STAFFORD COUNTY ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
February 2, 2026

The meeting of the Stafford County Architectural Review Board of Monday, February 2, 2026*,* was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mark Ethridge, in the ABC Conference Room of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mark Ethridge, Linda Burdette, Billy Shelton, Aaron Mastin, Kim Taylor-Wilson.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Doris McAdams.

STAFF PRESENT: Vicki Sowers, Nancy Kotting, Harriet Donkoh.

GUESTS PRESENT: Pamela McElvain.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Ethridge called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Ms. Burdette called roll. There was a quorum.

VOTE TO ACCEPT OR AMEND THE AGENDA

A COA item was incorrectly titled Pratt Park but should have been St. Clair Brooks Park. The change was effected. Mr. Shelton made a motion to accept the agenda with the change. Ms. Burdette seconded. Motion carried, 5/0.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Election of Chair

Mr. Shelton nominated Ms. Burdette for Chair. Mr. Ethridge seconded the nomination. With no opposition, Ms. Burdette was elected Chairperson.

2. Election of Vice Chair

Ms. Burdette nominated Mr. Ethridge for Vice Chair. Mr. Shelton seconded the nomination. With no opposition, Mr. Ethridge was nominated Vice Chair.

3. Election of Secretary

Ms. Burdette nominated Mr. Shelton. She was seconded by Mr. Ethridge. With no opposition, Mr. Shelton was nominated Secretary.

4. Vote to approve 2026 Meeting Calendar

With no questions, objections or changes, Mr. Shelton motioned to approve the meeting calendar. He was seconded by Mr. Ethridge. The meeting calendar was approved by unanimous consent.

5. Review of By-Laws.

Ms. Kotting reviewed key provisions of the bylaws, emphasizing that meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. She noted that an abbreviated "cheat sheet" of Robert's Rules would be distributed to members for their reference at home and stated that related points would further be addressed during the upcoming discussion on the ordinance.

6. Staff Liaison Guidelines & Basic Legal Information for BACC.

Ms. Kotting introduced Ms. Vickie Sowers, Business Finance Manager, and Ms. Harriet Donkoh, a new Administrative Specialist in Planning and Zoning. She mentioned Ms. Donkoh will serve as the primary staff liaison for ARB's administrative support. Ms. Sowers explained that the liaison guidelines packet, issued by the County Administrator's Office, constitutes legally required training and outlines the Dillon Rule, FOIA requirements, and meeting procedures. She emphasized that FOIA applies to ARB-related communications, that liaisons must gather requested records from members, and that the County must respond within five business days, with an internal three-day goal for member responses. She advised members to consider using a separate email account for ARB business to simplify FOIA compliance and asked that any new addresses be reported to staff. Referring to Robert's Rules and packet guidance, she stressed the need to keep unresolved matters on agendas as Old Business until formally resolved, to record deferrals and outcomes clearly in the minutes, and to maintain orderly, agenda-focused meetings. In response to questions about remote participation, Ms. Sowers stated that some BACCs allow call-in or virtual attendance only where explicitly authorized in their bylaws and re-adopted annually; she will research whether such provisions for the ARB would also require virtual public access and will provide sample bylaw language and further clarification at a future meeting. Extra copies of a Robert's Rules "cheat sheet" were made available to members.

7. Review of Rules of Procedure for COA Review

Ms. Kotting reviewed the Rules of Procedure for COA review using a Quick Reference Guide and walked members through the standard sequence for handling applications. First, staff presents the application, summarizes the staff report, and states a staff recommendation. The Chair then opens the floor to the applicant, who may provide additional details or clarify nuances of the request; once the applicant finishes, the Chair closes the floor. Following this, the Board discusses the application, and if members have specific questions for the applicant (and the applicant is present), those questions are directed to the applicant through the Chair.

Next, the Chair determines whether there is interest among members in suggesting modifications that could make the application acceptable for approval. If so, the Board defines the specific terms of those modifications and asks the applicant to state on the record whether they accept them. If the applicant agrees, a motion is made to approve the application with the stated modifications, the motion is seconded and voted on, and the item is closed. If no modifications are proposed, or if the applicant does not accept the suggested changes, the Board instead makes a motion either to approve the application as submitted, deny it as submitted, or defer it to a future meeting, for example, to allow the applicant to attend if they are not present.

8. COA Application Review: 107 Carter St

Mr. Mastin recused himself due to a business relationship with the applicant. Members reviewed the COA application and found the proposed mounted signs - a 2' x 8' cream sign with black wooden lettering on the primary façade and a 4' x 4' metal sign with black lettering on a white background on the rear shed- to be compatible with the historic structure and approved them as submitted. After discussion of visibility needs and potential precedent within the historic district, the Board modified the yard sign request, approving two (2) 2' x 4' yard signs instead of the four originally requested. Mr. Shelton then made a substitute motion to approve the application with a modification that the applicant be permitted two (2) yard signs, each measuring 2 feet by 4 feet, instead of the four (4) originally requested. He noted this would provide adequate marketing capability until the business becomes established and less reliant on additional signage.

Ms. Burdette restated the motion as follows: to approve the COA application as submitted, with the modification that only two 2' x 4' yard signs are permitted instead of four. The motion passed unanimously with Mr. Mastin recusing himself.

Ms. Kotting stated she would send a letter to the applicant confirming the ARB's decision and thanked her for attending and working with the Board. Members expressed enthusiasm for the new business and indicated they look forward to visiting for coffee.

9. COA Application: St. Clair Brooks Park (Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Applicant)

Ms. Kotting reported that the COA application, submitted by the Parks and Recreation Department, is for St. Clair Brooks Park and not Pratt Park as listed on the agenda. The proposal is to remove existing wood timber and rebar and replace them with a concrete wall approximately 8 inches tall, 24 inches wide, and 200 feet long adjacent to the basketball courts and playground. The work is intended to control erosion and improve user safety. She determined that the project would have no adverse impact on any historic or cultural resources and recommended approval as submitted. Mr. Shelton clarified that St. Clair Brooks Park is located on Butler Road, while Pratt Park is located on River Road off Washington Street, and apologized for any earlier confusion. He then moved to approve the request as presented and asked if there were any proposed modifications. Mr. Ethridge stated that he agreed the project would have no historical impact, but expressed engineering and effectiveness concerns, noting that he would not personally recommend that the County spend money on the design as proposed. He acknowledged, however, that such technical review may be outside the ARB's purview and presumed the appropriate County staff would address those issues. No modifications to the COA application were proposed from a historic-resources standpoint. Mr. Shelton moved to approve the application as submitted, and Ms. Taylor-Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Kotting acknowledged and apologized for a typographical error on the agenda, where St. Clair Brooks Park had been incorrectly labeled as "Pratt Park."

10. Letter of support for county-wide cultural resource survey update budget request-Fiscal Year 2027

Ms. Burdette requested that support for funding an update of the countywide cultural resource survey be explicitly included in the ARB's letter to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Kotting explained that Stafford County, as a Certified Local Government, is required to maintain an up-to-date historic resource survey, with updates recommended about every ten years. The last countywide survey, completed in 1993 as largely a windshield survey, effectively documents resources only through about 1943, leaving a significant gap (approximately 1943–1974) in identification and evaluation of potentially eligible historic resources. She emphasized the urgency of a comprehensive update, noted that a request for $100,000 to fund the project is included in the current budget, and reported that the Historical Commission is preparing a letter of support, with a similar letter requested from the ARB. She further encouraged ARB members to contact their respective supervisors to advocate for full funding, noting that potential matching grant opportunities do not align with the County's budget cycle and that securing the full amount in the budget will allow the project to proceed regardless of grant outcome. In light of the current budget season and recent missed meetings, Mr. Shelton moved that Ms. Burdette, with assistance from Ms. Kotting to draft and submit a letter from the ARB to the Board of Supervisors in support of funding the countywide cultural resource survey update; the motion was seconded by Ms. Taylor-Wilson and passed unanimously.

11. Review DRAFT letter introducing HROD to property owners for future use

Ms. Burdette reported that a draft template letter has been prepared to introduce the concept of Historic Resource Overlay Districts to potentially affected property owners. She explained that this effort stems from earlier ARB discussions identifying properties that may be appropriate for future overlay designation, and that the Board wishes to approach owners collaboratively by emphasizing benefits such as protection of historic character and added safeguards against incompatible development, rather than appearing heavy-handed. She noted that she and Ms. Taylor-Wilson worked on the draft, with Ms. Taylor-Wilson leading the preparation of a reusable template that can be customized for individual properties, including a section where staff can insert a brief description of each property's historic significance. Ms. Burdette stated that Ms. Kotting holds the most recent version of the draft and proposed that it be emailed to ARB members and scheduled for formal review and discussion at the next meeting, since it was not available for action at this session. Ms. Kotting confirmed that she had previously emailed a revised draft with an added section but agreed to resend it, as some members, including Ms. Burdette, may not have seen it. The Board agreed that the revised draft will be circulated to all members prior to the next meeting, with the intent that, once finalized, the letter will serve as a standing tool for future outreach to property owners regarding potential HROD designation.

<u>UNFINISHED BUSINESS</u>

Update: Potential Historic Resource Overlay Districts

a. Hunters Iron Works (Architectural and Archeological resources present)

Ms. Kotting reported that the status is unchanged. A potential change in ownership is pending in connection with the proposed development. A 501(c)(3) organization is expected to receive or assume control of the property and is supportive of establishing a Historic Resource Overlay District. No action can proceed until ownership and related matters are finalized.

b. Slavery Related Resource – Phillips House Duplex (Burnside Manor) 901 Northside Drive

The Board noted that this property includes one of the few remaining, well-preserved slave quarters in Stafford County. The assigned member reported having visited the property twice but was unable to reach the owner. The property is in excellent condition. The Board agreed to keep this item on the agenda and to continue outreach. Once the draft introductory letter regarding Historic Resource Overlay Districts is approved, this property will be the first to receive the letter.

<u>REPORTS BY ARB MEMBERS</u>

Mr. Shelton recommended keeping the Phillips House/Burnside Manor under Unfinished Business and commended Ms. Kotting for progress on the Counting House project, noting the emerging cluster of historic-area businesses with Dunbar Kitchen on Carter Street.

Ms. Burdette expressed enthusiasm that the Counting House is expected to become a bakery, and Ms. Kotting highlighted the owners' focus on community engagement and sharing the restoration process publicly, noting its proximity to Mr. Mastin's home.

At Ms. Kotting's request, Mr. Mastin summarized Dunbar Kitchen as a collective of local artists and makers, including youth contributors, offering coffee, baked goods, crafts, antiques, and décor, which is helping to reactivate that corner of Falmouth. He also reported that he owns the Samuel Gordon House at Carter Street and Route 1, purchased at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and plans to begin substantial rehabilitation work in the spring.

Ms. Burdette stated she has long admired the Samuel Gordon House, found its decline difficult to watch, and is pleased to see it moving toward restoration. No further member reports were offered.

<u>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</u>

With the December 2025 and January 2026 meetings cancelled, minutes from the November 3, 2025, meeting were approved on a motion by Mr. Shelton. He was seconded by Ms. Taylor-Wilson. The minutes was approved with unanimous consent.

<u>ADJOURNMENT</u>

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.