on this street for over 30 years and had never experienced wells running dry. She said that it was a small community living on an old road that was about a mile long, and they were coming together to support each other.

Ms. Patton said that a lot of them did not have \$20,000 just waiting around in their bank accounts. She said that she personally had just recently retired and was not expecting to need an extra \$20,000 to dig a new well. She said that they took water for granted, and for those of them living in rural areas, it was a vital necessity. She said that water was essential for everyone, and she was asking for the Board's help, guidance, and consideration. She said that there was going to be a new water tower nearby at the new elementary school and they had seen the new Stafford County water pipe installations, so it was difficult to see that while their wells were going dry.

19. Molly Denham, Hartwood District, said that tonight, the Board would hear a presentation on the School Division's adopted Capital Improvement project list for FY27 through FY36. She said that she urged the Board to truly listen to what they were saying about the urgent, large-scale needs that continued to plague their schools. She said that it was easy to declare success and say mission accomplished when three new schools open next year, but they must acknowledge the years of delays and subpar conditions that have left the schools barely meeting acceptable standards.

Ms. Denham said that the public was grateful for these new schools, but they were built years behind schedule and would only provide temporary relief before they face overcrowding again. She said that as they listened to the presentation tonight, please keep in mind that five of their school facilities were 60 years old or older, and six more were between 40 and 60 years old. She said that she would like the Board members to think about the condition of a house that had been minimally maintained for 50 years. She said that she thought this was not far from where their children spent the majority of their time each day. She said that the MacGyver work the facility staff had done to keep these buildings going was remarkable, but it should not be their norm.

Ms. Denham said that as a parent, it had not been up to her standards. She said that to be clear: they did not get into this situation because the School Board failed to identify needs. She said that they dug themselves into this hole because of a long-standing disconnect between the School Board's requests and what this Board ultimately funded. She said that these gaps were not small; they stretched for years, even decades. She said that Hartwood High School was a perfect example. She said that she was thrilled that it would open next year, but the need for

that school was identified in 2007. She said that it took nearly two decades to get it funded and built.

Ms. Denham said that the number one item on the current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was the Rising Star Complex, which had been on the list since 2007 and remains unfunded to this day. She said that as someone who followed this process closely and as Chairwoman for the CIP Citizen Advisory Committee, she could tell the Board that these were not luxury requests or nice-to-have items. She said that these were real, documented needs that had been deferred for too long, and now the consequences were unavoidable.

Ms. Denham said that tonight, she asked the Board to truly hear what was identified as the Schools' needs. She said that there would be multiple joint meetings following tonight's initial presentation. She said that as a member of the public who took these meetings seriously, she asked that the Supervisors all do the same. She said that they should mark them on their calendars now, attend them, and avoid the last-minute cancellations that they had seen multiple times in the past. She said that this issue was extremely important and deserved the Board's full attention.

20. Caroline Ullman, George Washington District, said that she attended the Planning Commission meeting last week. She said that regarding the comprehensive water plan, she found it concerning that the clock started ticking in November, yet the final plan was not received until four or five days before the meeting. She said that some of the wording was vague and left room for misinterpretation, and Commissioners pointed that out. She said that she was not sure how the clock could start ticking in November when the information was not available for five or six weeks.

Ms. Ullman said that the Planning Commission needed more time to address these issues and thoroughly review the document. She said that it was too important. She said that everyone had been discussing water tonight, and she thought that said it all. She said that she believed they would need to closely examine where their water would be coming from. She said that if one subdivision could take out 12 wells, she wondered what a dozen data centers, which required millions of gallons of water per day, would do to the water table. She said that this was a question that needed to be answered, not just considered.

Ms. Ullman said that the public needed to be notified of this information and it should not be hidden behind non-disclosure agreements (NDA). She said that the public deserved that transparency because it would affect all of them.

21. Will King said that he was part of the organization Uncage Rappahannock Regional Jail (RRJ). He said that today, he would like to discuss the nature of power. He said that over the past couple of months and years, he had learned a great deal about power, having seen firsthand what happened when individuals acquired power and challenged it. He said that power had a profound effect on people, changing the way they moved in the world. He said that they began to see people as tools. He said that what struck him most about their conversations today was that everyone knew that the water issues were because of the data center.

Mr. King said that the reason the data center was there was because powerful people wanted it there, and they exerted their power to make it happen. She said that this was a trend that he saw not only at the international and state levels but also on the local level. He said that in fact, this was what power did: it pushed its will onto people below. He said that the public elected the Board to represent them and defend them against outside powers, and whatever those powers were here for was driven by money.

Mr. King said that at Rappahannock Regional Jail, he saw this dynamic playing out, from the guards to the inmates. He said that rather than understaffing an institution whose primary goal of punishing individuals, even when they had known since the 1960s that punishment did not produce positive behavioral change, they should focus on helping people restore their lives. He said that crime was nothing more than the bubbling up of past policy decisions that were healthy and good. He said that they must take action now to fix their communities and provide people with water. He said that they needed to stop allowing powerful people to run the show. He said that the way that they did that was to look up at the person dictating the course of events and say no.

22. Lisa Nguyen said that she would like to discuss the data center and her research on the topic, but she believed it was more pressing to address the issue with the swamp. She said that she had lived in Stafford County since 2003, and she had never seen the swamp in such a state of distress. She said that it was drying out, and the consequences were alarming. She said that the swamp was home to approximately 15 eagles, beavers, and blue herons, which thrived on the fish, turtles, and snakes that inhabited the area.

Ms. Nguyen said that she had moved here from Fairfax County to experience nature, but the current state of the swamp was a major concern. She said that her community was on well water, and if the swamp dried out, their wells were at risk of drying out as well. She asked if the County was prepared to provide access to County water in their area and how they were going to take care of all the people on well water. She said that the current drought was unprecedented, even worse than the drought in 2008. She said that she had seen beavers struggling to survive, with some even being hit by cars while trying to cross the street.

Ms. Nguyen said that the dam had been taken down, and the wood piles were visible, but the water was nowhere to be seen. She said that she believed the data center was likely blocking the natural water flow to the swamp and her community. She said that she strongly advised against building the data center in this location and suggested exploring alternative options that could benefit Stafford County, such as businesses or other developments that would not harm the environment.

Ms. Nguyen said that the data center's presence was not only affecting the water quality but also causing a buzzing noise that was disturbing the peace and reducing property values. She said that she was worried that the data center would ultimately harm the people living in the surrounding area, rather than helping them.

23. Kevin French, George Washington District, said that he urged the Board to approve the resolution granting an extension to allow both the Planning Commission and the Utilities Commission to meet and review the 2026 Utilities and Reclaim Water Master Plan. He said

that he respectfully requested that the Board use that period to become familiar with the plan through a work session or direct updates from staff, ensuring the Supervisors were fully prepared for the final approval.

Mr. French said that this was not a routine update of a plan; the core document alone spanned over 50 pages, addressing Stafford County's most valuable resource, water. He said that for the first time, it introduced a full chapter on reclaimed water policy, a consequential aspect that would inform future Board decisions regarding data center zoning and proffers in 2026 and beyond. He said that the plan also included over 450 pages of appendices, including technical memorandum number nine, which contained key reclaimed water assumptions and analysis.

Mr. French said that although not indexed in the table of contents, it underpinned much of the reclaimed water strategy. He said that as new Board members joined in January, he wanted to emphasize that this was not an exam that could be quickly studied. He said that he would like to briefly highlight three reclaimed water issues. He said that there appeared to be an inconsistency regarding the emergency use of potable water in the plan. He said that for two data center sites, the plan stated that potable water would remain available as an emergency backup, but staff had clarified that this was not intended or possible. He said that this discrepancy warranted further clarification.

Mr. French said that there was also uncertainty about the currency of the consultant's work product. He said that the document carried a final report from October 2025, and the chapter on reclaimed water noted that things may have changed since the plan was drafted in mid-January 2025. He said that this section was almost a year old. He said that third, there was a lack of synchronization between utilities planning and land use planning. He said that the data center standard subcommittee was instructed not to address water issues, yet the reclaimed water policy appeared to have been developed before that subcommittee began work.

Mr. French said that these points were not arguments for delay, but rather reasons for deliberate understanding on the Board's part. He said that for these reasons, he respectfully asked the Board of Supervisors to approve the extension and to actively use that time to prepare themselves for the decisions that would follow.

24. Cade Hildreth, Hartwood District, said that he was here to request that the Planning Commission be granted the additional time they had requested to rebuild the Utilities Master Plan. He said that he would like to raise critical concerns about this plan. He said that at 528 pages, this document was massive. He said that it was the first time their County had included a reclaimed water system, which was largely designed to support one specific industry. He said that he was particularly concerned because the Utilities Master Plan was prepared by Ramble, a global engineering and consulting firm that was not a neutral municipal advisor.

Mr. Hildreth said that Ramble was a major data center consultant worldwide, having assisted with over 60 billion due diligence transactions, designed and tested more than 15 gigawatts of data center space, and completed over 1,000 data center studies. He said that this represented a staggering amount of global data center capacity, which was rarely touched by a single consultancy. He said that Ramble was not the consultant that produced their previous master plans, which were produced by O'Brien and Gere (OBG). He said that he worked in market

research and consulting, and he was familiar with both firms. He said that OBG was a small to mid-sized U.S. engineering firm founded about 80 years ago.

Mr. Hildreth said that prior to its acquisition by Ramble in 2019, there was no document involvement with data center consulting for OBG. He said that at the time, Ramble was a massive global behemoth, 15 to 20 times larger than OBG by revenue. He said that while the resolution tonight stated that Stafford County Utilities Department engaged Ramble, formerly OBG, that statement was inaccurate. He said that he worked in this industry and understood that re-disclosures were necessary any time the scope expanded or there was a new project. He said that he believed the County did disclosures annually, so he was unsure why they had not been notified publicly.

Mr. Hildreth said that Ramble was aggressively hiring staff, sponsoring industry events, running Google ads, and publishing white papers about their data center work. He said that Ramble was not an impartial offer for their Utilities Master Plan, and for a plan governing Stafford's water allocation, growth, and emergency capacity, they deserved a consultant with no financial entanglements in the industry that the plan governed.

25. Jeff Adams, Hartwood District, said that he wanted to thank Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary for their service on the Board and for putting up with him. He said that a few weeks ago, he had talked to the Board about data centers and the agricultural potential of the surrounding land if put into use. He said that he wanted to show the Board what they would get out of that. He said that he had brought Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary each a leg of lamb to demonstrate what could be produced from the land surrounding data centers. He said that he was unsure of what the Hatch Act was, but he could guarantee it was less than that.

Mr. Adams said that since all of the residents of Clark Patton were talking tonight, he would like to comment that his farm had three wells and still had to pump water out of his pond for the livestock. He said that several years ago, before the data centers arrived, a house on Mount Olive Road required an astonishing four 600-foot wells and one 800-foot well to meet occupancy permit requirements. He said that he understood that \$20,000 was a significant expense, so he asked everyone consider 3,000 feet going straight down. He asked the County to consider building a water line for those people. He said that nobody asked for it, but it was the common-sense thing to do.

26. Abby Carter, Falmouth District, said that she was a Stafford County resident who had lived less than a half mile from the now former beaver swamp on Potomac Run Road. She said that she and her husband had purchased their house in 1998, drawn to the area's quiet and ecologically diverse nature, one of the features nearby being the swamp. She said that for more than 20 years, they had watched the ebb and flow of Potomac Creek and its wetlands.

Ms. Carter said that never, regardless of the severity of drought, had the swamp been as dry as it is now, after suddenly draining in September. She said that she was deeply upset by the cavalier manner in which the drying of the swamp had been treated by County staff, particularly a staff member untrained in waterways and hydrology, who announced publicly that the swamp was emptied in less than a month due to a drought that was not as severe as two others in the last several years. She said that she found this shameful.

Ms. Carter said that she suspected that the clear-cutting of the Stafford Technology Campus land and the uncontrolled sediment, trash, and noise from that development had far more to do with the degradation of the swamp than the drought. She said that in the last six months, she had seen two beavers killed on the roadways nearby, a sight she had never encountered before. She said that even during severe droughts, the beavers managed their swamp well, ensuring they had two feet of water necessary to maintain their lodges.

Ms. Carter said that she did not know whether the beavers were driven from their homes due to noise, silt, or toxic runoff, but as someone who had lived nearby for a long time, she would be willing to hazard a guess. She said that wholesale degradation of 500-plus acres of forest, less than a mile and upstream from their home, was a likely cause. She said that furthermore, the eagle family that they had watched start as young nesting pairs five or six years ago, growing into a large family of more than 10 early last spring, was no longer able to subsist where there had been plenty. She said that all but one or two were gone, and those two now flew over her house daily as they looked for food elsewhere.

Ms. Carter said that they were all losing their homes along with this steady loss of viable wild land, they lost buffers necessary for their survival and well-being as part of a web of nature. She said that all their activities had consequences, and many of those were felt most by the flora and fauna that had no voice. She said that she stood before the Board tonight to give them voice. She said that she would also like to encourage the Planning Commission to give the water plan more time to study. She said that clearly, water in the County was an issue and would continue to be an issue.

27. Rick MacGregor, Aquia District, said that he gave his best wishes to the departing Board members and thanked them for their service. He said that he thanked the Board again for asking the Patowomeck Tribe for records. He said that years ago he was encouraged to join the Tribe because he was told there was proof of his Indian heritage. He said that he was not seeking documentation of the recognition process, as Charlie Payne had offered. He said that he was seeking the proof they claimed to have in 2010. He said that Mr. Payne had stated at the last Board meeting that documentation and oral testimony from the Patowomeck started in 1996, but he did not bring it to the meeting.

Mr. MacGregor said that perhaps Mr. Payne did not bring it because in 1998, the Virginia Council on Indians stated that it did not justify recognition. He said that Mr. Payne made it clear that the Patowomeck Tribe were recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. He said that the Commonwealth had made it clear that the reason why was because there were records and other proof that they were Indians, but no one reviewed it except for the VCI, who were ignored. He said that Mr. Deyo, former tribal historian, was not a doctor, the other scholars were unknown, and there was no documentation proving descent.

Mr. MacGregor said that Resolution 150 was given under false pretense and should be deemed null and void. He said that Mr. Payne said that the Stafford Board of Supervisors, Stafford Historical Society, Colonial Williamsburg, many experts, and many anthropologists from William & Mary supported recognition. He said that that was true, but support was not documentation. He said that the anthropologists told the Tribe to sue them for questioning them. He said that Mr. Payne said that the Tribe had been recognized for 100 years, but that

was not true. He said that the real Tribe disappeared in 1666 and the current, fake tribe was created in 1995. He said that the citizens of this tribe were not Indians. He said that over 300 years of records proved that they were descendants of the earliest English settlers that took Indian land.

Mr. MacGregor said that he was one of them, and they were his family and friends. He said that he grew up with them, worked with them, went to church and school with them. He said that they were good people for the most part. He said that however, they were not Indians. He said that they were lied to. He said that yes, they wanted to call back recognition wrongly bestowed on white people. He said that he invited anyone who thought he was acting shamefully to have lunch with him, and they could see all of the records he had proving these people were not Indians. He said that many records could be found at discoverstafford.org and searching "Patawomeck."

28. Jerrilyn Eby MacGregor, Rock Hill District said that she would begin dissecting the Patawomeck Tribe's Federal Recognition Bill. She said that the 20 findings in the bill purported to be a synopsis of the tribe's history, but 15 of these findings contained significant errors. She said that the bill's author appeared to have relied on the assumption that no one would take the time to verify the information. She said that the Virginia Council on Indians had rejected the PITV's application in 1998, largely due to the group's inability to demonstrate a continuous existence as a functioning tribe.

Ms. MacGregor said that this was not surprising, given that there had been no tribe in Stafford since the 1660s. She said that the text of the federal bill attempted to create this tribal continuity where none existed. She said that for example, the finding that read, "In July 1666, the General Council of Virginia declared war on the Patawomeck Tribe, most of the men were killed and most of the women not already living in English families were captured as slaves." She said that in 1666, the Council did order the destruction of the Patawomeck, but there was no record of the order being carried out.

Ms. MacGregor said that based solely on the existence of the order, the PITV extrapolated that the braves were killed and women were enslaved. She said that the massacre was central to their narrative, but was based on nothing. She said that however, the bill's author used the massacre story to set the stage for the claim that the Patawomeck descendants continued living in the area unknown to the neighbors because they were supposed to have married into the local English families. She said that proving such a claim required historical documentation which the group did not provide to the VCI or to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. MacGregor said that this only became a problem if someone questioned the narrative. She said that while 1666 was the last appearance of the Patawomeck Tribe in any known historical records, they did not know what became of them. She said that anthropologist Dr. Helen Roundtree said that they may have moved down to Portabago, but no evidence supported their remaining here in hiding for the next three centuries. She asked the Board to get this stopped before it was too late.

CHAIR REMARKS

Mr. Diggs said that on behalf of the Board, he wanted to express to the public that they were just as disappointed that they had to cancel their tree lighting event due to the weather. He said that the main factor was that the majority of their performances were by school children, and all school activities were canceled that day due to the weather. He said that additionally, weather reports predicted freezing rain that evening during rush hour, and they did not want to put anyone at risk by holding the event.

Mr. Diggs said that to mitigate this, they did stream the tree lighting live with just a few staff and Supervisors, allowing everyone to still participate, albeit online. He said that he hoped the weather cooperated next year, and they could host an even better event. He said that they would have abbreviated hours over the next couple of weeks during Christmas and New Year's. He said that County offices would be closed on December 24 through December 26 as well as January 1. He said that the landfill would be closed at noon on December 24th and Christmas Day, as well as January 1. He said that he hoped everyone had a wonderful holiday and enjoyed their time with their family and friends.

Mr. Diggs said that he looked forward to working with everyone in the new year to move Stafford forward and make their community even better. He said that the Stafford County Department of Economic Development was pleased to announce that the Director of Economic Development, Liz Barber, had earned the Certified Economic Developer designation from the International Economic Development Council, the industry's highest professional honor. He said that this designation was awarded to professionals who demonstrated comprehensive expertise across the fields of economic development.

Mr. Diggs said that to achieve this distinction, candidates had to complete extensive prerequisite training, approximately 175 classroom hours, and pass a rigorous two-day, three-part examination that evaluated knowledge and real-world application of essential economic development principles. He said that Ms. Barber now joined a select group of just over 1,250 active certified economic developers worldwide.

PRESENTATIONS

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WINTER WEATHER REPORT, PRESENTED BY KYLE BATES, RESIDENT ENGINEER

Giovanni Esposito, Assistant Residency Administrator of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Fredericksburg Residency, said that he would present to the Board the 2025-2026 Winter Weather Briefing. He said that to begin, he had a map of the VDOT Fredericksburg District, which included the Fredericksburg Residency Office. He said that within this District was where they coordinated their snow removal operations, and had coordinated their snow removal operations with the other eight districts around the state for many years.

Mr. Esposito said that their district encompassed 14 counties, including Gloucester, Mathews, Lancaster, and those in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. He said that they also coordinated with their partners further south for resources and response during snow removal operations. He said that specifically, the Fredericksburg Residency Office covered three counties: Stafford, Spotsylvania, and Caroline. He said that within these counties, they had extensive road

networks, including over 300 miles of interstate, 600 miles of primary roads, and 4,000 miles of secondary roadways.

Mr. Esposito said that additionally, they had 12 commuter lots, with six located in Stafford County. He said that furthermore, they had 511 bridges and large culverts, which were particularly sensitive to winter weather due to their elevated surfaces and tendency to freeze first. He said that the Fredericksburg Residency Office was staffed by over 120 employees who were fully engaged in snow operations during winter weather events. He said that moving on to their equipment and materials, the residency had 44 pieces of VDOT state equipment, including plows, loaders, and motor graders. He said that they also housed 655 pieces of hired equipment, provided by private industry partners, which performed snow removal operations on primary and secondary roadways.

Mr. Esposito said that the interstate also used over 250 pieces of private industry equipment, totaling nearly 1,000 pieces that they had ready to deploy in the worst-case scenario storms. He said that for materials, they had over 83,000 tons of salt, sand, and treated abrasives, including their new 14,000-ton facility in south Stafford, which would serve Stafford and the greater Fredericksburg area. He said that this new facility would be a significant asset for them. He said that they also had over 100,000 gallons of salt brine tanks, which were ready to deploy as needed for pretreatment.

Mr. Esposito said that to prepare for winter weather events, they held regular briefings with their partners, including the National Weather Service, DTN, and held these briefings 72, 48, and 24 hours prior to an event to ensure they had a good understanding of the forecast and could prepare accordingly. He said that based on these forecasts, they developed a mobilization plan, which they deployed between a level one storm and a level five storm, with the level five being those storms with eight to 12 inches or more of snow. They scaled their response accordingly, mobilizing equipment 12 to 18 hours prior to smaller events.

Mr. Esposito said that for their larger events, they typically prepared 18 to 24 hours in advance, equipping contractors and stocking supplies. They also pre-deployed and staged trucks as they approached the immediate hours before the storm. He said that all VDOT employees were essential to their operations during high-level storms; they were an all-hands-on-deck agency, everyone within VDOT played a critical role, from road designers and planning staff to truck drivers. He said that they were fully engaged 24/7, with 12-hour shifts throughout the duration of the storm, to ensure their snow removal operations continued uninterrupted.

Mr. Esposito said that one key aspect of their operations was their incident command system, which they had been standing up for the past three to four years. He said that this system enabled them to facilitate communication with local and state partners, including Virginia State Police (VSP), Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), first responders, and local Emergency Operations Centers. He said that they also held regular briefings throughout the storm to coordinate response, closures, and other needs across their sections. He said that regarding pretreatment, they may apply salt brine up to 72 hours prior to a storm if conditions permitted.

Mr. Esposito said that however, they had specific criteria for when to apply pretreatment, including temperature requirements and the potential for rain to wash off the salt brine. He said that the primary purpose of salt brine was to prevent initial snowfall from binding to the road surface,

giving them a few hours of time to clear the roads before the snow became effective. He said that they focused on critical areas, such as the I-95 corridor, ramps, and bridges, as well as primary roads like Route 1, Route 17, and Route 3, which carried the most traffic. He said that they prioritized these roads, followed by roads leading to public safety facilities, such as fire and EMS stations, hospitals, and other essential services.

Mr. Esposito said that they aimed to maintain access to those roads as much as possible before moving to their higher volume secondary routes. He said that these included Garrisonville, Courthouse, Mine, Shelton Shop, Mountain View, Poplar, and other secondary roads that carried significant traffic through an area. He said that then, they moved on to the subdivisions and lower volume secondary roads, which were more residential areas. He said that finally, they cleared out their commuter lots to ensure commuters could access those areas. He said that regarding subdivisions, their operation involved local area headquarters handing out maps and highlighting routes for their snowplow drivers.

Mr. Esposito said that this systematic approach allowed them to clear out local areas and subdivisions during higher level storms. He said that they activated their VDOT plow tracker map during storms with two inches or more of accumulated snow, providing better progress updates. He said that for subdivisions, they treated main subdivision streets first, aiming to provide emergency responders with access as quickly as possible, and then to hit smaller side streets, cul-de-sacs, and other areas. He said that their goal was to reach the most residents as quickly as possible, with extra emphasis on known areas that could be problematic, such as hills, curves, and intersections. He said that they sanded and salted these areas to improve traction before clearing them out.

Mr. Esposito said that finally, they did not use brine pretreatment in subdivisions, reserving it for highest volume roadways. He said that moving on to frequently asked questions, one question was often, "When will the plow get to my street?" He said that they could not provide an exact timeline, but VDOT asked that residents wait at least 48 hours after the storm ended before reporting that their state road had been missed. He said that if significant snowfall occurred, this timeframe may be longer; they asked that residents wait 48 hours after the storm ended and their goal was to clear every road within that timeframe. He said that another question was, "Why are they plowing the other roads in my subdivision first?"

Mr. Esposito said that the answer was that they prioritized clearing roads carrying the most traffic first. He said that their goal was to create a single lane, 8 to 10 foot wide path that allowed emergency responders to access the subdivision as needed. He said that they were not aiming to clear the edge of pavement to the other edge of pavement from the start. He said that instead, they were trying to create a path that allowed them to access as many people as quickly as possible before making another loop around and clearing the cul-de-sacs and side streets. He said that another question they received was, "I have a medical emergency, how is an ambulance going to reach me?"

Mr. Esposito said that the answer to that question was always to not call VDOT during a medical emergency; call 911 first. He said that emergency responders directly coordinated with their VDOT Traffic Operations Center, and their center could deploy resources to create a path, if necessary, to ensure emergency responders could reach the necessary area. He said that they had

resources on standby to address this situation. He said that another common question was "Why doesn't VDOT put sand and salt down before it snows?" He said that they did apply liquid salt brine to the roadway initially, but they did not apply dry salt or sand because over time, the traffic would likely displace the salt and sand from the roadway, leaving it on the shoulder.

Mr. Esposito said that when they did apply something, it was usually salt brine on higher volume roads. He said that another question was, "Why does the plow push snow in front of my mailbox or at the end of my driveway, and can VDOT come back to remove the snow?" He said that unfortunately, the answer was that they could not remove the snow from these areas. He said that they strived to clear the roadway as much as possible, but in extreme conditions, it may be unavoidable. He said that they advised their crews to avoid pushing snow in front of mailboxes and driveways whenever possible; however, their goal was to clear the roadway as much as possible.

Mr. Esposito said that minimize double work, VDOT recommended shoveling snow in front of the driveway to the right, so the plow could push it past the driveway. He said that they also had VDOT staff assigned to monitor roadways for control and identify slick spots to treat first. He said that additionally, they used automatic vehicle locator devices on all VDOT plows to track their location and ensure they were not standing still or causing issues. He said that in the highest-intensity storms, they would initiate their Virginia Plows website, which provided updates on their progress in clearing residential areas.

Mr. Esposito said that this resource provided a useful overview of their progress. He said that drivers and residents could play a crucial role in helping them prepare for and respond to storms. He said that before a storm, it was essential to closely monitor forecasts and plan to adjust travel and commute accordingly. He said that they understood that not everyone could avoid travel during a storm, so they encouraged drivers to avoid travel unless absolutely necessary. He said that if one must travel, they should ensure they had essential items such as gas, wiper fluid, proper tires, emergency kits, medicine, warm clothes, flashlights, and other necessary supplies in case he became stranded or encountered difficulties; safety and preparation were key.

Mr. Esposito said that during and after the storms, one should check the roadway conditions on the Virginia 511 app, follow the recommendations of public safety agencies, and exercise caution when traveling. He said that they also recommended following VDOT's driveway shoveling tips, giving plows ample space, and being patient. He said that their goal was to reach everyone within 48 hours after the storm had passed. He said that they had several resources available for citizens, including the 511 Virginia app provided live updates on roadway conditions, categorizing them as minor, moderate, severe, or noting road closures.

Mr. Esposito said that the app also featured traffic cameras that showed the roadway live. He said that VDOT's Customer Service Center was available 24/7, allowing them to report hazards or ask questions through their online website or by calling 1-800-4-ROAD. He said that their Communications team regularly updated their website and social media channels with winter weather information and news releases.

Ms. Allen asked how VDOT ensured construction areas were safe so they did not become prone to accidents during construction.

Mr. Esposito said that they worked closely with construction staff to ensure the roadways and work zones were clear, allowing for efficient snow removal operations. He said that they coordinated directly with them before the storm. He said that if there were areas that required special attention, they informed VDOT staff and crews to be mindful of them. He said that in some cases, they would move the plow more directly to push snow past these areas, minimizing potential issues. He said that the coordination and awareness they had in place generally proved effective in these situations.

Ms. Allen said that she understood VDOT's prioritization of roads for snow clearing, but there were some communities that only had one exit and entrance. She said that last year, her neighborhood's homeowners' association (HOA) had to hire a private company to plow the road because they were lower down on VDOT's list. She asked how VDOT prioritized that for tertiary roads.

Mr. Esposito said that for subdivisions, their goal to establish an 8 to 10 foot wide access path on every subdivision street as soon as possible. He said that they were prioritizing the main entrances and exits, but it took time. He said that they were asking for 48 hours of access during the worst-case storms, but in reality, they often got less than that. He said that they were focusing on the higher volume areas.

Mr. Esposito said that Telegraph Road was a good example of a higher volume arterial that would likely be addressed early. He said that he acknowledged that the side streets and subdivisions off of Telegraph would require attention once they had taken care of the primary roads and secondary roads, which would provide emergency access first and foremost, before fully clearing out those areas.

PRESENTATION OF A PROCLAMATION TO RECOGNIZE SUPERVISOR MEG BOHMKE
FOR HER YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE ON THE STAFFORD BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS AND TO THE CITIZENS OF STAFFORD COUNTY

Mr. Diggs presented the Proclamation to Recognize Supervisor Meg Bohmke.

Ms. Bohmke accepted the Proclamation and gave remarks. She said that she wanted to thank Chairman Diggs and all her colleagues for the proclamation. She said that she wanted to have her husband, Dave with her today as he had been an unbelievable hero and her foundation over these many years. She said that she knew that being married to an elected official could be challenging, as she was constantly working. She said that as her husband knew, she truly loved her work and the community. She said that they both loved the community, and they worked together as a team. She said that there were times when he would answer her phone, posing as her administrative assistant. She said that she wanted to thank him especially for everything he had tolerated over the years.

Ms. Bohmke said that she also wanted to extend her gratitude to her constituents. She said that they had entrusted her with this position for 16 years, which was a long time. She said that she had taken it very seriously and had always loved this community. She said that she felt like she had worked very hard to serve it. She said that as her colleagues were aware, she had a strong affinity for data and enjoyed digging into details. She said that she had always asked questions of the County Attorney and Administrators because the devil was in the details.

Ms. Bohmke said that at the end of the day, she always had a personal reminder on her desk that she worked for the people, not the developers. She said that this was very important to her, and it was difficult when working with developers to not see their perspective, and one had to walk a fine line. She said that she also would like to thank all the volunteer firefighters, particularly the Martha Newtons of the world. She said that when she first joined this Board, they only had one paid fire system, Station 2. She said that Falmouth Fire Station handled more calls than any other station, and they had only volunteers at the time.

Ms. Bohmke said that 11 years later, most of their Fire and Rescue station had paid crews, so things had changed a lot over the years. She said that she was also proud of their joint health benefit plan with the school division, which they established in 2014. She said that at that time, they did not have such a plan, and it was a significant achievement. She said that they had established their three-on-three committees for the Board and School Division, which still stood today.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to thank County staff, who had been incredibly responsive to her colleagues and constituents. She said that their work was greatly appreciated, and she recognized the value they brought to this role. She said that she would like to thank Ms. McClendon, as she had the pleasure of serving with her for the longest, and she remembered how much she had learned from her time on the Planning Commission. She said that she was an excellent County Attorney, and she had always been impressed by her dedication and expertise.

Ms. Bohmke said that to Mr. Ashton, he had been with them for a little over a year now. She said that he had walked into the data center frenzy before he even had a chance to meet all his department heads. She said that she wanted to thank him for his leadership, and she had enjoyed working with him. She said that to the new Board, she wished them all the best. She said that she knew they would work hard on the Board priorities next year. She asked them all to remember to have respect for each other, as the decisions would be challenging.

Ms. Bohmke said that finally, she wanted to acknowledge that they did not do anything on this Board without four votes. She said that some of the accomplishments she would mention were not hers alone; she could not have done them without her colleagues. She said that these included rebuilding Stafford High School, renovating three elementary schools, bringing the School Division and County health benefits under the same plan, and adding the multi-use path to the Chatham Bridge. She said that she would also like to thank Kyle Bates from VDOT for his advocacy over the past couple of years for a multi-use path on the new Falmouth Bridge, which would be 12 feet wide.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had kept pushing for these initiatives, but it was not just her - the City of Fredericksburg also played a crucial role. She said that revising the data center standards and approving the Rappahannock River crossing were also very important achievements. She said that she wanted to extend her gratitude to the entire community. She said that she and her husband loved Stafford. She wished everyone a Happy Hannukah and Merry Christmas.

PRESENTATION OF A PROCLAMATION TO RECOGNIZE SUPERVISOR MONICA GARY
FOR HER YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE ON THE STAFFORD BOARD OF
SUPERVISORS AND TO THE CITIZENS OF STAFFORD COUNTY

Mr. Diggs presented the Proclamation to Recognize Supervisor Monica Gary.

Ms. Gary accepted the Proclamation and gave remarks. She said that it felt like her life flashed before her eyes and she had lived an entire lifetime once serving at least one term, so she truly commended Ms. Bohmke for her several terms. She said that the Proclamation included a lot of accomplishments that she was proud of. She said that as a public comment mentioned earlier, when individuals possessed power, it was essential that they used it to benefit all of the people around them. She said that she almost cried when Mr. Diggs spoke about fighting for people who did not have a voice or perhaps were not listened to, and that was so important to her.

Ms. Gary said that there were a lot of wonderful things that they got to do on this Board, and while they may have some power as a Board, their real power was inherent to all human beings. She said that their constituents and staff had the power to speak their mind, and that was incredibly important. She said that when she first ran for this seat on the Board, she looked at the County's organization chart and shared it, because it was important to remind everyone that the members of the public were at the top of that org chart.

Ms. Gary said that the citizens put them on the Board, could take them out, and could tell the Board what to do. She said that if they did not listen, the public had the power to point out when something was wrong. She said that she would be okay with whatever happened as long as she did the right thing, and she acknowledged that she did not always do the right thing and had to take full responsibility for that. She said that she was happy with that and hoped the rest of them could be when they made mistakes and could support one another in the future. She asked the public to understand that they were people who made mistakes, but they also must be held accountable.

Ms. Gary said that they must keep their integrity, because without it, nothing mattered. She said that when they did have power, they must stay aware of how they used it. She said that they all must recognize that they had that power. She said that she was so grateful for serving these four years with those on the Board and others who had moved on. She thanked everyone.

REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Bohmke – reported that the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission had announced it the previous Thursday, and they had hired Katie Cho as the new CEO of Virginia Railway Express (VRE). She said that Ms. Cho came from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, where she was the chief engineer for Boston Public Works and program manager at the Massachusetts Port Authority. She said that she believed Ms. Cho would be an excellent leader for VRE in the future, and she would face numerous challenges during the construction of the long bridge. She said that she would like to extend a warm welcome to her.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had her last meeting with VRE scheduled for the following Friday. She said that she had forwarded each of the Supervisors a memo today, which they believed was one of the best-written memos on their existing budget and future budget. She said that they would be voting on that Friday. She said that she would like to inform everyone that they were proposing a 5% increase to VRE fares next year, and their jurisdictional subsidy, which was \$2.8 million in their current budget, would remain the same for next year.

Ms. Bohmke said that they were proposing a flip, where one year there would be a fare increase, and the following year the jurisdictional subsidy may increase. She said that they had not had a fare increase in several years. She said that she had recently had the opportunity to hand out frozen turkeys to over 250 families at the food bank. She said that she would like to commend Dan Maher, the executive director and his staff, on their phenomenal job. She said that she was a pleasure wishing people Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays, and hopefully making their Christmas or Hanukkah a little more festive.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to request the Board's attention to the Hartwood well issue on Clark Patton Road. She said that she was surprised to hear about it during public comments, and she was sure Mr. English would have a request coming to the Board. She said that she would like to request that the Board consider a hydrology analysis of the Phase 1 project at the Stafford Technology Center data center campus, as it related to Potomac Run Road. She said that she was aware of the drought conditions but believed there may be more evidence to consider, and as they knew they were doing the project in phases, they may need to examine its impact on wildlife and creeks. She asked the Chair to poll the Board on having staff dig deeper into that issue. She said that she was unsure of the appropriate next step.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was not opposed to the hydrology study. She said that she would appreciate it if Mr. Ashton could share any additional information he had on the topic, including any recommendations he may have. She said that she was curious about what the next step would be in trying to determine why the swamp had dried up.

Mr. Ashton said that he thought that the first step was to convene a task group, and he had some ideas on who he would like to include from a staff perspective to begin defining the issue. He said that during the earlier conversations, he had taken some notes, and he would like to share his thoughts with the Board. He said that to start, they needed to review the site plan at STC and determine what they were doing regarding their MS4 permit in terms of permitting on the ground, as well as inspecting it as it got completed or as-built assessments. He said that this was the first step.

Mr. Ashton said that he also believed that they needed to address the question of determining a causal relationship between the two issues. He said that as he reviewed the materials provided by one of the residents, he was trying to identify one of the tributaries running through the site, but he could not see it on the map. He said that therefore, he believed they needed to determine that. He said that he thought the initial step was to determine the causal relationship of the problem they might be experiencing. He said that once they had a clear understanding of the issue, they could then look at the various factors related to the site itself, such as their MS4 permit, and define the problem they were trying to solve. He said that from there, they could decide whether to involve hydrology studies or the involving the state.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was amenable to Mr. Ashton's approach. She said that they should identify the problem first.

Ms. Allen asked if they could pull the STC's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permits. She said that perhaps she had presumed incorrectly, but she thought that DEQ considered the downstream impacts and other factors when issuing those permits.

Mr. Ashton said that Stafford would, under its MS4 permit, conduct the review on behalf of DEQ and in accordance with DEQ's requirements. He said that having an MS4 permit allowed the jurisdiction to bypass some of the review requirements, which would otherwise necessitate sending the review to Richmond for DEQ's evaluation, a process that would be time-consuming. He said that with an MS4 permit that required periodic renewal, they could conduct these reviews at the County staff level, but they must still meet DEQ's standards. He said that this was one area where he would like to scrutinize the County's review process and its execution on the ground.

Dr. Yeung said that she had been advocating for developing a framework and categories, and it was coming together where she believed they were realizing that they could not examine one aspect without considering the others. She said that for Utilities, they had this water issue, the environment, beavers, eagles, and other wildlife, as well as density, the rivers, generators, and utilities.

Dr. Yeung said that they needed a framework to effectively address these various factors, she suggested they consider hiring a consultant for next year. She said that while she appreciated the expertise of their constituents and data center professionals, she believed having an independent, evidence-based expert would be beneficial for their staff and the Planning Commission for not just one aspect but all of them.

Mr. Diggs said that there was Board consensus that staff would research this issue.

Mr. English – stated that in reference to Potomac Run, he had lived in the area his entire life, and he had never seen that swamp dry up. He said that he was seriously concerned and also thought it was because of what was going on with the data center construction nearby. He said that he was similarly concerned about his constituents in Clark Patton. He said that tomorrow, they would put their heads together and find a solution. He said that because of the fees incurred by the residents who needed new wells, he would like to ask the Board to reimburse people for the \$300 fee and suspend future fees on Clark Patton until they could fix the problem. He said that he had also been in contact with the Westlake people about this issue, as well. He said that he would like to poll the Board on reimbursement and suspension of fees for this neighborhood.

Ms. Vanuch said that before they polled the Board, she would like to clarify something. She said that in order to waive fees, she believed it must be applicable to the entire County. She said that they could not simply select specific applicants to waive fees. She said that she thought there must be some type of ordinance or legislative action involved.

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said that ultimately, she would recommend that Mr. English poll the Board to gauge their interest in doing that and then staff could conduct research to determine its feasibility, taking into account the limitations Ms. Vanuch had mentioned. She said that this would enable staff to present something to the Board that was actionable and informed.

Mr. English said that he appreciated that.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was amenable to that. She said that the Westlake subdivision was approved in 1980, if she recalled correctly. She said that she was definitely in favor of Mr. English's request.

Ms. Allen said that she was in favor of the request, but she was wary because this development was so old. She said that she was unsure what this decision would open them up to, as there may be other subdivisions that could have affected people. She said that therefore, she wanted them to be extremely careful and avoid issuing refunds across the County.

Mr. English said that staff would look into that.

Ms. Allen said that she would support staff researching it, but she did not want the County to make promises to their constituents that they could not keep. She said that it was an unfortunate situation, but when things were done so long ago, the impacts had been unknown until this point.

Mr. English said that he understood Ms. Allen's point, but it was the County's responsibility to address it now.

Dr. Yeung said that she would be amenable to looking into what exactly happened, but she was not sure about reimbursing fees. She said that she wanted to know more about the approved proffers in the rezoning ordinance for the Westgate project. She said that specifically, she was interested in learning about any proffered mitigations for water, wells, public water extension, or cash proffers that were earmarked for the residents living on this road with the existing water infrastructure. She said that it would be possible to amend the request to include an inquiry into these matters.

Mr. English said that he would not know anything about that until their meeting tomorrow; this was a preliminary ask for right now.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would support Mr. English's request. She said that she was going to ask staff for additional information as well, but she was happy to include it in her Board comments instead. She said that it was similar to what Dr. Yeung mentioned, but she would like for their legal team to send the Board the proffers for Westlake, as they were quite old. She said that she believed it was essential that Mr. English needed to have visibility of that, because without the support of the Board, it would be difficult for him to get access to that.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would recommend that the Board direct staff to pull those old proffers and provide them to Mr. English before his meeting. She said that she would like them to look into the location of the water and sewer lines and identify the closest connection to Clark Patton, as she did not think the County could reimburse the residents for their wells. She said that however, they could explore options through their County ordinances, such as waiving fees for them to connect to the water and sewer system.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had intended to ask a question that a resident later mentioned, which was about how shallow the wells were. She said that she would advise the residents to consult with an attorney, because if the cause of the wells drying up could be linked to the nearby Westlake neighborhood, that may provide some evidence that could be helpful in rectifying the situation. She said that the County was limited in their ability to intervene in this type of situation, so she thought the Board should support Mr. English in making sure he had all available information as he assisted his constituents through this difficult issue.

Ms. Allen said that she had an action item she wanted to discuss, which was not only to pull the proffers but also to ask Development Services about any bonds or financing options available for the infrastructure from a Utilities standpoint. She said that she thought it was worth exhausting all avenues from a developmental perspective to see what resources were available to them.

Ms. Allen said that she understood that the situation was difficult, but she was concerned about the existing infrastructure issues they faced in general. She said that for example, she recalled a resident in her district a few years ago who had to pay \$40,000 to connect to the County's utilities after a subdivision was built. She said that she did not want to have to consider reimbursing everyone in the future.

Mr. English said that when people were out of water, they had to do something. He said that in reference to the drill wells, he would note that they had no effect on the older board wells. He said that the drill well should not affect those shallow wells. He said that he was looking forward to their meeting tomorrow, where they would attempt to resolve some issues for Clark Patton. He said that he wanted to assure everyone that he was actively working on this in conjunction with staff and the Health Department.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted to voice his support for Mr. English as he worked to address this issue in his district.

Mr. Ashton asked what time the meeting would be.

Mr. English said that he needed to meet with Ms. Krauss to schedule it, but it would be sometime in the afternoon. He said that he would like to extend his gratitude to Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary for their service. He said that it was a pleasure to serve with both of them, and he wished them all the best in their future endeavors. He said that he was confident that they would be fantastic in whatever they pursued.

Mr. English said that additionally, he would like to express his appreciation to Post 290 of the American Legion and Mountain View Rescue Squad for their efforts in organizing the annual food drive. He said that they consistently did a tremendous job. He said that he wanted to finally wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Ms. Bohmke asked staff to please ensure that the proffers for Westlake were sent to the two new Board members.

Ms. Gary – reiterated her gratitude to the community and to the individuals serving throughout the County and in her district. She said that she felt blessed to have two volunteer fire stations and the Aquia Harbor Police in her community. She said that the harbor itself was a unique and special place, and she had a deep appreciation for it. She said that as a resident of Brooke, she had a strong connection to the area and the people who lived there.

Ms. Gary said that the Harbor and Brooke were distinct entities that maintained a level of independence and it was fascinating to observe the way they coexisted. She said that she was also grateful for the community she had had the opportunity to serve. She said that once again, she wanted to thank those she had had the privilege to work alongside. She said that she wished everyone a happy holiday season and a Happy New Year.

Ms. Vanuch – stated that she wanted to focus her comments on saying goodbye to Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary. She said that her first interaction with Ms. Gary, who was just starting her term on the Board, was just two days after his swearing-in – it was a catastrophic snowstorm that shut down I-95. She said that she was not sure if she had picked her up, but she did remember they had ended up riding together in her truck. She said that they met at the Emergency Operations Center, and then drove to Prince William County to pick something up.

Ms. Vanuch said that by then, they were starving, and it was almost 1:00 a.m. so the only restaurant open was El Gran Charro, so they stopped for some food. She said that it was a crazy way for Ms. Gary to start her time on the Board, but it was very indicative of how it was to serve as an elected official. She said that they just got thrown right in and handle whatever came their way. She said that she would never forget that experience.

Ms. Vanuch said that she also remembered her first experience with Ms. Bohmke, who was a familiar face from her time on the Planning Commission. She said that they had supported Ms. Bohmke to serve as Chair and when COVID-19 happened. She said that in that difficult time, there was no better person to lead their community than Ms. Bohmke. She said that she wanted to thank her for that. She said that Ms. Bohmke had taught her so much throughout her time on the Board and she talked to her every morning and after every Board meeting on their way home.

Ms. Vanuch said that this was the way they should be working together, and she would miss her dearly. She said that she wanted to thank the families of the departing Board members, as no one truly understood the toll this role took personally and on families. She said that even when they were at Board meetings, people often did not realize the additional meetings the Supervisors attended in the evenings and on weekends, the phone calls they took.

Ms. Vanuch said that when Mr. Bohmke mentioned that he answered Ms. Bohmke's phone as his assistant, she had personally experienced that. She said that she would like to extend her gratitude to their families, as it was indeed a very difficult job to hold. She said that she thanked them both so much, and she wished them both the best of luck in the future.

Dr. Yeung – thanked Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary for all the work they put in on the Board. She said that she believed Ms. Vanuch said it best. She said that she would like to share some updates from her regional meetings. She said that on December 4, they had the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) meeting, which was held online. She said that on December 15, they had the NVTC/PRTC.VRE legislative forum, held at the George Mason School of Policy.

Dr. Yeung said that the PRTC legislative agenda focused on long-term sustainable funding for Omniride public transit programs and public transportation funds. She said that the main reason for this agenda was to oppose state-level creation of unfunded mandates, which the schools also faced. She said that on December 5, due to inclement weather, they had a Christmas tree lighting ceremony held online on Facebook.

Dr. Yeung said that on December 8, they had a Central Rappahannock Regional Library (CRRL) meeting, where they discussed the fiscal report, library usage, and the circulation of the Q1 report for FY26. She said that they also voted on the community foundation, which will take in revenue from community and business donations to support the library. She said that currently, they rely

on funding from the Rappahannock Friends of the Library donations. She said that this was a positive development for CRRL. She said that they also had a Joint Board and Schools meeting, where they discussed the specialty schools' process, results, and the costs that would not be maintained by the state, which became an unfunded mandate.

Dr. Yeung said that on December 9, they had the Boards, Authorities, Commissions, and Committees (BACC) Christmas event, where she thanked their volunteers and wished them a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and whatever they celebrated over the holiday. She said that on December 10, they attended the Recycling Board, where Ms. Bohmke was also present. She said that outside of her Board and regional committees, she attended the Fredericksburg food distribution for people in need on December 13 and December 15. She said that Ms. Bohmke was serving the turkeys, and she was helping with the vegetables and fruits.

Dr. Yeung said that she knew they were looking for a bigger warehouse, and Ms. Krauss would be exploring options and sharing that information with them. She said that she previously mentioned Clark Patton Road and the approved proffers. She said that on December 15, she attended the Rappahannock Goodwill Committee. She said that she would like to reiterate the importance of considering the framework she had been discussing with regards to Utilities, water, and data centers. She said that they needed to look at everything simultaneously to avoid going through the same issues repeatedly; they needed to examine all of them as separate categories within a larger framework.

Ms. Allen – congratulated North Stafford High School's Wolverines on representing the County at the state level. She said that although they did not achieve the final results they wanted, she was proud of the grit, pride, and honor they showed in representing their community this past season. She said that she was particularly proud of each and every one of them. She congratulated the schools for their support and ensuring a memorable sendoff for the team.

Ms. Allen said that watching the event was emotional for her, as she grew up in New York City and these kinds of events were a bit different there. She said that experiencing high school and middle school sports had allowed her to get in touch more with what it was like for kids to grow up in suburbia. She said that she wanted to extend her gratitude to the Wolverines for their great run. She said that they made everyone proud and she looked forward to seeing them bring home the championship next year.

Ms. Allen said that to County staff, she wanted to acknowledge the significant challenges they had faced during this difficult year, and they had truly risen to those challenges. She said that despite limited resources, they had consistently demonstrated leadership and growth. She said that she had seen many of them go above and beyond their roles to help with requests and acts outside of their scope. She said that Ms. Krauss handled everything asked of her and tried her best to help in any way she could. She said that she wanted to express her gratitude to each and every one of them.

Ms. Allen said that she also wanted to thank the County Attorney's office. She said that their attorneys had been invaluable in providing guidance and navigating complex situations.; their expertise and professionalism had been a significant asset. She said that she also wanted to thank County Admin for their outstanding work, their Sheriff's Office, Fire and Rescue, and EMS for

their tireless efforts in protecting their community. She wished them all a happy holiday season and a new year filled with joy and love with their families and loved ones.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to also mention her two departing colleagues. She said that to Ms. Gary, one thing she would forever be grateful for was her willingness to be vulnerable, to express her emotions, and to often be the emotional voice or heart of the Board when some of them may not be equipped to handle it. She said that this took great courage, and she had consistently shown a willingness to speak up and wear her emotions on her sleeve, fighting and defending what she believed in, whether right or wrong.

Ms. Allen said that she could promise that if Ms. Gary was in your corner, she would go down swinging for you. She said that for the Aquia District, she knew Ms. Gary had fought tirelessly for conservation and protection over the past four years. She said that she hoped as Ms. Gary stepped into her next phase of life, they offered her the same grace she had given them. She said that when she prayed, one of the first things she said was, "May God grant us all grace."

Ms. Allen said that she wished her and her family the best, and she hoped that this upcoming year would bring her peace, new opportunities, and a chance to dedicate her passion. She said that her voice was very much needed in this community. She thanked Ms. Gary for her service over the past four years; she would miss her.

Ms. Allen said that to Ms. Bohmke, when she ran in 2019, it was one of the worst elections she had endured. She said that she never forgot the hurtful things that were said about her, and one of the first people to reach out to her was Ms. Bohmke. She said that she remembered Ms. Bohmke asked to meet at Stafford Hospital, where ironically she now worked. She said that they sat for hours and Ms. Bohmke acknowledged the difficult campaign she had endured and the hurtful misinformation put out in the community during that time, but that she respected her and looked forward to working with her.

Ms. Allen said that in the six years she had been on the Board, they did not always agree, but Ms. Bohmke always made sure they had respect. She said that she was one of the most caring people she knew, and she always led with her heart. She said that she greatly respected Ms. Bohmke's tenacity, her structured approach, and her systematic leadership style. She said that it was not easy to dedicate 16 years of her life to serving a community, sacrificing part of herself and her family for this greater good.

Ms. Allen said that Ms. Bohmke's commitment to leadership was evident in her consistent presence and willingness to step up, whether on this Board, in regional committees, or as President of VACo, making history in the process. She said that she had left a lasting impact on this community, and she hoped that in her retirement, she would receive everything she deserved. She said that she hoped Ms. Bohmke would have the opportunity to enjoy time with her grandkids and loved ones, knowing that she had given generously to the Board, and for which they would always be grateful.

Mr. Diggs – wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Hannukah this year. He said that his heart was heavy due to their departing Board members. He said that additionally, he wanted to offer prayers for those affected by the shooting in Australia and prayers for the Reiner family. He said that one of the things that had been weighing on his mind was a quote from Ms. Swain, who

said, "We are stewards of the land, and we're just passing through." He said that his resonated with him, and he agreed that it was essential to take care of their land and leave it for future generations.

Mr. Diggs said that as he reflected on this, he was reminded that their time on this earth was short, regardless of their lifespan. He said that when he was done with this life, he would like to hear those words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant," and strive to live up to that standard in his work. He said that he would like to offer two apologies. He said that firstly, to Erin Sanzero, with whom he had a heated exchange during their data center conversations. He said that his tone and response were inappropriate, and he wanted to apologize for that.

Mr. Diggs said that next, he wanted to apologize to Ms. Vanuch due to a video he posted and later regretted what he had said in it. He said that Ms. Vanuch had told him not to worry about it and that he did not have to say anything, but he had promised he would publicly apologize. He said that he was wrong for having done that, and asked for her forgiveness. He said that he would also like to express gratitude to the George Washington District for the opportunity to serve and to the constituents who held them accountable.

Mr. Diggs said that their input kept them humble and focused, and he appreciated the perspective they had given him, particularly Ms. Bohmke. He said that it was essential that their discussion was fact-based. He said that during some recent difficulties, she provided him with valuable perspective, and he appreciated her guidance. He said that he would like to express his gratitude to his colleagues for the opportunity to serve as Chair. He said that he truly believed this was the American dream, as he had risen from poverty and overcome trauma to become a leader within the Sheriff's Office and now the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Diggs said that when he went back home to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, people who usually never looked at Board meetings were waiting to see what happened next. He said that he got to this position because there were people on the Board who believed in him and knew he could accomplish this. He said that Ms. Bohmke stated earlier that they did not do any of this alone; they did it as a team and together, and he wanted to thank them all for that support.

Mr. Diggs said that he wanted to express his appreciation to County staff, who were the backbone of their organization. He said that they worked tirelessly behind the scenes, allowing them to focus on their roles. He said that while they may receive recognition, the staff's dedication was essential. He said that he would sincerely miss Ms. Bohmke and Ms. Gary. He said that he hoped that all of his colleagues knew that despite any disagreements they may have as Board members, he would always be there if they needed him.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to make one final comment that had been mentioned by her colleagues. She said that staff was the reason for the continuity in this organization and they did not do this work for the same reasons as some Board members at the end of the day. She said that staff's roles were not as political because they were behind the scenes and did not get the glory. She said that staff usually went unnoticed until something went wrong, and she was very grateful for all that they did. She said that Ms. McClendon's department did so much work that they would never know or understand, yet none of this would be held together without it.

Ms. Gary said that she sincerely hoped that the incoming Board would support staff as best as possible. She said that she hoped they would all do the right thing in that regard. She said that she wanted to thank staff very much for everything and would miss them all.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

ITEM 1. UTILITIES; CONSIDER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE STAFFORD COUNTY CODE TO REPEAL SEC. 17-28 "PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES AT TERMINAL RESERVOIRS" AND CREATE AND ORDAIN SEC. 17-28, "TERMINAL RESERVOIRS" TO UPDATE THE SECTION AND INCLUDE LAKE MOONEY; PROPOSED ORDINANCE O25-41

Jon Brindle, Department of Utilities, said that tonight they were discussing Ordinance O25-41, which addressed the protection of their drinking water reservoirs. He said that following the presentation, staff would be requesting a vote of approval. He said that to provide some background on the Stafford County water supply, it was 100% surface water drawn from Smith Lake and Lake Mooney. He said that currently, they were withdrawing approximately 4.2 billion gallons of water per year. He said that the average production rates were 7 million gallons of drinking water per day from Smith Lake and 4 million gallons from Lake Mooney.

Mr. Brindle said that the Smith Lake Reservoir was supplied by Aquia Creek, Beaver Dam Creek, and several tributaries in the north. He said that the Lake Mooney Reservoir was pumped from the Rappahannock River. He said that although Abel Lake was not currently being used, they had long-term plans to utilize it as an additional water supply source. He said that the protection of their drinking water was critical to the quality of the water produced by their water plants.

Mr. Brindle said that traditional plants and advanced filtration plants like Lake Mooney were designed to remove physical contaminants and disinfect the water. He said that however, chemical contaminants were more challenging to remove, and most water treatment plants were not equipped to handle these. He said that to protect the quality of their drinking water, they must protect the source water itself. He said that over the recent years, there had been several issues that had led to this Ordinance, including requests to build on or near the water, unauthorized withdrawals from the reservoirs, and illegal or improper access to the reservoirs and boats.

Mr. Brindle said that the original Code section, 17-28, was established in 1979 and had remained unchanged since then. He said that the primary reason for presenting this Ordinance to the Board today was to add Lake Mooney to the list of protected reservoirs. He said that the Ordinance also included several new prohibitions, including restrictions on gasoline-powered boats, modifications to setback limits, and increased pollution protection from pesticides, gasoline, and people. He said that additionally, they were adding public safety measures, such as a setback from the intake for boats, to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of the public.

Mr. Brindle said that last year, there had been an issue at the Lake Mooney boat ramp, where the water level had dropped low enough to make it unsafe for people to launch their boats from the ramp. He said that this was an additional section of code that they had added. He said that the new section of code did cross-reference the park rules, as well as their erosion and sediment control sections of the Code. He said that as structured in other parts of the County Code, they had included

a civil penalty for those who violated this section of the Code. He said that the additional restrictions staff were proposing today were consistent with neighboring jurisdictions.

Dr. Yeung said that this issue was first brought up in 2024. She asked why it was not fully resolved at that time, what had changed since, and why Board action was not taken at that time.

Mr. Brindle said that nothing in the proposed Ordinance had changed since the County Attorney approved it in 2024. He said that he could not speak to why it had not been brought to the Board before today.

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that there were several ordinance changes that needed to be completed before bringing it to the Board, so it took them about a year to get those other changes in line.

Dr. Yeung asked if the Board should be made aware of those other ordinance changes.

Mr. Edwards said that the Drought Management Ordinance was likely the most significant one they would be reviewing today. He said that it was a requirement from the DEQ, and as such, it was one of their top priorities.

Ms. Gary said that the civil penalty with the fine appeared to be a flat \$100. She asked if it did not take into account the cost of cleanup if someone was spraying pesticides or other substances. She asked if it was a blanket fine that applied regardless of the circumstances.

Mr. Brindle said that the civil penalty was \$100 per day per violation, similar to other sections of the Code. He said that a class 3 misdemeanor could also be imposed if it was egregious.

Dr. Yeung asked who was managing the issues of non-compliance and Code violations.

Mr. Brindle said that according to the Ordinance, County staff had the authority to report on an issue, but the actual enforcement rested with the Sheriff's Office.

Dr. Yeung asked if it was complaint-based.

Mr. Brindle said that yes, County staff would have to be aware of it, or someone would have to inform them that something was happening.

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

1. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that this item concerned water bridging and the loop and the addition of Lake Mooney to the scope of the water project alignment. She said that at the Board of Supervisors, September 2, 2025 meeting had heard this under section 17-28, which included the terminal reservoir, pressure zone upgrade 342-15, Enon Road to Centreport Parkway and Mountain View Road, as described as the Lake Mooney water treatment effort. She said that row right-of-way acquisition had begun on April 2025. She said that according to staff, there had been no impact on Stafford County.

Ms. Maxson said that hearings from 2023 to 2025 and impact assessments pursuant to section 27B-12 during development review and process 27B-11 should catch impacts, however, impact statements were not accurate when stated by Planning and Zoning hearings and others. She said that the historical record of section 17-28 had not been a concern, as stated by staff. She said that at 5 hours and 25 minutes, the Utilities Department had stated that Stafford County had never experienced severe drought conditions. She said that she should have noted the date, but she believed she had lost it.

Ms. Maxson said that within their packet today, they were addressing water drought conditions, which concerned section 17-28 and Lake Mooney intakes and treatment cycles. She said that number nine in their packet today, where Utilities were considering declaring a drought watch and authorizing the Administrator to implement the Stafford County Drought Management Plan, which included stages two and one B to protect the water supplies.

Ms. Maxson said that on November 17, 2025, a drought watch had been issued for the Piedmont region, as noted on page 368 of 402 pages today. She said that section 27B-16A impacts to the RPA required that impact reviews be directed to prevent impacts upon the public. She said the construction of half of a house over their RPA line could potentially take precedence for data centers, now that it had been passed by the Chesapeake Bay commissioners.

2. Julia Lewis, Falmouth District, said that one of the slides presented showed drinking water protection, and a bullet point mentioned that water plants filter and disinfect, but were not capable of removing chemicals. She said that she had previously spoken with Mr. Edwards about the wastewater treatment plant and how the water was filtered and released back into the creek. She said that she was curious about this because she had concerns about the inability to remove chemicals, as this was a concern for their drinking water, which was also affected by pollution. She said that she would appreciate clarification on this reference.

Mr. Diggs closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Mr. Brindle said that addressing the filtration, the treatment process at a wastewater plant differed significantly from that of a drinking water plant. He said that as previously discussed, the reason protecting source water was crucial for drinking water plants was that neither of their plants employed a reverse osmosis system or a carbon system. He said that consequently, chemical contaminants such as gasoline or pesticides were not effectively removed through their filtration treatment process.

Mr. Brindle said that instead, their process focused on removing sediment, which contained a substantial amount of contaminants, and disinfection to eliminate bacteria and viruses. He said that some water treatment plants possessed more advanced filtration capabilities. He said that they were currently exploring an upgrade at their Smith Lake facility to achieve this, but at present, they did not have the necessary capability.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Ordinance O25-41.

Ms. Bohmke said that to clarify, they were considering the upgrade for Smith Lake, but not for Lake Mooney.

Mr. Edwards said that they could remove some pesticides and petroleum products from the water, but the main goal was to prevent them from entering the water. He said that this was the reason for the Source Water Protection Plan, which was a requirement from the state. He said that one of the treatment technologies they used was powder activated carbon, which was injected at the plant just before the main treatment process. He said that they did have this technology at Lake Mooney. He said that approximately two years ago, he believed there had been a potential issue reported by the Rapidan Service Authority, which they had addressed.

Mr. Edwards said that one of the actions they took was to stop pumping from the Rappahannock River, but they also took precautions by starting to use the powder activated carbon feed. He said that notably, they did not have this technology at Smith Lake, and it may be something added to the plant. He said that alternatively, they could use granular activated carbon (GAC), which was typically placed at the end of the treatment process.

Ms. Bohmke asked if it was already included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and if so, she would like to know how far out it was in the program.

Mr. Edwards said that that project was included in the CIP. He said that they had recently completed the request for proposal (RFP) to select an engineer to design the project. He said that it was likely that the design RFP or design contract would come before the Board for consideration in January or February.

Ms. Bohmke said that she appreciated learning that they were moving forward with it now.

Dr. Yeung asked when Abel Lake would be used and if it would have to conform to the new Code.

Mr. Brindle said that the current plan for Abel Lake, as they had designed it, involved installing a raw water feed that would draw water from Abel Lake and pump it to the Lake Mooney treatment plant, where it would be treated if an additional water supply was needed.

Mr. Edwards said that one aspect he would like to add was that Lake Mooney was originally designed to double in size. He said that consequently, when that expansion occurs, they would likely need to build a pipeline from Abel Lake to Lake Mooney to provide an additional water source for the plant. He said that this plan was first proposed in 2018, and it was estimated to be approximately 15 to 20 years away.

Mr. Diggs called the vote on the motion to approve Proposed Ordinance O25-41.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

ITEM 2. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES; CONSIDER REPEALING AND REPLACING COUNTY CODE CHAPTER 27B, "CHESAPEAKE BAY PRESERVATION AREA," TO ALIGN WITH CHANGES TO STATE CODE; PROPOSED ORDINANCE O25-38

Emily Torrey, Assistant Director of Development Services, said that she was here to provide a staff presentation on the required update to Chapter 27B of Stafford County Code, which was the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance. She said that the first slide provided a brief overview of why this Ordinance was before the Board tonight. She said that the purpose of this item was to hold a public hearing on proposed amendments to Chapter 27B and to request Board action on adoption.

Ms. Torrey said that in terms of background, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality updated the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations. She said that as part of those updates, localities were now required to incorporate resiliency assessments and tree preservation standards into their local Chesapeake Bay Ordinance. She said that Stafford County's existing Chapter 27B did not fully reflect those updated state requirements, so these amendments were necessary to ensure that the County remained in compliance with state law and DEQ guidance.

Ms. Torrey said that before they moved forward with discussing the amendments themselves, she would like to briefly discuss what a resource protection area (RPA) was. She said that they were all familiar with the buffer area and where it was applied in the County. She said that an RPA was a 100-foot vegetated buffer that already existed in County Code around tidal wetlands, tidal shores, and certain non-tidal wetlands and perennial streams.

Ms. Torrey said that the purpose of the RPA was to protect water quality by filtering runoff and reducing pollutants before they reached the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. She said that within the RPA, land disturbance and development were limited, and any proposed encroachment must follow a specific review process and mitigation requirements, which were outlined in Chapter 27B. She said that it was worth noting that RPAs were not new; the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act was adopted in 1988, and this Ordinance did not expand or further restrict what RPAs or where RPAs applied.

Ms. Torrey said that the proposed changes addressed how existing standards were administered. She said that for further background, the subsequent slide illustrated the regulatory framework that applied to wetlands and waterways in Virginia and how those authorities overlapped. She said that depending on the type of resource, projects may fall under jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Virginia Marine Resource Commission (VMRC), their local Wetlands Board, as well as their Chesapeake Bay Board.

Ms. Torrey said that Chapter 27 specifically implemented the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act requirements at the local level. She said that the graphic on the right showed the distinction between perennial intermittent and ephemeral streams. She said that for purposes of Chapter 27B, RPAs were associated with perennial streams and connected in contiguous wetlands and not every drainage feature on site was perennial. She said that the intent of including this slide was to show the County's role under Chapter 27B was one part of a broader state and federal regulatory system to protect water quality.

Ms. Torrey said that the proposed amendments did not change those jurisdictional boundaries, nor did they expand jurisdictional authority to non-perennial features. She said that she would like to take one quick moment to discuss the perennial stream versus temporary streams graphic. She said

that to give the Board a general idea of what was considered perennial or not, perennial streams typically had water in them, although there were additional criteria that were required.

Ms. Torrey said that temporary streams were dependent on groundwater and would either have water or not have water in them. She said that RPAs were only located near perennial features and wetlands that were contiguous to perennial features. She said that the significance of this was that the application of RPAs on a property significantly limited development near perennial features and connected or contiguous wetlands. She said that on the next slide, she had included a visual example showing two residential developments, one developed prior to the adoption of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and one developed after its implementation.

Ms. Torrey said that as it could be seen, without buffer requirements, development tended to occur very close to streams. She said that this proximity had two impacts: first, impervious surfaces and managed turf areas near streams contributed to degraded water quality through increased runoff pollutants; second, structures located near streams were more susceptible to flooding and erosion, increasing long-term risk to both property owners and the County. She said that the RPA buffer helped address both of these issues. She said that it protected water quality while also reducing flood risk and increasing resilience over time.

Ms. Torrey said that the next slide highlighted the key updates and proposed amendments to Chapter 27B. She said that first, the Ordinance now required a resiliency assessment for any proposed development within the RPA. She said that this assessment evaluated factors such as flooding, sea level rise, and storm surge, and was required under the updated state regulations. She said that second, the Ordinance strengthened tree preservation standards within RPAs. She said that mature trees were to be preserved to the maximum extent practicable, and when removal was necessary, replanting was required. She said that this was only within the RPA buffer itself.

Ms. Torrey said that more specifically, the processes for removing a mature tree were more cumbersome, to disincentivize mature tree removal. She said that for example, tree surveys were now required to be submitted and verified by staff. She said that third, the Ordinance added several new definitions, including terms such as mature tree, nature-based solution, and adaptation measure. She said that finally, the amendments clarified but also increased the permit review process. She said that if a project proposed disturbance within an RPA, the application must include required resiliency assessment and tree information to be considered complete.

Ms. Torrey said that together, these updates aligned the County's Ordinance with state law, improved predictability for applicants, and provided staff with clear standards for review. She said that in conclusion, staff's recommendation was to adopt Ordinance O25-38, which repealed and replaced Chapter 27B. She said that the goal of the amendments was to ensure compliance with state law, to enhance climate resilience and environmental protection across Stafford County.

Ms. Torrey said that these updates also supported the County's strategic priority of growth management for community sustainability. She said that with the Board's approval tonight, Stafford County would be aligned with current state requirements and better positioned to protect water quality and reduce flood risk while maintaining consistent and fair processes for property owners.

Dr. Yeung asked if there was a fee for the assessment.

Ms. Torrey said that the fee would be incorporated into the Chesapeake Bay Compliance Plan application, which already existed. She said that as part of this application, they would be updating the resiliency assessments. She said that when proposing development within an RPA, the applicant would need to submit the required information under the Chesapeake Bay Compliance Plan application. She said that this would include additional requirements such as a water quality impact assessment, perennial flow determination, and the updated resiliency assessment will be added to that.

Dr. Yeung asked if staff would need to review recent data center applications under these new regulations.

Ms. Torrey said that data centers undergo the same review process as any other development. She said that they required the Chesapeake Bay Compliance Plan application, which included the perennial flow determination. She said that this determination helped the County identify areas of wetlands, perennial streams, and then a map of the RPA boundary. She said that they reviewed this information and either concurred or disagreed. She said that if they agreed, the developer must provide RPA boundaries. She said that if they proposed impacts to the RPA, they must submit a water quality impact assessment.

Ms. Torrey said that they would then be required to submit a resiliency assessment. She said that the water quality impact assessment explained the effects on water quality, while the resiliency assessment focused on flooding impacts. She said that for instance, if a developer proposed a structure within an RPA that was vulnerable to storm surge or sea level rise, the resiliency assessment would indicate that it may not be a suitable location for the structure due to increased flooding risk.

Dr. Yeung said that in terms of Development Services, she assumed they were working with Utilities and other departments to ensure everyone was in sync with their water planning.

Ms. Torrey said that yes, every application underwent a thorough review by all departments, and they were in frequent communication regarding all the applications.

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

1. Karen Fox, Hartwood District, said that one of her concerns when reviewing the Chesapeake Bay Authority and state regulations was the elimination of CRPA, which provided critical resource protection, and its amalgamation into the RPA. She said that although she understood the intention behind this change, making it cleaner and easier, her primary concern was that 100 feet was not sufficient for real protection. She said that she believed it should be the bare minimum that was required.

Ms. Fox said that she hoped the Board would have the authority to determine when an area was critical for Stafford County and could be expanded or moved. She said that she acknowledged their Dillon Rule State limitations. She said that she was excited to see the mature trees and maintaining those trees and the riparian buffers. She said that she believed

that some of the concerns and comments they had heard tonight could have been avoided with this new ruling. She said that she was eager to see the Board step up and acknowledge the value of this idea.

Ms. Fox said that nevertheless, she thought they needed stronger enforcement and a more rigorous test to what developers were telling them, as it largely relied on trust. She said that they were relying on the developers and the County to ensure the water quality assessment was accurate. She said that she worried that they may be placing too much faith in developers' honesty. She said that they must ensure that they were protecting their waters.

2. Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, said that yesterday's meeting, December 15, 2025, Chesapeake Bay and Wetlands agenda was removed from the online platform and all previous agendas ahead of it were no longer available to the public. She said that this was due to a lack of staff review and the potential conflict of interest that may exist in committees and government shutdown records. She said that today, the Development Services Department was considering repealing and replacing the County Code Chapter 27B, Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area, to align with changes to the state code. She said that this raised questions about how it would affect non-federal mandates.

Ms. Maxson said that in their packet under section two, there appeared to be a proposal to pre-date the Chesapeake Bay Protection Act, which showed 18 existing houses built over the RPA zone and likely a proposed pump line area within this map. She said that the yellow dash lines on page 140 of today's agenda depicted this. She said that the developer had collected on the 18 house sales, and it was unfortunate that this impact was now being seen during this hearing. She said that the post-CBPA Act depiction on the same page showed double the residency capacity. She asked if it was a negative impact, and if so, she wondered how it could be delineated as described in Section 27B.

Ms. Maxson asked how building on RPA and the present impact be delineated today with the new creation and the ordainment of Section 17-28. She said that this may be a critical issue for Stafford County water in the years of 2025 and 2026. She said that in Section 17B-16, Administration Waivers, Section 16B-17 and 18, Special Exceptions, page 132 in their agenda today, and Section 17B-20, Appeals, page 132, there was relevant information.

3. Caroline Ullman, George Washington District, said that she would like to briefly mention the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area information., the Virginia County 2026 Legislative Program, and the Tri-County City Soil and Water Conservation Annual Report, all emphasized the importance of conserving trees, mature trees, the Rappahannock River, water, and soil. She said that it was strikingly ironic that these efforts focused on preserving the very elements the County was depleting with development of data centers. She said that they were eliminating wildlife corridors and mature trees, and potentially draining the water table; they were undermining these conservation efforts. She said that she wanted to highlight this discrepancy.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve Proposed Ordinance O25-38.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS BY DEPARTMENTS

ITEM 5. COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND AUDIT RESULTS FOR FY2025

Andrea Light, Chief Financial Officer, said that she would like to introduce Mike Garber, a partner with PBMares.

Michael Garber, Partner with PBMares, said that his firm had completed the audit of their financial statements for the County, and they had issued an unmodified opinion on that document, the financial statements and footnotes. He said that there was also an opinion on internal controls and compliance. He said that they did not identify any findings or issues that required reporting. He said that however, he did want to point out a couple of items that were different from prior years. He said that they had implemented new GASB standards this year, and GASB 101 required them to restate the beginning fund balance of certain funds.

Mr. Garber said that restatements usually indicated some type of error, but in this instance, it was simply a new standard that they had to follow. He said that the single audit process for the County's federal dollars had been delayed due to the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) had failed to issue the compliance supplement in March and April; it was just released in November. He said that they had now received the supplement, and they were finishing up the remaining work. He said that they expected to submit the report by the end of this month. He said that the County's report was due to the state of Virginia on December 15 and it was submitted yesterday, so everything was submitted on time.

Mr. Garber said that they were working on a few other small items, including a report due to DEQ and their landfill. He said that overall, the audit had gone as planned, and they had been able to complete it without any issues. He said that everything was provided to the audit team fully and in a timely manner. He said that he was happy to answer any questions the Board may have.

Dr. Yeung said that she understood that they were technically sound, but she would like to inquire about any long-term fiscal perspective concerns that they may have.

Mr. Garber said that he did not review financial statements for long-term issues in the future. He said that someone had described him as an auditor who "came in to bayonet the wounded." He said that as a result, he was examining what had happened; he did not typically perform forecasts.

ITEM 4. VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRE-SESSION REPORT FOR 2026, PRESENTED BY LAUREN GILBERT OF ADVANTUS STRATEGIES

Lauren Gilbert, Advantus Strategies, said that they were just one month away from the start of the General Assembly session, and she expected it to be a very busy session. She said that the first two weeks would see new members join the delegation, including two representatives from Stafford County. She said that they would have at least 13 new members, as special elections were ongoing. She said that the inauguration of the new Governor would take place during the first full weekend,

and committee meetings would begin shortly after. She said that it would be a quick start to a long session.

Ms. Gilbert said that Governor-elect Spanberger had already begun making committee appointments, focusing on areas such as Transportation, Health and Human Services, public safety, and homeland security. She said that Stafford's current delegate, Candi Mundon King, had been designated as Secretary of the Commonwealth and would be leaving her position. She said that Prince William Supervisor Margaret Franklin won her primary election for the Democratic nomination and would be filling her vacancy in the coming days. She said that they were also expecting announcements for Education, Veterans Affairs, and the Secretary of Administration in the coming weeks, all of which were important to Stafford County.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had been in touch with the current members of the delegation, as well as Delegate-elect Stacy Carroll, to build relationships and ensure she was equipped to represent Stafford County's issues. She said that their top legislative priority for the upcoming session, as per the County's Legislative Program, was the 1% local option for school construction. She said that they were confident that Senator McPike and Delegate Rasoul would be patronizing legislation, and Delegate Cole may do the same. She said that they expected this to be signed by Governor-elect Spanberger, so it had been an effort that Stafford has been spearheading for many years and they were pleased to be leading the charge on this issue this upcoming session.

Ms. Gilbert said that they would be working closely with VACo and Virginia Municipal League (VML) to align with bills that could impact Stafford County, including those that may add requirements, diminish local authority, or create unfunded mandates. She said that as localities, their voices were strongest when they were united. She said that Senator Durant shared with them that when she was approached by the Governor's Office for budget priorities, she identified her top priority was helping Stafford County secure financial assistance for the real estate tax exemptions for 100% disabled veterans.

Ms. Gilbert said that they would be reviewing the Governor's budget draft tomorrow to see if this was included. She said that it would be a long-term strategy for them, as Stafford County needed immediate help addressing this issue but also that the budget forecast was challenging, given the economic slowdown in Virginia. She said that to address this, they had developed a multi-pronged approach and various strategies to implement in the near, medium, and long terms to help build remuneration for Stafford County. She said that as usual, they would be seeking reimbursement for the lost real estate revenue that Stafford was not receiving to make this program more sustainable.

Ms. Gilbert said that they had had great success in the interim by engaging with VACo and VML to get them more invested in this issue. She said that they recognized that Stafford County was not the only locality dealing with this, although Stafford was experiencing it to a significant extent. She said that they had been doing excellent work in understanding best practices in other states with similar programs to see if they could learn from their experiences and explore potential strategies to borrow from their approaches.

Ms. Gilbert said that one of the main things they would be addressing this year was finding a budgetary solution to help the Commissioners of Revenue Offices cope with the increased

workload resulting from these applications. She said that this task was the only state-mandated task not included in their workload indicators. She said that Stafford County alone had approved 1,100 applications last year, representing a 25% increase over the previous year, and this number did not account for denied applications.

Ms. Gilbert said that this was a significant amount of work for small offices, which were not factored into the state's budget calculations. She said that they would be exploring this as a short-term solution to make the program more sustainable. She said that they would also continue working with VML and VACo to support a tax study, as there was ongoing conversation in Virginia about their tax structure, and she believed this issue should be part of that conversation.

Ms. Gilbert said that VML and VACo were prominent players in this space, and they could rely on them to help elevate this issue. She said that they were also planning to increase education efforts, having reached out to the Veterans Caucus to present to them during the session, which was effective for them last year. She said that their goal was to build knowledge of what this program looked like in the long term. She said that they were happy to be advocating for Stafford County again during the General Assembly session in Richmond.

Ms. Gilbert said that she would also like to take a moment to thank their outgoing Supervisors, Supervisor Bohmke and Supervisor Gary. She said that Supervisor Bohmke was serving as Chair when she began and had been incredibly welcoming and helpful, bringing valuable institutional knowledge. She said that Supervisor Gary had been part of the Legislative Committee at that time and she wanted to thank her for her service-minded approach and engagement. She said that they would miss working with both of them and thanked them for their service.

Ms. Allen asked what their options were for the veterans' tax exemptions depending on the Governor's budget. She said that she was wondering if, in the short term, the state could offset the costs of the program by providing more funding for schools. She said that she was also curious about their local authority over data centers and artificial intelligence (AI), especially in light of the President's executive order. She said that it would certainly have an impact on their state and would likely have downstream revenue impacts.

Ms. Gilbert said that in terms of AI and data centers, that was a bill area they tracked for Stafford County and ensured they had regular communication with staff regarding developments in this space. She said that the state was still working to understand the implications of the President's executive order. She said that the Virginia General Assembly's Joint Committee on Technology and Science (JCOTS) had been working to establish a framework for generative AI and other similar technologies. She said that the power generation required for data centers would be a significant topic of discussion this session, and Advantus would be working to make sure that Stafford County would have their concerns represented.

Ms. Gilbert said that in terms of school funding and the budgetary process, Governor Youngkin's outgoing budget would include a full two-year budget bill and a "caboose" bill addressing any amendments to the existing budget based on actual revenues. She said that both bills would be reviewed by the General Assembly for amendments. She said that they would work with the delegation to submit budget amendments to secure remuneration for the Stafford. She said that

they would consider various approaches, including seeking full remuneration, partial remuneration, or support for the schools.

Ms. Gilbert said that given the economic slowdown in Virginia, full remuneration was unlikely, but they would still advocate for it to highlight Stafford County's efforts to support veterans in the community. She said that they had drafts, but a clearer understanding of the Governor's budget would emerge once it was released. She said that they were working with the delegation to determine the potential approaches to that issue.

Ms. Allen said that they had previously discussed the potential of asking for state assistance for creating separate electricity taxes for data centers so that the costs of the grid were not being passed onto individual households across the state. She said that the Board had discussed this as a priority.

Ms. Gilbert said that she could assure the Board that General Assembly members had been meeting, even as recently as this week, to discuss the costs of power generation for localities and residents and explore potential solutions within this General Assembly session.

Dr. Yeung said that in terms of the unfunded mandate and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) study, she understood that they moved away from that due to the criteria. She asked if there was any update on what that would look like, or what Senator Durant had put forward in terms of reimbursement.

Ms. Gilbert said that the Governor typically reached out to members of their party to inquire about any essential items that should be included in the budget. She said that Senator Durant's staff informed her that their sole request was remuneration. She said that she believed this was based on a budget amendment proposed last year, which she was requesting again. She said that they would know tomorrow. She said that she did not have any additional details to share, as the Governor would present his budget tomorrow.

Ms. Gilbert said that in response to Dr. Yeung's question regarding unfunded mandates and the JLARC study, she was wondering if she was asking about specific legislation that would impose an unfunded mandate on the locality. She said that generally, they scrutinized any legislation that would cause significant financial burdens on the locality and stood in opposition to such legislation. She said that JLARC had been conducting several studies, and she was happy to discuss these further.

Dr. Yeung said that it was clear that the educational criteria was flawed, and the state was aware of this. She said that therefore, she assumed that they were either planning to revise it or had already made changes to it, although she was uncertain about their current stance on the matter.

Ms. Gilbert said that in terms of the JLARC study on education funding, the interim group did not meet during this past period at all, and they were surprised to see that. She said that Senator Hashmi would be moving on to become Lieutenant Governor, and the General Assembly's recent budget included some of those recommendations, so they were eager to see what the next steps would be. She said that she understood that any direct funding would be a challenge due to the economic slowdown.

Ms. Gilbert said that nevertheless, the focus was on reviewing the overall algorithm for funding schools. She said that the last update indicated that a consulting group had been secured. She believed that the algorithm was complex, and the consultants were taking a cautious approach to ensure that any changes did not harm localities. She said that some states had completed this process in a shorter timeframe, but their approach had had negative consequences for local governments.

Ms. Gilbert said that other states had taken 10 years to complete the process, and Virginia aimed to avoid a similar timeline, but were working with private consultants to develop a more equitable funding system. She said that as they moved forward, she anticipated receiving updates on budget amendments and the discussions of Governor Youngkin's outgoing budget.

Dr. Yeung said that she recalled Governor-elect Spanberger had mentioned she would try to reduce utility costs and also mentioned data centers paying a higher rate. She said that she had mentioned in the Water Basin Commission meetings having levels for consumers, small businesses, distribution centers, and data centers. She said that she was unsure if anything like that would be introduced at the state level, so she would ask Ms. Gilbert to keep an eye out for anything like that.

Ms. Gilbert said that based on what she was hearing on the ground, it was almost certain that legislation similar to that would be introduced. She said that when that happened, she would ensure that it was flagged on their bill tracker list for the County's review, and they could express their support for it as they saw fit.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

ITEM 3. STAFFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) PRESENTATION

Chris Fulmer, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Operating Officer for Stafford County Public Schools, said that the Clerk had distributed their Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document for this year and he may reference a few pages as they discussed it. He said that the actual large capital projects list was on page 19. He said that one aspect he would like to emphasize tonight was that this year's CIP would look fairly similar to last year's, as they focused on maintaining stability rather than making significant changes.

Mr. Fulmer said that he first wanted to provide a final update on their major construction projects for this calendar year. He said that as they may recall, Dr. Smith had provided an update last month on some of their major projects. He said that it was not often that they were opening three schools in one year. He said that they were currently nine months away from opening three brand new schools next year, so he would like to give a brief update on each project.

Mr. Fulmer said that first, Hartwood High School was still on track and on budget. He said that one notable achievement was that they had finalized their logo for the Hartwood Stallions. He had included an updated picture from December 11, 2025, which showed the construction progress on the outside. He said that while they may not see it, the inside of the school was also making great progress. He said that likewise, their two elementary school projects, Falls Run and Crow's Nest, were both on time and within budget.

Mr. Fulmer said that they were currently about 70% complete for Falls Run and 60% complete for Crow's Nest. He said that they had been able to apply the efficiencies they had identified in Falls Run to Crow's Nest, which had helped them make up ground. He said that both schools would start on time and open with their final completion. He said that Drew Middle School was also coming along well, with renderings nearing final approval. He said that they were currently putting out to bid in February, with an expected opening in August 2028. He said that it would be located on Oak Knoll Farm on Cliff Farm Road.

Mr. Fulmer said that the Hartwood Elementary School replacement project was their third elementary school prototype and was tagged for the Westlake proffered site. He said that they were currently under design on this site and expected to go out to bid in the spring of 2026. The opening date was expected to be the same as Drew Middle School, August 2028. He said that he would also like to provide an update on their North Stafford High School Performing Arts Wing. He said that they had shared a schematic design with the School Board last year, which had been approved. He said that they were now in the full design phase, with the addition of a new space to address the lack of adequate square footage.

Mr. Fulmer said that there would also be a light renovation in their auditorium. He said that they had undertaken some upgrades, including sound and lighting improvements, as well as addressing safety concerns, a couple of years ago. He said that therefore, this renovation was more of a light update, but it would still look great. He said that the other portion of the school would be undergoing a more extensive renovation for the choral and drama spaces. He said that they were hopeful that they would be able to start construction on that project this summer, and if they could not start in late summer, it would be early fall.

Mr. Fulmer said that he was pleased to share that in the School Board-approved Capital Improvement Plan for this year, they had actually reduced the budget for their four major construction projects: Hartwood, Falls Run, Crow's Nest, and Drew Middle School, by a combined \$10 million. He said that specifically, for Hartwood, Falls Run, and Crow's Nest, the total reduction was \$4 million. He said that they were now far enough along in the construction progress that they felt comfortable recognizing some savings, and they had decided to reduce the budget in the CIP, knowing that they could reinvest those funds as soon as possible.

Mr. Fulmer said that they believed that on those projects, they may have additional savings as they finalized the plans. He said that for now, they were turning over \$4 million in this year's CIP. He said that additionally, for the Drew Middle School replacement, they had previously requested an additional contingency to account for potential VDOT requirements and road work. He said that they were now in the final review stages of that plan after several iterations.

Mr. Fulmer said that as a result, they were turning over \$6 million on that project. He said that they expected to have a few more dollars available, which they would know more about when they bid out the project in February and received the bids. He said that by this time next year, they would have a better understanding of all four projects, but he was excited that they had so far been able to identify savings in those project budgets.

Mr. Fulmer said that he would provide a quick overview of the CIP process for the public's benefit. He said that the Board had gone through this process for both the Schools and County sides, so

they were familiar with the multiple budgets and CIPs. He said that their CIP included their large capital projects, which were longer-term projects typically \$500,000 or greater, such as new construction, replacements, and renovations. He said that they also had their Repair, Replacement, and Renovation (3R) projects, which included projects like roofs and paving.

Mr. Fulmer said that similar to the County, the Schools' CIP formulation included a lot of input, beginning with feedback from principals, staff, and school leadership, who shared their observations and areas of concern. He said that they also heard from central office leadership and their Facilities and Maintenance teams, who brought their personal experience and knowledge of the schools' equipment and replacement cycles. He said that they analyzed their work order data and combined that with their expertise to help develop their CIP. He said that they incorporated input from School Board members, community members, and held town halls and CIP Advisory Committee meetings.

Mr. Fulmer said that their draft CIP was developed by considering long-term, medium-term, and short-term needs, with high-level estimates and assessments. He said that they typically worked on two CIPs simultaneously, with one CIP being completed and the next one being initiated shortly after. He said that tonight, they were presenting their staff presentation to the Board of Supervisors as part of their budget calendars, and they would have a joint meeting next week. He said that this process had begun in August, with multiple work sessions, CIP development, and town halls. He said that ultimately, the Board of Supervisors would adopt the CIP in April.

Mr. Fulmer said that this year's CIP focus was on stability, with minimal changes and a focus on aligning their CIP with the County's CIP. He said that one notable aspect was the addition of a footnote to their large capital project list, specifically for Elementary School #20 and Middle School #9, which was requested by the School Board. He said that when the School Board adopted the plan in November, it coincided with the receipt of enrollment projection updates from Mr. White. He said that the data showed a dip in enrollment this year, which would impact their 10-year enrollment projections.

Mr. Fulmer said that they had overall had a decade of steady enrollment growth, with a brief slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that this was not unique to Stafford, as others across the state experienced similar or greater reductions. He said that however, they did not know what the future held. He said that to avoid making drastic changes to the Capital Improvement Plan this year, they did not make any significant adjustments. He said that specifically, they had two projects that would benefit from enrollment growth, including additions to the Elementary School #20 and Middle School #9.

Mr. Fulmer said that these projects were already included in last year's CIP and were projected to open in the same year. He said that the School Board wanted to note that they wanted to see another year of enrollment projections to better understand the growth or potential decline in students before moving forward with those projects or adjusting their timelines. He said that one of the key focuses was the Rising Star Complex and the joint complex with the public Day School. He said that this building, originally constructed in 1931, had undergone additions over the years, and they were now approaching its 100-year mark, but they hoped to avoid celebrating this milestone.

Mr. Fulmer said that this project was currently slated to open in 2030 if it was placed at the current Drew Middle School site. He said that if the new Drew Middle School could open in August 2028, it would allow them to start the design and construction immediately after it opened and vacated the existing building. He said that in last year's CIP, the Board of Supervisors had previously approved an August 2032 opening date for this project. He said that they were working to align these dates.

Mr. Fulmer said that this project would add capacity not only to their Day School but also to their pre-K and Head Start programs. He said that it was a critical project, as they had significant problems at this school and at Hartwood. He said that they were now at the point where they needed to replace this facility, and they were hoping to avoid a catastrophic failure. He said that Elementary School #20 was the next project on the list, and they did not make any changes, so it remained on the same date with an August 2030 opening date. He said that the Board of Supervisors had previously approved an August 2034 opening date.

Mr. Fulmer said that this would be their fourth elementary school following the prototype, and they hoped to gain additional efficiencies with this project. He said that it was slated for the Embrey Mill site. He said that Middle School #9 was slated for an August 2032 opening, with the Board of Supervisors having previously approved an August 2038 opening date. He said that this project would follow the same Drew Middle School prototype design, and they hoped to gain efficiencies there as well.

Mr. Fulmer said that currently, they did not have a location designated for this project, so they were internally exploring options to determine a suitable location. He said that they were aware of capacity issues in the north and anticipated that the opening of Drew Middle School would require additional seats, leading to a redistricting process. He said that to avoid providing relief only to the south, they would need to find a way to redistribute students from the north.

Mr. Fulmer said that looking at their critical systems and restoration projects, this was something they had moved to their large capital list. He said that in the past, some of these projects had been listed on their 3R list. He said that by moving them onto their large capital list, they aimed to secure definitive funding and complete the projects within one or two years, rather than in smaller pieces over a longer period of time. He said that these overhauls involved major mechanical system upgrades in entire schools. He said that regarding the 3R lists, starting around page 120 of the CIP document, they provided detailed analyses of those 3R projects.

Mr. Fulmer said that he wanted to thank the Board for fully funding last year's 3R list. He said that they had opted for an incremental approach to their 3R list so they could gradually increase their 3R investments, catching up on past-due items while adjusting for inflation. He said that for this year, they were at \$19 million for the School Division's 3R projects, slowly increasing each subsequent year. He said that this was intended to provide some more balance to the CIP.

Mr. Fulmer said that he would next review some of the key changes made to this year's CIP. He said that this included additional funds for Colonial Forge High School bus parking, which would have a fueling station that could be used by County and school vehicles, providing a central location that benefited both organizations. He said that as with previous years, they were refining their 3R list and making adjustments to the budgets as they got closer to completion. He said that

they ensured that their 3R list for each year remained within the approved 3R amount, consistent with previous years. He said that in previous years' CIPs, their elementary school rebuild projects were scheduled for the last year of the CIP.

Mr. Fulmer said that as a result, they remained in the last year of their CIP, albeit delayed by one year, still in year 10. He said that additionally, interior renovation and mechanical work at Mountain View and North Stafford were added to the mid-to-late portions of their CIP. He said that as previously mentioned, they also had a reduction of \$10 million in their current construction projects, which they were excited to reinvest into the CIP. He said that moving forward, as they opened three new schools next year and added capacity at the elementary and high school levels, they would be making significant changes at the elementary school level.

Mr. Fulmer said that they had already completed their full redistricting, but they still had modular classrooms, and that remained a prominent concern in the community. He said they currently had 60 modular classrooms across 10 schools, so they had been working with the School Board to develop a modular exit plan, which would address the future of these 60 classrooms. He said that it shifted as projects progressed and uses changed, but he would give some examples of the primary uses they expected to be in their final plan.

Mr. Fulmer said that they wanted swing space for major renovation projects, such as Rodney Thompson mechanical work. He said that by relocating one wing of the school to modulares, they could more efficiently complete the work. He said that they were currently planning to complete this project over four summers to minimize disruption to school, but they could potentially move a portion of a school to a modular campus during that construction. He said that another option was to work with contractors to use their construction trailers as their own, and then return their property to normal after the project was completed.

Mr. Fulmer said that this approach allowed them to avoid using operating dollars to fund the work, thereby saving money on the operating fund side. He said that these items were already included in the budgets of their larger capital projects. He said that of the 60 trailers, four of them were leased at Rocky Run. He said that these were the initial trailers they had used, and it was more cost-effective to buy them in the long term. He said that however, the lease for these trailers was planned to expire at the end of the school year, and the leaseholder would be responsible for removing them.

Mr. Diggs said that in the interest of time, Board members would forward their questions to the County Administrator, who would then share them with the School Division. He said that they would address them in-person together at their joint meeting in January.

PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS BY DEPARTMENTS (CONTINUED)

ITEM 10. DISCUSSION AND BRIEFING ON THE COUNTY'S CURRENT EFFORTS REGARDING THE NORTH ANNA-KRAKEN LOOP TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT; PROPOSED RESOLUTION R25-306

Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney, said that she would be presenting this item today to provide a discussion and briefing on the County's current efforts regarding the North Anna-Kraken Loop Transmission Line Project. She said that to ensure everyone was on the same page, she would

like to provide a brief background. She said that the North Anna-Kraken Loop project was a Dominion Energy project that proposed a 500-kilovolt transmission line covering approximately 70 miles across five different counties.

Ms. McClendon said that secondly, she would like to cover the actions the Board had already taken regarding this project. She said that at the December 2, 2025 Board meeting, the Board adopted Resolution R25-303, which opposed alignments of the project that negatively impacted Stafford County. She said that the Resolution also requested additional engagement from Dominion and asked the County Administrator to send letters to Dominion and the State Corporation Commission.

Ms. McClendon said that these letters had been sent and were included in the Board package as Attachments 2 and 3. She said that the Board had made five specific requests, which were incorporated in this graphic on the slide. She said that the Board members had also posted this information on their social media accounts. She said that the rest of the presentation would provide a briefing and response to these five specific requests and review the information provided in the Board package.

Ms. McClendon said that the first request made by the Board was to review and prepare a comparison of how similar Dominion projects were handled in other counties, such as Loudoun County. She said that this information was included as Attachment 4 in the Board package. She said that it was important to note that in Loudoun County, the applications had been filed and had gone through the SCC process, which meant that there was a significant amount of information available. She said that in contrast, the Stafford County application had not been filed yet, and they only had access to the same information that the public had access to on Dominion's website and through Dominion's community meetings.

Ms. McClendon said that with that in mind, she would like to highlight a couple of key differences between the County's projects and Loudoun's projects. She said that this could impact how the County navigated the process with Dominion and the SCC. She said that firstly, Loudoun County projects were all within one County, whereas the Stafford County project spanned across five counties, which meant that any alignment or modification adjustments requested of Dominion must also consider alignments in other localities.

Ms. McClendon said that next, Loudoun County projects required the acquisition of hundreds of acres of new right-of-way, whereas in Stafford County, and part of the entire project, was proposed within existing above-ground right-of-way. She said that of note, there were parts of this project that Dominion was proposing a new right-of-way, specifically in Caroline County, whereas the line proposed in Stafford County was an existing right-of-way. She said that when referring to existing right-of-way, it meant that Dominion had a recorded right in the land records to install power lines and utilize those easements for that purpose.

Ms. McClendon said that within the existing right-of-way, as illustrated in chart 4A in the Board package, there were various configurations. She said that this project was divided into different segments. She said that within the existing right-of-way, some segments had above-ground or overhead transmission lines already installed, which could be seen. She said that they also had a small segment of existing right-of-way with underground power lines, in addition to the easement

for above-ground power lines, but currently, there was no infrastructure above ground, so it was not visible.

Ms. McClendon said that it was important to note that the easement language would be very specific, and therefore, the language used for above-ground transmission lines was different from the language used for below-ground transmission lines, and they were not interchangeable. She said that this meant that if the lines were to be buried, Dominion would need to obtain new easements, which would result in additional costs. She said that given that Dominion claimed the proposed line was the most cost-effective mechanism, knowing that new easements meant additional costs may lead to challenges that Dominion may raise when considering that approach.

Ms. McClendon said that in one of Loudoun County's cases, they requested that the lines be buried for historic purposes around Route 7, but Dominion still submitted an application for above-ground lines, which the SCC approved. She said that Loudoun County was currently challenging that decision in the Virginia Supreme Court. She said that in another case, Loudoun County requested a specific alignment and supported an alternative line. She said that they also asked that if the line ran within 500 feet of residents or schools, Dominion would bury the line. She said that Dominion submitted an application for above-ground lines, again citing cost effectiveness.

Ms. McClendon said that they also chose the modified or secondary route that Loudoun County supported, but modified it to avoid school properties. She said that Loudoun County was currently challenging this decision before the SCC, with a decision expected sometime mid to early next year. She said that the second part of this request pertained to a pathway to addressing the State Corporation Commission, which was the approving authority for Dominion Energy. She said that this information was in Attachment 4B of the Board packet.

Ms. McClendon said that the process was established by State Code and the Virginia Administrative Code and could take between 12 to 24 months for the project to complete. She said that her main point today was to highlight a couple of key points regarding opportunities for engagement as they moved forward with this process. She said the first official notice the County would receive from Dominion would be given to the County Administrator, and this notice must be given prior to filing their application, as required by State Code. She said that she had heard anecdotal evidence that it had been about six weeks in other localities, but there was no specific timeframe.

Ms. McClendon said that once the application is filed, the SCC would post Dominion's application on its website, providing the County's first opportunity to engage with the information and learn about the project. She said that this was when Dominion would begin sharing details on measurements, materials, historic values, scenic, environmental, and other aspects. She said that the application itself was substantial, with dozens of files, so the information they had now was quite different from what they would have once the application was filed.

Ms. McClendon said that respondents, including the County, must file a notice of participation, making them a party to the case and allowing them to be involved. She said that importantly, the SCC will issue a procedural order, establishing specific dates and deadlines, as well as rules for public engagement in the comments. She said that the next step was the public hearing process,

where the County could request the SCC hold a public hearing in the locality affected by the project, and the SCC must hold at least one here.

Ms. McClendon said that there would also be public comment hearings, where the public could engage and provide testimony following the SCC's rules. She said that additionally, there would be evidentiary hearings, where Dominion and other respondents could present evidence regarding their projects. She said that the Board's second request was to review the County's authority in this process and where state law limits local decision-making authority. She said that this information was available in Attachment 5A to the Board package. She said that ultimately, local building, environmental, and public safety regulations still applied even after SCC approval; however, they could not be used to block the siting of a transmission line.

Ms. McClendon said that the SCC's decision also deemed the locality's local Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan satisfied, so this exemption was an important consideration for their local government. She said that lastly, the SCC had authority over the construction and siting of transmission lines, but there were a few small federal preemption issues that even they could not control, such as the height of the towers required. She said that specifically, continuing with this particular item, the local Comprehensive Plan was an area where the Board had existing authority and could take action today to enhance the County's guidance in this area.

Ms. McClendon said that state code allowed the County to include corridors and routes for 150 kilovolts or higher transmission lines. She said that it was essential because the SCC must consider the locality's Comprehensive Plan when requested by the locality. She said that if the locality designated routes in its Comprehensive Plan for these high-voltage lines, the County could present evidence during the SCC hearing to support why the designated routes were sufficient if the power company proposed lines outside of those designated routes.

Ms. McClendon said that possible Board action for today would be to allow the County to review its existing Comprehensive Plan map, which included existing electrical easements, and update the Comp Plan to provide additional guidance on the County's desire to have new transmission lines buried, minimizing visual and other impacts on existing easements, and designating routes within the Comprehensive Plan for major power lines. She said that one of the parts of Resolution R25-306, if adopted, would ask the Planning Commission to start drafting amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to achieve these goals, engaging industry experts and stakeholders in the process.

Ms. McClendon said that additionally, while the Planning Commission was drafting the Comprehensive Plan amendments, State Code permitted the Planning Commission to request additional information from Dominion; the Planning Commission could request information from Dominion specifically about the project to gather more information to guide their efforts as they discussed corridors throughout the County. She said that the third request from the Board was to identify potential legislative priorities that could better protect and support the community in the future. She said that this information was in Attachment 5B of their Board package.

Ms. McClendon said that there was recommended State Code language in this document, understanding that the 2026 General Assembly session was approaching. She said that if the Board desired to move forward, there was language that outside counsel had worked with them to

develop, which could be moved forward tonight. She said that the first legislative initiative before them would strengthen the legal force of the transmission corridors and designations in the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. McClendon said that specifically, State Code currently required the SCC to consider the corridors in the Comprehensive Plan, but it must be requested by the locality. She said that it also put the burden on the locality with regards to those routes. She said that additionally, in State Code, it was not clear that localities could designate the actual corridors for underground high-voltage transmission lines in their Comprehensive Plan. She said that lastly, under state law, localities could only request the SCC to consider the benefits and costs of underground installation of lines; it was not a requirement for that to be done.

Ms. McClendon said that the proposed language before the Board, which would go to the General Assembly if approved, would require utility companies to consider in good faith the corridors proposed in a locality's Comprehensive Plan and make it clear that localities had the ability to designate underground lines for the underground burial of high-voltage transmission lines. She said that it would also shift the burden to the utility company, requiring them to demonstrate and explain why the designated lines were sufficient, even if the locality had designated routes within its Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. McClendon said that furthermore, the amendment would require the utility to submit at least one alternative with underground transmission lines or partly underground transmission lines as part of its plan. She said that one of the arguments they had been hearing was that nobody was doing it, but that created a chicken-and-egg problem. She said that by including this requirement, the utility would be compelled to at least engineer and consider the feasibility of underground transmission lines. She said that the SCC could then consider this as part of the application.

Ms. McClendon said that the second proposed legislative initiative would narrow the existing automatic exemption to the local zoning process through the SCC approval. She said that this meant that when the SCC approved an application, it would deem the locality's Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan as being satisfied. She said that there were federal regulations that could not be touched; however, if the State Code gave localities authority in their Zoning Ordinances, it was possible that localities could do siting, screening, land disturbance, and restoration.

Ms. McClendon said that this would not affect areas that were federally preempted, but they needed the State Code to be there first. She said that the proposed language before them would give local governments the authority to adopt Zoning Ordinance regulations, allowing them to attach siting and construction requirements to high-voltage transmission lines. She said that specifically, it would require the SCC to make a finding that if they determined a utility project's lines were necessary and did not comply with Zoning, they must make that finding.

Ms. McClendon said that this would not happen automatically if this proposed language was accepted. She said that the last proposed legislative change would calculate the underground costs to high-load customers. She said that this would involve adding new language to the State Code. She said that currently, the rate process was separate from the approval process, and the proposed change would bring the rate process into the approval process. She said that as the lines were proposed, the SCC would need to determine the incremental cost of burying an underground line.

She said that beyond that, when the SCC approved the applications, the incremental cost would need to be attributed to high-load customers.

Ms. McClendon said that high-load customers were defined as those with non-coincidental peak loads of 25 megawatts or greater and a load factor of 75% or greater. She said that according to Dominion's briefing with the School Board, their anticipated customers were most likely data centers or large warehouse users. She said that this would essentially shift the cost of burying those lines to those entities that were most likely using the most power. She said that moving on to the fourth request, the Board asked them to explore hiring outside legal counsel to advise and guide the County in its efforts. She said that they had retained outside counsel, Sands Anderson, which was the same firm representing Loudoun County.

Ms. McClendon said that this firm had recent and relevant experience navigating Dominion Energy transmission line projects, and they believed this was something the County could leverage to its advantage. She said that Sands Anderson would advise the County and advise the Board as they proceeded through this process, guided by the general guidance of the County Attorney's office, and lead the County in its efforts with the SCC. She said that although Sands Anderson was not representing individual property owners, they would be working with local groups and organizations that had concerns about this project, as this project affected six of the seven districts in the County.

Ms. McClendon said that a unified countywide and community effort would strengthen the County's interactions with Dominion and the SCC as they continued forward in this process. She said that the final request from the Board was to schedule a joint town hall meeting. She said that in the background information for the Board package, staff originally recommended holding the town hall in February to accommodate the Board's regular meeting schedule and to develop a strategy and approach to address this project with the limited information available.

Ms. McClendon said that however, the Board had expressed a desire to move forward more quickly with the town hall, so they were shifting to provide this information to the Board sooner. She said that they had a closed session planned with the Board and outside counsel on January 6, 2025. She said that staff was also recommending that the Board's schedule be coordinated with Dominion for a presentation about the project. She said that this ensured that the most complete information about the project was obtained and provided from the entity with the information.

Ms. McClendon said that given that they did not have all the application information, she believed it was essential to ensure Dominion's presence to answer the Board's and community's questions. She said that due to the General Assembly legislative session, Dominion had stated that January could be a challenging month for them, so staff was still working to find a suitable date. She said that they were targeting a mid to late January date, and the County Administrator was coordinating with Dominion to find a suitable date.

Ms. McClendon said that she had reviewed the Board's requests and would like to reiterate the possible actions before the Board today. She said that Proposed Resolution R25-306 would request the Planning Commission to draft Comp Plan amendments to designate corridors for high-voltage transmission lines, engage industry experts, and request information from Dominion about their energy project. She said that it would also authorize additions to the County's 2026 Legislative

Program. She said that if the Board wished to pursue these initiatives, staff would need direction on which ones to pursue.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. English, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-306.

Ms. Allen said that Ms. McClendon had mentioned an industry expert, and she was wondering if they were prepared to move forward with submitting a consultant request to obtain the necessary expertise. She said that she was concerned that their staff may not have the resources or technical capabilities to undertake this work.

Mr. Ashton said that he believed they needed to, but they did not have a timeline at this juncture. He said that one of the things that was coming up in his research, particularly regarding undergrounding lines, was that once they reached 5 kilovolts, the heat generated by the line was so extreme that burying it would melt the lines and insulation, unless it was done in an environmentally controlled situation, similar to a subway tunnel where the lines were run through in a controlled environment.

Mr. Ashton said that Dominion representatives had mentioned that substation work would be required every two to three miles. He said that they needed to bring this into their conversation and consider bringing in an expert to provide more detailed information. He said that he did not want them to write a Comprehensive Plan that recommended they must underground these lines when it was technically infeasible or would cause unintended consequences that they were not anticipating. He said that this was an important enough question that they should definitely explore it further with outside consultants.

Ms. Allen said that she wanted to clarify that once the amendments were made, they could not be retroactively applied to Dominion. She said that she did not want the public to think that they had made these changes and those would prevent Dominion from doing this project.

Ms. McClendon said that it was important to remember a couple of key points. She said that firstly, Dominion would need to be involved in the process, as they were a utility company provider in the County and the State Code required engagement with utilities. She said that this meant they would be aware of these developments, so it would not be a surprise. She said that it was also important to remember that the County's provision of a guide was to ensure that they were providing all the necessary tools to both Dominion and the SCC to implement the guide effectively.

Ms. McClendon said that it was not the County's responsibility to apply the guide, but rather the SCC's. She said that by having the information adopted, they could provide the SCC with the necessary context to consider their proposal, and demonstrate why it was viable. She said that if the State Code language was accepted, then Dominion would need to explain to the SCC why they had not followed the County's recommendations. She said that ultimately, however, the decision would still rest with the SCC, and they wanted to make sure they had all the information they needed to make an informed decision.

Ms. Allena asked if they completed the draft amendments before Dominion's quarter two presentation to the SCC, there was a better chance for the County to present their argument regarding the potential impacts on the current project as it was proposed.

Ms. McClendon said that having the amendments adopted before SCC consideration increased the likelihood that the SCC would consider them.

Ms. Allen said that if this Resolution dealt with amendments, they should provide a timeline then, because quarter two was essentially spring. She said that the Board needed to provide a timeline and resources. She said that she thought the Board needed to have that conversation, because they could not simply approve the Resolution without also considering the potential opportunity to present their case to the SCC before they made a decision. She said that in order to move forward, they needed to equip the new Board with the necessary information so that they could get it back to staff. She said that they likely needed to get that done before April.

Mr. Ashton said that he believed they faced two primary challenges here. He said that one was a budgetary challenge, which they had mentioned, and the other was a procurement challenge. He said that he was uncertain if any of their on-call engineers possessed the necessary sub or expertise in this area. He said that he would like to inquire with staff to determine this.

Ms. Vanuch said that one possible solution was for outside counsel to hire them.

Mr. Ashton said that doing that would likely come at a premium cost. He said that as a result, they needed to explore all available options to make it feasible. He said that he had not yet had these conversations with staff. He said that he had conducted preliminary research based on the conversation that Dominion presented to the School Board, and some of the information he uncovered was eye-opening. He said that he wanted to emphasize that he was not an expert, but he was simply stating that it appeared to be a complex issue.

Ms. Allen asked if the Board could get this information by their Board Retreat in January and if they would have enough time for the Planning Commission to create the amendments.

Ms. McClendon said that if the Board moved forward with this Resolution today, staff could provide an update on January 6 regarding their findings on selecting a consultant and the path forward. She said that this Resolution simply gave them the ability to start. She said that if the Board wished to establish more specific guardrails for timelines in January, they could certainly accommodate that.

Ms. Vanuch said that one additional note to help move this process forward was that outside counsel, specifically Sands Anderson from Loudoun County, may have recommendations for consultants. She said that as they likely utilized consultants to inform their legal strategy with the SCC, it might be worth asking them, and she believed it was part of the Virginia procurement process that allowed them to tag onto their contract, thereby streamlining the process.

Mr. Ashton said that they could pursue cooperative procurement if they identified it as a cooperative contract.

Ms. Vanuch said that they may have that in place, which would be another potential pathway to pursue. She said that with regarding the town hall meeting, she agreed that the outside counsel should provide guidance, as she knew the constituents would have a lot of questions and the County did not have many answers at this time. She said that she thought they should get Mr.

Spence to edit Ms. McClendon's discussion on this item, as she thought it would be beneficial to post it on their website.

Ms. Vanuch said that this way, when they received questions from residents, they could direct them to that video, providing them with information on what they were doing and what was possible in this process. She said that she thought it was impressive that they were recommending legislative changes at the state level. She said that they should move forward with the town hall in January, but if they needed to adjust the date, she was okay with moving it to the second or third week of January, depending on the legal counsel schedule.

Ms. Vanuch said that they must ensure that Dominion was at that meeting; if they were not able to participate, staff needed to let the Board know as soon as possible so that they could notify their state elected officials and reach out to the Governor's Office as soon as possible, as they should be meeting with these stakeholders sooner rather than later.

Mr. Ashton said that had been communicated to them. He said that in fact, when they mentioned the legislative session, Dominion asked about February, and he told them it was a non-starter. He said that he explained that they wanted to bring it back to January, and it appeared Dominion was researching to ensure the right people were in the room, rather than just having a meeting.

Mr. Diggs said that he agreed with Ms. Vanuch's suggestion to have Mr. Spence post Ms. McClendon's presentation for the public. He said that he would recommend it being split into four or five parts.

Ms. Bohmke said that she thought that all of this planning was excellent. She said that she was wondering if staff had already contacted all the counties south of them, including Caroline, to discuss whether they were anticipating similar impacts to Stafford.

Ms. McClendon said that staff had reached out to some of their counterparts in the attorney's offices and discovered that some counties were less affected by this line, meaning it did not have a significant impact on them. She said that they were aware that there may be potential larger issues in Caroline, particularly with the proposed new rights-of-way. She said that they would be following up with Caroline specifically, but some of the other localities did not seem as concerned, which she thought was because the line skimmed them rather than going directly through.

Dr. Yeung said that she was wondering if there was an opportunity for the County Administrator, Chair, and County Attorney to have discussions with Loudoun County regarding this information. She said that although they had already spoken with them, she believed it would be beneficial to have additional conversations, particularly about the cost, as Ms. Allen mentioned. She said that she shared that concern, and she was wondering if Loudoun could provide them with some additional information so they could prepare for that possibility.

Ms. McClendon said that staff had reached out to Loudoun County's Attorney's Office, and she would certainly follow up with them about costs.

Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator, said that staff had already planned to present the five-year Comp Plan update to the Board, in collaboration with a consultant, and the process was set to begin in January. She said that she wanted to ensure the Board was aware of the scope of

work involved, as there may be potential capacity constraints on the Planning Commission. She said that if they proceeded with this direction, the Planning Commission could not handle both the update and these new amendments simultaneously. She said that at their January 6 meeting, she would provide more detailed information and be able to address any questions the Board may have, allowing them to make an informed decision about the pathway forward.

Dr. Yeung asked whether new Planning Commission members would be adequately prepared to take on this level of work.

Ms. Krauss said that one of the things she had discussed with staff was the possibility of bringing in external experts to provide assistance with the planning process, which would help guide the Planning Commission and staff.

Mr. Diggs called the vote on approval of Proposed Resolution R25-306.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

ITEM 6. BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT; CONSIDER TEMPORARILY SETTING PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX PENALTIES AND INTEREST TO 0%; PROPOSED EMERGENCY ORDER EO25-02

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Ms. Bohmke, to approve Proposed Emergency Order EO25-02, setting personal property tax penalties and interest to 0% until January 9, 2026.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

No: (0)

Mr. Diggs said that to clarify for the public, their personal property taxes were due on January 9, 2026, and after that there would be penalties.

ITEM 7. FINANCE; CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO ADVERTISE SEPARATE PUBLIC HEARINGS TO CONSIDER (1) INCREASE IN THE LOAN THROUGH THE VRA FOR THE STATE'S CLEAN WATER REVOLVING LOAN FUND, AND (2) BOND ISSUANCE TO THE VRA, ALL FOR LITTLE FALLS RUN WATER TREATMENT PLANT; PROPOSED RESOLUTION R25-304

Kevin Smedley, Business Finance Manager for the Utilities Department, said that the purpose of this item was to request Board authorization to advertise a public hearing related to the additional borrowing for the Little Falls Run Wastewater Treatment Plant facility upgrades. He said that on November 6, the Board had approved the \$42 million construction contract for this project. He said that the previous authorization borrowing amount approved under Resolution R25-123 was \$33 million.

Mr. Smedley said that the final contract amount exceeded the authorization by approximately \$9 million, which required a new public hearing under state and bond requirements. He said that the increased borrowing amount was due to the refined project scope identified through final design and bidding, as requested by the Virginia Resource Authority (VRA), who had advised them to wait until they received the exact borrowing amount to ensure accuracy and financial responsibility. He said that the Utilities Department would like to utilize this borrowing mechanism, as it provided the lowest interest rate and ensured generational equality.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-304.

Ms. Bohmke said that she had asked Mr. Ashton earlier today about the \$9 million increase, or \$8.9 million, as had been mentioned. She said that Mr. Ashton had stated that it had been a year since the original estimate was completed. She said that she then asked him to show her the documentation on a sheet of paper to explain where the \$9 million increase came from.

Chris Edwards, Chief Operating Officer, said that there were two primary reasons for the increase in cost. He said that the original cost estimate was based on a spring 2024 timeline, which they had used to make the initial request for borrowing. He said that however, as they progressed, they were advised by the Virginia Resource Authority to wait until a bid opening had taken place, allowing them to determine the exact amount required.

Mr. Edwards said that this resulted in a one and a half year delay, during which time inflation and cost escalation occurred. He said that the second factor contributing to the increase was the scope change to the plant's headworks. He said that the existing structure, a 25-by-150 foot long sifting unit, was replaced with a more efficient model preferred by the staff, which they believed would be a better fit for the facility. He said that this considerable change was part of the \$9 million upgrade.

Ms. Bohmke said that she understood Mr. Edwards' explanation, but that information should be included in the background report. She said that the public deserved to be informed about such a significant increase, and they should explain the reasons behind it. She said that with taxpayer money, it was essential to be transparent and educational when requesting this type of money. She said that she would be supportive of the request and appreciated staff's comments.

Dr. Yeung asked how the increase of the loan and bond authorization affected the ratepayers. She asked if there would be effects felt in the next five to ten years.

Mr. Smedley said that when they borrowed money, they ensured generational equity. He said that if they were to fund it with user fees this year, it would only be the current users paying the full cost. He said that if they issued a 20-year bond at a low interest rate, such as 3.85%, they could spread those costs across different generations, allowing future users to pay for it as well, not just the current users. He said that this was a very advantageous rate for the VRA.

Mr. Edwards said that this was the second reason they sought to maximize the borrower on this project. He said that the Virginia Resources Authority, a state revolving loan fund, offered rates that were significantly better than what they could secure on the bond market. He said that as a result, they aimed to maximize this loan.

Dr. Yeung asked if that was part of the assumptions in their projections.

Mr. Smedley said that yes, it was.

Mr. Diggs called the vote on approval of Proposed Resolution R25-304.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

ITEM 8. PLANNING AND ZONING; CONSIDER GRANTING THE PLANNING COMMISSION ADDITIONAL TIME TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO ADOPT A NEW STAFFORD COUNTY WATER, SEWER, AND RECLAIMED WATER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN ELEMENT OF THE PLAN; PROPOSED RESOLUTION R25-307

Ms. Bohmke motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-307.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

Mr. Diggs asked staff if there were any potential impacts that the Board may need to consider.

Mr. Edwards said that one of the reasons they were under a timeline was that they were trying to get through the process prior to the County Administrator's budget proposal on February 7, 2026. He said that the Water and Sewer Master Plan had a significant impact on their Capital Improvement budget pro rata. He said that as a result, they were hoping to bring that before the Board at the second board meeting in January, but that would not be possible if it was sent back to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Diggs asked what the fiscal impacts would be.

Mr. Ashton said that they would work through it.

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Mr. Diggs, to reconsider the vote to approve Proposed Resolution R25-307.

The Voting Board tally was:

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

Mr. Edwards said that during the Planning Commission meeting, they deferred the decision and requested more time. He said that one of the things they wanted to bring forward was the Master Plan, which was part of the Comprehensive Plan. He said that they began preparing the Master Plan update in 2023, following the Comp Plan update, and to maintain consistency, the Utilities

Department had used the same firm since 2004, Ramble, formerly known as O'Brien & Gere. He said that the process was time-consuming; they sat down with Planning staff and went through parcel by parcel within the Urban Services Area (USA) to ensure they understood the land use, water flows, and other relevant factors.

Mr. Edwards said that this allowed them to create an accurate description of what was in the Comprehensive Plan, which would help them understand the impacts on the Water and Sewer Master Plan. He said that however, while they were working on the Master Plan, the County entered into two water service agreements and amended the Comprehensive Plan to prioritize the use of reclaimed water for cooling. He said that since the addition of reclaimed water impacted the entire utility system, they decided to expand the scope to include reclaimed water, which added to the preparation time for the Master Plan.

Mr. Edwards said that one thing to note was that the reclaimed water system in the Master Plan was identical to what was outlined in the two water services agreements. He said that this meant that the Master Plan could not be changed, but it provided a central repository to document the information in the water services agreements. He said that this was also an important step towards the pro rata program, which had been in place since 1990. He said that one of the items in the water services agreements was to add a reclaimed water pro rata program.

Mr. Edwards said that unfortunately, this extended everything until around November of this year, at which point they came to the Board to make sure it went to the Planning Commission. He said that it was a 53-page long document with supporting materials, but most of the Water and Sewer Master plan had not changed, especially the water and sewer elements. He said that the main change was the addition of reclaimed water, which was identical to what was in the water services agreement.

Mr. Edwards said that completing the Water and Sewer Master Plan was essential for the FY27 budget, as it helped set future rates, pro rata charges, and the Capital Improvement Plan. He said that the Plan must be finalized before these components were established, and the County's budget process had already begun in preparation for the County Administrator's presentation on February 7 of next year. He said that with a delay, they would push the Master Plan past the Board meeting on February 7. He said that they wanted to have this done by then because they also needed to propose an overall change to Chapter 25 to add reclaimed water rates.

Mr. Edwards said that the Utilities Commission's primary function was to review code amendments, and one of the things that came up by the Planning Commission was that the document had not gone to the Utilities Commission. He said that fortunately, it did not require review by the Utilities Commission. He said that they were still rescheduling a meeting with them for early January, as they wanted to inform them that it would impact their rates.

Dr. Yeung asked if they needed a subcommittee to work with the Planning Commission so that there could be a more thorough and shared review of the document. She asked what the risk was in delaying the adoption of the Master Plan, especially considering the growth of the data centers and water demand of that industry.

Mr. Edwards said that the main concern was that they were pushing one more thing off until April. He said that they would be presenting updates on the Master Plan, pro rata rates, and Chapter 25, which included reclaimed water, as well as a three-year rate increase, which typically required one to two meetings with the Board. He said that concern was that by trying to get these five or six items done by April, they were effectively compressing the timeline, starting it in mid-to-late February and attempting to complete it by April.

Ms. Bohmke said that for the record, she watched the Planning Commission meeting and observed the entire discussion. She said that the Planning Commission was very engaged in this topic and was prepared to vote to deny the entire Plan due to their frustration over not having the opportunity to review all the documents, as mentioned by constituents at tonight's Board meeting. She said that they were on the verge of denying it, but ultimately decided to request more time from the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Bohmke said that this was how they arrived at their current situation. She said that in her humble opinion, if they did not allow the Planning Commission to examine the documents, as they had comments on some of them, they could not expect them to make a decision. She said that Mr. Ashton was in attendance, so she would ask him to attest to the Planning Commission's comments so that she could accurately represent their concerns. She said that she believed it would be remiss of them as a Board not to give the Planning Commission another opportunity to review the Plan.

Mr. Ashton said that the Commission had some concerns about the clarity surrounding emergency water usage, which was primarily related to the fact that they were building pump stations as part of their data center construction to interconnect the north and south halves of the County. He said that they were trying to document the ability to use this system to transport water in emergency situations. He said that Mr. Edwards' answer about whether data centers would be disconnected from potable water once the reclaimed water system was operable had nothing to do with data centers in the emergency use at all.

Mr. Edwards said that it was a good comment from the Commission and staff agreed they needed to clarify that. He said that when reviewing the original two water service agreements that established this, it was not included. He said that in fact, it was intentionally struck; therefore, it was not allowed. He said that he believed that the rest of the comments were mostly related to typos, which were likely a result of preparing the document quickly. He said that since then, they had gone back to make corrections.

Mr. Ashton said that the substantive issue was the emergency provision of water.

Ms. Bohmke said that she still needed clarification on one point. She said that one comment they received was that they had looked at this in January 2024 and were just now getting it back to the Planning Commission. She asked if Mr. Edwards could elaborate on that.

Mr. Edwards said that they began working with the Planning Department in late 2023, and it took approximately six months to a year to work on it. He said that they worked parcel by parcel, which allowed them to accurately capture the water usage for each individual parcel. He said that when they added reclaimed water to the system, they also brought in the necessary background information, which set them back about six months due to the complexity of pro rata calculations.

He said that as a result, the completion date was pushed to the end of November, just before they were scheduled to present the Master Plan to the Planning Commission.

Mr. English asked Mr. Edwards if the Utilities Commission had not looked at the Master Plan at all.

Mr. Edwards said that staff was prepared to present the Master Plan in early December, but the Commission did not have a quorum.

Mr. English said that he still felt like this needed to go back to the Planning Commission, and the Utilities Commission needed to provide some feedback. He said that it was not staff's fault that things worked out this way.

Mr. Edwards said that the Utilities Commission's main role was to advise on rates, so technically their input was not required for this Master Plan. He said that however, they still wanted to explain how this would affect future rates.

Ms. Vanuch said that she felt the Board needed to be made aware when their committees did not reach a quorum. She said that she would be very concerned if her committee appointee was causing issues with achieving quorum. She said that they needed to appoint people who would show up, especially when they needed to make sure important work was progressing as it should.

Ms. Bohmke said that she knew that her Utilities Commission member did not go to the meeting because he was under the impression that he was no longer appointed because she was retiring from the Board.

Ms. Vanuch said that that sounded like an accident, while Mr. Edwards had mentioned they had a few issues with achieving quorum throughout the year. She said that she had heard of similar issues on other committees, so they needed to make sure they were consistently reaching quorum and reasserting that importance when they made appointments each January. She said that she understood that this would push the timeline back, but she thought the Planning Commission needed to have more time to review this Master Plan.

Ms. Vanuch said that they would have two or three new Planning Commissioners this upcoming year, so they needed time to get ingrained in the process and digest this information in order to make well-informed and confident decisions. She said that she would recommend that staff project the estimated costs into their budget and they could adjust downwards as things progressed.

Ms. Allen asked if Ms. Krauss could provide the Board with the attendance from their committees, most importantly their Telecommunications, Parks and Rec, and Utilities Commissions. She said that she would appreciate having that when the Board met for their advance retreat.

Ms. Krauss said that staff could talk to the liaisons to see if there had been any challenges. She said that she would get the attendance from those that acknowledged issues with reaching a quorum. She said that this would allow them to focus on the ones that experienced issues, rather than all of them.

Ms. Allen said that if she had sufficient time, she would like to have attendance for all of them. She said that the main ones that required review and oversight included the Parks and Recreation, Telecom, and Utilities. She said that she would also like to ask Mr. Edwards to explain the tax implications related to the Master Plan. She asked how this would affect setting the tax rate this year and whether they would need to readjust it.

Mr. Edwards said that for taxes, no, but for utility rates, yes. He said that this work included input for multiple things that affected multiple rates. He said that Mr. Smedley was working to finish those calculations, but it would be helpful to first complete the Master Plan and understand what the pro rata rates were.

Ms. Allen asked what the worst-case scenario was if it was pushed back. She asked if staff would have to return to the Board in the summer to get everything readjusted.

Mr. Smedley said that he would do his best to get it done on time, but this change could impact the forecasting of pro rata funding sources over the next 10 fiscal years. He said that the pro rata rates directly related to the CIP.

Ms. Allen said that that was what she was trying to understand. She asked how this would impact some of the projects that were set to come online next year.

Mr. Edwards said that another consideration was the reclaimed pro rata and availability fees, which were two factors they needed to calculate. He said that it was worth noting that approximately a quarter of the budget for the FY27 budget would come from these fees.

Ms. Vanuch asked how long of a deferral the Planning Commission was asking for.

Ms. Allen said that it was January 28, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Mr. English, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-307.

Mr. Ashton said that if the matter was deferred to the Planning Commission's January 28 meeting, it still had to come back before this Board for approval. He said that therefore, he would not have time to include it in his proposed budget on February 7. He said that he could build assumptions into his budget, but it would not be concrete.

Mr. Edwards said that regardless, staff would make it work. He said that however, it put them in a pinch to come back by mid-February, change whatever was necessary, and then have it ready by the end of February for the overall budget presentation. He said that staff would do whatever was needed, but it was a bind.

Dr. Yeung asked if the senior members of the Planning Commission could help in getting this work done.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was not the role of the Planning Commissioners to do that. She said that the Commission voted 6-1 to request for more time, and members of the public had expressed that same concern that more time was needed to review the Master Plan. She said that she thought it would be inappropriate for the Board to circumvent the Planning Commission when staff could

make some assumptions and do some more work. She said that this Plan may have needed to go to the Planning Commission sooner.

Ms. Vanuch said that the Planning Commission had already recommended to defer it to a date certain and it could not be brought forward earlier than that. She said that the Commission felt that they could not perform the work they had been tasked to do and that they needed more time. She said that even if the Board wanted to proceed with it, the Planning Commission was likely to deny it or defer it again, so the Board would need to deal with it on this extended timeline regardless.

Dr. Yeung motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to call the vote.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (6) Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
No: (1) Allen

ITEM 9. UTILITIES; CONSIDER DECLARING A DROUGHT WATCH AND AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO IMPLEMENT THE STAFFORD COUNTY DROUGHT MANAGEMENT PLAN STAGES 1A AND 1B (VOLUNTARY WATER RESTRICTIONS) TO PROTECT THE COUNTY'S WATER SUPPLY

Ms. Gary motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to continue the meeting past 12:00 a.m..

The Voting Board tally was:

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

Jon Brindle, Department of Utilities, said that Proposed Resolution R25-308 would implement voluntary water use restrictions throughout the County. He said that in June, the Board had passed the Drought Management Plan, which was a DEQ requirement that they had developed with the Lake Mooney withdrawal permit, and it was a Countywide drought plan based on technical triggers. He said that recently, DEQ had declared Stafford County in the northern Piedmont region under a drought watch. He said that this, combined with the current level of the Smith Lake Reservoir, had met their two trigger level conditions for a Stage 1B, which would require commercial and residential voluntary use restrictions.

Mr. Brindle said that they were currently experiencing a unique situation, with the lowest water usage of the year. He said that they were averaging about 4.5 million gallons per day (MGD) from the Smith Lake water plant, which was down from their average of 7 MGD and peak of 9.5 MGD. He said that typically, if they were to implement restrictions during the summer, they would consider measures such as an odd-even schedule and asking people to reduce lawn irrigation, car washing, and other outdoor uses like pool filling or ornamental fountains.

Mr. Brindle said that however, given the current low usage, they would need to discuss with staff what kind of restrictions they would be asking people to implement. He said that their public service would focus on a general awareness campaign, simply asking people to reduce waste, as they could not achieve reductions below the usage levels they currently had. He said that this was

the second year in a row they had experienced a very dry fall, causing the reservoir levels to drop below expected.

Mr. Brindle said that they were still within their annual cycle, which was the purpose of the reservoirs - to store water during the wet season and provide it for usage during the summer months. He said that there was no expectation that the reservoir would not refill as they entered the wet season in the winter and spring. He said that staff was requesting the Board to approve this item.

Mr. English motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to approve Proposed Resolution R25-308.

Dr. Yeung asked if data centers were held to different restrictions than households in the County.

Mr. Brindle said that currently, they were at a stage where voluntary restrictions were recommended, affecting both commercial and residential. He said that according to the plan, commercial restrictions would typically be implemented first, but due to the reservoir's low level, which was already below the 1B level when the drought watch was declared by the DEQ, they were essentially skipping the first, commercial-only phase. He said that as a result, both commercial and residential areas would be under voluntary restrictions.

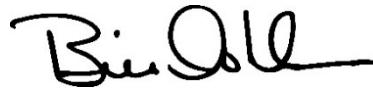
The Voting Board tally was:

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned its meeting at 12:03 a.m.

A Copy, teste:



William H. Ashton, II
County Administrator