BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
DRAFT MINUTES
JOINT SCHOOLS WORKING COMMITTEE
JANUARY 22, 2026

CALL TO ORDER – A joint Schools Working Committee meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and the School Board was called to order by Deuntay Diggs, Chairman, at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2026 in Conference Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Deuntay Diggs, Chairman; Maya Guy, Vice Chairman (arrived at 2:04 p.m.); and Pamela Yeung.

The following School Board members were present: Dr. Elizabeth Warner, Chair (and committee co-chair); Shannon Fingerholz; and Wanda Blackwell.

Also in attendance were Bill Ashton, County Administrator; Donna S. Krauss, Deputy County Administrator; Sukhmani S. Purewal, Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors; Melissa (Missy) Hall, Clerk of the School Board; Dr. Daniel Smith, Superintendent; Chris Fulmer, Deputy Superintendent; and Jason Towery, Chief Facilities Officer.

1. DRAFT DECEMBER 8, 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Dr. Warner **moved** to approve the December 8, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Dr. Yeung **seconded** the motion, which passed 4-0 (Ms. Guy was absent; Ms. Fingerholz abstained).

NEW BUSINESS

2. LAND BANKING

Mr. Ashton reported that staff is presenting a master list of all County parcels and their locations, which committee members have received electronically. He said that staff needed to go through the list and extract things like pump and water tower utilities—things that aren't available for other uses—as their intent is to review availability for potential school or County facility sites.

Dr. Yeung said she has asked in the past about the parks, as the County has a master plan of parks they are looking at to accommodate population growth, and she asked Ms. Krauss if she had a number in terms of required acreage to meet standards.

Ms. Krauss responded that the standard is around 12,000 acres for a certain number of people, but the County is currently at around 3,000 or 4,000 acres.

Dr. Yeung said she has previously discussed with Ms. Healy the potential of using properties such as the small parcel at Hampton Oaks that could be used for small [pocket] parks. She also noted that citizens have been trying to provide acreage for park use, such as the three acres at Eustis, which could be used as something more inclusive for the community and for students. She mentioned that there is a football field back there, and the County has an unused soccer field. She added that the County is looking at their proffers to see what has been dedicated, prior to those requirements expiring—which happens when no one is looking at it.

Dr. Warner asked if that was something Parks & Rec should be looking at so they can start coordinating this, because everyone has different needs and they don't seem to be coordinating what those are.

Dr. Yeung responded yes, but she also stated that Parks & Rec only focuses on what is already in the database and what's already in their scope of work. She added that the schools may have land that can be used for parks, and that needs to be included.

Dr. Smith stated that what they provided today is the list in the CIP that's the undeveloped and proffered sites—so it's really five sites. He said it's the two sites they are aware of in Embrey Mill, the Cliff Farm site, the Westlake proffered site for Hartwood, and the six-acre site off of Route 3 near the King George line. He added that they did not go into our existing developed sites and see is there a piece of land here that could be further purpose.

Mr. Diggs commented that it would be good for Supervisors to know as they are dealing with developments in each of their districts where the schools want their facilities to go. He said he is having some limited conversations on a potential development and then wanting to proffer land for schools—but if they are not going to want to build a school there, that changes whether he would support it or not. He said if they could have those conversations and as it changes, they would be updated as a Board. He commented that from a law enforcement and safety standpoint, he would prefer to keep parks away from schools.

Dr. Warner said one challenge is if they are too specific about where they want to locate things, it suddenly becomes more expensive. She stated that if they look at the growth and the way students are being students are coming into the County, they do have holes that they do need to put schools in. She noted that it's likely they are going to need a high school in the north but are really pushing outside their 10-year plan, based on current numbers, and Drew Middle School takes some of the pressure off. She emphasized that this is definitely something their two staffs can work with closely so they are not releasing any information that might ultimately be more harmful than good. She added that she agreed with Mr. Diggs about putting public parks close to schools because they can also be an attractive nuisance for a variety of reasons.

Ms. Fingerholz suggested classifying items instead of scrubbing them out of a list, as she would rather have a dog park at a water tower area that has usable land than at a school where they already may have parking issues.

Mr. Ashton agreed, stating that in looking at the parcel sheet, a lot of the larger County-owned parcels are already spoken for and have facilities there. He added that the other ones on the list are small or are part of small groups of parcels—so staff will classify them and sort them by size.

Ms. Guy stated that she agreed about the issue of safety with parks and schools but also wondered about having a park nearby that isn't open until well after school instead of during school hours, if they needed to compromise.

Dr. Yeung said she concurred on the safety issue but said you have to be there and live in the community to know who is there, and she is certain that School Board member Blackwell knows the area well because she walks there. Dr. Yeung said she has lived in her area for 33 years, and the citizens there use the grass area at the school for their dogs—which means the kids using the field must be aware of animal waste. She noted that at one point, they were planning to remove the grass area and create more parking, but three acres remain, with teenagers using it, trash dumped, and dogs using it. She said the plan was to open it and clean it up, and there was proffered money designated for that. She encouraged other board members to visit the area prior to making any decisions or judgments about it.

Dr. Warner agreed, stating that part of this is a communication issue, and if the schools know what's coming and what's planned, they can provide input on how a project might impact students.

Dr. Smith stated that in terms of the different places they might want to look for land, the CIP only looks out 10 years, while there are needs down the road. He said the 10-year CIP that the School Board adopted does have Elementary School 20, identified as Embrey Mill; High School 7, identified as Northeast; and the middle school, which would need to have redistricting with Drew to assess and determine future needs.

Mr. Ashton mentioned that the fleet services facility is a piece of land that also really needs to be identified.

Mr. Diggs asked how much land was needed for that.

Mr. Ashton responded that they have proposed in discussions the possibility of using the old Cure site, and there are other designs there too. He said in terms of a location, this has been in their CIP before and has been discussed with the local land acquisition committee. He said that the fleet site should require 5 to 10 acres, depending on whether they are trying to do joint parking, etc.

Dr. Warner commented that Garrisonville seems like a prime piece of real estate for a fleet services site, and perhaps there is something that could swap.

Mr. Diggs asked if it changed the schools' perspective if they are looking in the northeast for a high school and looking northwest for something else, but there are developers saying they are going to bring in a business and want to donate property for a school.

Dr. Warner responded that the issue is transportation, so if the school is built where they don't have students, they have to move them. She said this is a particular challenge in Stafford County because those potential school sites are often on the perimeter, so students would have to be moved all the way across to get them to class, which takes time, especially given traffic. She emphasized that they try to be thoughtful about where to put a school to optimize the attendance zone and be the most effective.

Mr. Fulmer said they know a general area where they will start a search because they are aware of student growth patterns, and part of the reason for the High School 7 location is because they didn't have a high school in the southwest quadrant of the County. He said they weren't pinpointing a specific location but more of a general area, with land that will fit their needs with the right topography and for the right price.

Ms. Guy asked if they were looking for an existing building to retrofit in addition to just land.

Mr. Fulmer responded that they need an additional facility because the current one is inadequate and too small, and they can't serve all the buses they need to there. He added that they are on the southern end of the County with that, so all the northern-end busses require paying for drivers and fuel to get them to the fleet facility—with state law requiring a 45-day inspection of all busses.

Ms. Guy asked if all the diesel needed to be filled up in the south.

Mr. Fulmer responded that there's an additional supplement they can only get in the south, but that only has to be added once per month.

Dr. Smith said fleet is a good example because it is a joint facility for both County and schools.

Dr. Yeung recalled that former Superintendent Thomas had mentioned fleet services when building one of the new schools, but it sounds like that's no longer the case.

Mr. Ashton and Mr. Fulmer said the Blackjack property is very small and predominately just for warehouses. Mr. Fulmer stated that there is a back tenant on the school's property now that has two vehicle bays and has been discussed as a possible location for the smaller "white vehicle fleets" as a bridge until they get to something more permanent.

Dr. Yeung said when they are thinking about building and projecting growth, they should consider things like technology and buses, rather than coming back to the Board with new funding requests. She said when it comes to Embrey, that ship has sailed but the school is still needed; with Westlake, the houses are not there. She emphasized that it is important to identify where the growth patterns are and where there are homes already.

Mr. Fulmer responded there are a couple of elements that go into the enrollment projection, with birth rates being one of them, so where they are born today in Stafford doesn't mean as much as where they are living when they start attending school. He said they know how many live births were in Stafford County five years ago, and now it's five years later. He stated that they know that an eighth grade class of 2000, when it gets to ninth grade, it's going to have 2,100 kids—so it's continually growing. He noted that they're moving into the County into new construction, which is where Westlake fits in; in looking at Hartwood High School or Hartwood Elementary School and the projections, those elementary school students start coming on the radar around four and five because they are building out the demo home now and then starting to sell homes very shortly in Westlake.

Dr. Yeung asked if Embrey is still in the hands of the County and not the schools.

Mr. Fulmer confirmed this and said it is not in the schools' hands.

Dr. Yeung said she had mentioned to County Attorney McLendon the previous evening the easement that was purchased by Dominion in 2012, which was decided by the School Board. She asked how valid that was, as it not the schools' easement because it's still sitting under the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Fulmer responded that he didn't want to speak to the legal side of it, but there was an original easement of around 300 feet that was already there long before the school, and the additional easement that came later was just to do underground lines. He added that the easement was there regardless, but to do overhead lines, it was the underground line that was added later.

Mr. Towery clarified that at the time, the parcel was not in the hands of the Board of Supervisors or the School Board; the developer still held the parcel and approached the County and school about it. He said the developer was in credit condemnation from Dominion, and there was an agreement totaling about $40,000 that the developer accepted from Dominion on behalf of the County and the school.

Dr. Yeung stated that they have a meeting coming up on the 28th or 29th, and she was just inquiring as to whether they could push back on that.

Mr. Towery said the original 1963 easement is the one being used for the Kraken Loop, not the one from 2012.

Dr. Yeung stated that she had met with some landowners in Hartwood about the Kraken Loop and found there are some stipulations as to how that is supposed to be used. She said they have materials that could be used to push back, and he wants to ensure it is available for use either for the schools or a County use such as fire/rescue.

Dr. Warner said that one of the challenges is the one proffer site has an easement that cuts through the middle of it, but the coastal road site is suitable for an elementary school.

Mr. Towery said they have done layouts for elementary schools on that site; it would be ideal if they could get the elementary to go with the full site down in the bend for the middle school, which wouldn't fit if they also did a fire station there. He noted that this is all based on the conservation easement being there.

3. REVIEW AND DISCUSS COMMITTEE CHARTER

Ms. Krauss reported that this group was established out of an ad hoc committee in 2021, with Dr. Yeung serving on it, and they established the current charter in the beginning. She said her conversations with Mr. Ashton, Dr. Smith, and Mr. Fulmer, they would like to proceed as "one Stafford" and determine how they can collaborate and be intentional in the time they have together in working with both full boards. She stated that they are building the relationship and are working really well together, and a charter requires both full board to approve it—so anything they do would be recommended to both bodies.

Dr. Yeung said that joint boards in general need to meet more often to better explore issues.

Dr. Warner stated that the purpose of this committee is good, but they need to be more goal oriented; for example, they could have had the land bank discussion at the last meeting. She emphasized that they need to be much more thoughtful about why they are discussing it and what the goal is so they can take it back to their respective boards. She said with the Regional Day School, that item was on the agenda without any clear indication of why it was there. She stated that it was there because they are considering replacing the day school since the hold Drew site is being torn down, and they are trying to combine the day school with Rising Star. She said it would have been good for them to have that discussion so they are not constantly coming back with the same topics—and have specific goals listed and a calendar created.

Ms. Guy said it was mentioned the previous evening that there was a committee years ago, which functioned as a technical committee, and she wondered if that work could be done here with this committee so maybe that would extend a meeting for 30 minutes. She added that they can do a lot more productive work here if they come with more meaningful ideas and questions, as well as better defining and agreeing to their scope.

Ms. Fingerholz said she would also like to ask staff what they would like for the committee to do or consider while they are convened.

Dr. Smith said one of the challenges is saying that they will have agenda items submitted one week before the scheduled meeting, as it makes it tough on staff to clarify what is intended and what the boards are trying to get out of this. He said there are some big topics that would be great for them to discuss, such as the revenue-sharing formula, which requires in-depth information and lead time.

Mr. Ashton said he concurs completely with Dr. Smith on that point, as they both run very large, complex organizations. He said they may not get to an item the day it is submitted, so they've already lost a day, and then they have to re-task the work to staff and have some kind of quality control before it goes to the boards. He emphasized that anything they can do to extend the planning timeline would be a welcome change.

Dr. Yeung mentioned that they once had this as a one-day turnaround, which was extremely challenging when it came to things like gathering data, so they extended it to one week.

Mr. Diggs said he is hearing that they don't want to shorten the time again; they actually want to extend it. He said he would potentially like to see what the topics will be for the next two meetings to give staff sufficient time to research and give the committee members enough time to communicate with their respective boards.

Ms. Krauss stated that from a staff perspective, one of the things they were going to do and have integrated for the last two meetings is to have a pre-meeting with the chairs to talk through the agenda and what it looks like. She said this would allow members to get feedback from the rest of the people on the committee but also from their board members and colleagues, then come to the table and do what Dr. Warner had suggested in terms of mapping out their agendas ahead of time, knowing that there may be emerging issues that require flexibility. She emphasized that she and

Mr. Fulmer talk frequently about what will be discussed and what will be presented, so they provide information that is consistent, expansive, and good quality.

Mr. Diggs asked if they had to go back to their board to lengthen the timeframe.

Mr. Ashton said that wasn't necessary, and if they can start setting meeting agendas 3–6 months in advance, they can start thinking about that and getting topics from their boards.

Dr. Smith suggested that it would help if they went back to their respective boards to get ideas so they can start sharing perspectives to bring back to this committee.

Ms. Guy asked if there could be an email that would go out that would indicate the timeframe for submitting ideas for their agendas.

Ms. Krauss responded that she has always done that for committees, with much shorter timeframes.

Ms. Blackwell asked for clarification on what Ms. Guy stated, so they would send staff information for the agenda, rather than meeting to discuss what will be on an agenda.

Ms. Krauss clarified that the four staff members meet with the two chairs to prepare for this meeting, to get in sync and consider the intentionality and purpose of each meeting.

Dr. Yeung asked, if they are trying to put more time in between to prepare for meetings, whether they should consider having fewer three-on-three meetings, more seven-on-seven meetings, or have them ad hoc as needed. She emphasized that she didn't want to meet just to meet, as time is valuable, and she wants outcomes and results rather than just having meetings. She recalled that in the last year and the year before, they were hunting for topics to fill their meetings, in addition to having their seven-on-seven meetings. She added that they need to be deliberate in their intent.

Dr. Warner commented that quarterly meetings were not excessive, but they must consider the timing so they are not doing back-to-back meetings. She said they can also add an agenda item as to what's on the next agenda, so they can make decisions as a group about future content.

Ms. Guy stated that it is important for all of them on this committee to improve communication with their respective board members—so if they get the information here, it's incumbent upon them to take it to their boards and be responsible for communicating with them.

Ms. Blackwell commented that this is her first meeting, and she is wondering why they didn't discuss this last night, as they had the same people in the room.

Mr. Diggs stated that last night's meeting was a collaborative one as two new boards, to get a feel for each other while going over the CIP, which had already been presented to them. He said sometimes in the larger meetings, they can get off topic and go down rabbit holes, whereas these smaller committee meetings are more focused and less political.

Dr. Yeung said it's the chairs' job to keep them focused regardless of the size of the meeting, and she liked the smaller committees to work out details, which isn't always possible in the larger board context. She stated that the community also loses that detail, and the board members have seven minutes to go through all their information and report it to the rest of the board. She suggested perhaps having a report that goes out to the boards from the committees, akin to meeting minutes but more of an emailed report.

Ms. Fingerholz said to refocus this on the charter, she would like staff to provide input on their desired timeframe as discussed.

Ms. Krauss responded that it should be at least a month, just off the top of her head.

Mr. Fulmer stated that they typically do theirs a month in advance, and they can go ahead and put agenda items on certain months—such as April, August, and October—where they know certain items will be discussed.

Ms. Krauss agreed that having standing items on the agenda would help the committee as well as the public.

Dr. Yeung said she wanted to ensure they could still get urgent items on an agenda.

Dr. Warner said that it could go in the charter under procedure three: "All other requests or requests of an urgent nature can be presented maybe to the committee members for approval in less time." She stated that perhaps Ms. Krauss and Ms. Hall could reach out to their respective board members, then have a straw poll that says yes or no to proceed.

Mr. Ashton suggested limiting it to "important high topics that are time sensitive."

Mr. Diggs said in that case, it would be a 707. He also noted that the charter language talks about how "having all 14 elected officials in attendance has proved to be difficult, and the committee was established to enhance and improve communication." He commented that all of these things come from some previous misstep or misapplication.

The committee agreed with a lead time of 45 days to put items on the agenda.

Dr. Warner **moved** to extend the timeframe for staff to 45 days. Ms. Blackwell **seconded** the motion, which passed unanimously.

4. <u>2026 Potential Meeting Dates</u>

After some discussion, the committee agreed with the 2026 meeting dates as amended to reflect an April 23 meeting time of 3:00 p.m.

Ms. Blackwell **moved** to approve the 2026 meeting dates of April 23, August 20, and October 15 as amended. Ms. Guy **seconded** the motion, which passed unanimously.

Dr. Warner asked if it would be appropriate to discuss the Technical Review Committee (TRC) when they're working on the CIPs, which is usually in August.

Ms. Krauss suggested that staff bring back some history on that committee and how the process evolved, which could be done at their April meeting.

Dr. Warner noted that the April 23 agenda items would be ATI and enrollment projections/funding, the revenue-sharing agreement progress, and what a TRC might look like from the perspective of this committee.

Ms. Fingerholz asked if there was something they should be doing as a committee with the land-banking information.

Mr. Diggs responded that this was just a beginning step in starting that communication, so they are not operating in silos, then sharing that information and beginning a dialogue.

Mr. Ashton said if this is shared at the staff level, that will help get a discussion going between both the County and school sides, which would then come back to the committee.

Ms. Guy commented that Supervisor English was very passionate about a regional day school, and she would like to learn more about financial impacts, required steps, and a realistic timeline.

ADJOURNMENT

The committee adjourned its meeting at 3:17 p.m.