

STAFFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

March 11, 2026

The meeting of the Stafford County Planning Commission of Wednesday, March 11, 2026, was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Kristen Barnes in the Board of Supervisors Chambers of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristen Barnes, Carlos Bratton, Kelsey Caudill, Marcus Oats, Willie Shelton, Jr., Maureen Siegmund

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gregory Goldstein

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Zuraf, Lauren Lucian, Stacie Stinnette, Emilie Wolfson

DECLARATIONS OF DISQUALIFICATION

Ms. Barnes asked if there were any declarations of disqualification. With none, she asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

Mr. Zuraf recommended that item number 7 be moved before the first public hearing, stating the two items were related.

Ms. Barnes asked if they needed to vote on that, followed by asking for a motion to move number 7 before item number 1 on the agenda. Mr. Shelton made the motion to move, and Ms. Siegmund made the second. Ms. Barnes then asked for discussion; seeing none, she asked for the vote. The motion passed 5-2 (*Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Bratton absent*). Ms. Barnes then opened the Public Presentations portion of the meeting.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Darla Stencavage, Garrisonville District, addressed the Planning Commission to request denial of the applicant's extension request for the conditional use permit related to the proposed Buc-ee's development. She began by thanking the Deputy County Administrator for providing clear responses to her questions ahead of the meeting. She noted that although the county has historically granted such extensions, this precedent should not dictate current decisions. She emphasized that continuing the same practices can place unnecessary financial burdens on residents. She referenced progress in county leadership as an example of positive change driven by reconsidering past norms. Ms. Stencavage argued that granting another extension would shift the cost of additional review work onto taxpayers, despite increases in the Planning Department's budget. She stated that Buc-ee's has had sufficient time but has repeatedly failed to submit required documentation. According to her remarks, key materials—including the operational and safety analysis report, wetlands delineation report, and updated traffic impact analysis data—remain missing. She also noted that Buc-ee's previously withdrew from a planned public hearing, which she believes reflects a lack of commitment to the process. She expressed concern about Buc-ee's responses to VDOT questions, describing them as cursory and dismissive. She argued that the applicant has not demonstrated a respectful or cooperative approach and therefore should not be given additional time. Ms. Stencavage urged the Planning Commission to deny the extension and require the applicant to submit a new, complete application.

Nancy Rueter, a resident of the Garrisonville District, spoke before the Planning Commission and began by thanking the members for their service to the citizens of Stafford County. She stated that she was appearing as a concerned citizen to respectfully request denial of the extension for the conditional use permit associated with the proposed Buc-ee's project. Ms. Rueter explained that the Buc-ee's organization has not adequately considered the concerns of Stafford residents and has failed to follow established procedures that exist to safeguard the community. She noted that key reports remain missing, including updated traffic

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data for the traffic impact analysis, which has been a major concern consistently raised by citizens. Ms. Rueter referred to the applicant's own previously submitted documentation, which projected that the proposed development would generate approximately 25,194 daily vehicle trips, with a peak of 1,448 vehicles per hour. She stated that such traffic volumes would significantly impact current traffic conditions and create disruptions affecting schools, the hospital, and the commuter lot. She emphasized the need for a current and accurate accounting of traffic conditions before the project moves forward. Ms. Rueter concluded by repeating her request that the extension be denied and that Buc-ee's begin the process again with a complete and properly prepared application.

Julia Lewis from the Falmouth District addressed the Planning Commission and began by expressing her appreciation for the Commission's decision at the previous meeting to deny the B-2 request for the Market at Austin Ridge. She stated that she was grateful the Commission listened to the many residents who opposed the introduction of a data center at that site and expressed hope that such a proposal would not return. She then turned to the upcoming application for the proposed Accokeek data center, scheduled for April 8, and urged commissioners to personally drive to the site. She explained that numerous homes sit directly across the street from the proposed development and that seeing the area firsthand would help illustrate the potential impacts on nearby residents. Ms. Lewis noted that the plans include features such as a water tower for each building and raised concerns about whether sufficient water capacity exists, given that the applicant would be the third to connect to the purple pipe system. She also discussed the applicant's intention to use free cooling systems, which require large exterior fans. She stated that these types of fans can be loud and asked the Commission to hold firm on sound standards. Additionally, Ms. Lewis raised a question about the ongoing comprehensive plan subcommittee discussions and asked whether the term "emergency" could be clearly defined. She expressed concern that without a specific definition, data centers might classify various situations as emergencies and run tier-four generators more frequently or for extended periods, which she said would be unacceptable. Ms. Lewis also noted that the applicant proposes placing its generators along the Resource Protection Area that drains into Crow's Nest, which she warned could allow pollution to enter the protected area if generators run regularly. She concluded by acknowledging the Commission's demanding workload, thanking them for their efforts, and offering encouragement as they prepare for upcoming meetings.

Kristen Maxson from the Falmouth District spoke to the Board and thanked them for their time and attention. She referred to Item 11 on the March 11, 2026 Planning Commission agenda, a new TRC submission concerning the Arbors of Stafford major site plan and post-development drainage study dated February 17, 2026. She explained that the plats identify the Arbors development on parcel 39-16, but a search in the county's GIS system shows two separate locations associated with that tax map number, one on each side of Route 1, even though tax maps should be unique. She pointed out a significant discrepancy in the drainage study, which identifies a post-development drainage area of 62.22 acres despite the site study covering only 8.49 acres. She asked where the remaining acreage is accounted for and who is affected by the drainage plan. Ms. Maxson stated that the study also fails to identify the owner of Tax Map 38-8, who owns part of the drainage easement connected to the Arbors property. She noted that no elevation study was included, making it difficult to evaluate drainage and water-flow impacts. She added that the applicant did not disclose the data center located immediately east of the property line on Tax Map 39-71A, known as the Potomac Church Campus. She highlighted that a daycare center sits directly in front of the Arbors site at 122 Old Potomac Church Road and said that Tax Map 39-16 is mislabeled in the plats, which also omit references to neighboring property owners. She further explained that the Stafford County registered office located at 39-16P is not identified in the submission, which instead incorrectly assigns that location to the daycare center. Ms. Maxson emphasized that the applicant is responsible for making neighboring data centers known in accordance with the comprehensive plan and Board of Supervisors guidelines for high-density developments. She briefly referenced the concept of post-event information, noting that

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incomplete or inaccurate information can distort understanding and lead to unreliable conclusions. She closed by stating that Tax Map 39-16 produces 14 separate records in the Commissioner of the Revenue's online system and thanked the Board for their attention.

Ms. Barnes closed the public presentations portion, and moved on to number 7.

Mr. Zuraf recognized Emilie Wolfson for the staff presentation.

7. Application Time Extension – A request to grant a time limit extension for action for a Conditional Use Permit application, pursuant to Stafford County Code Sec. 28-185, "Conditional use permits," for a project known as Cardinal Forest Retail.

Staff project manager, Emilie Wolfson, presented a request for the Planning Commission to grant a six-month extension for the Cardinal Forest Retail conditional use permit application, explaining that the current 12-month processing period would expire on April 25. Staff noted that county zoning regulations established time limits for applications, including a one-year limit, and that due to workload demands and the time needed for applicants to address comments, some projects required additional time. The Cardinal Forest Retail request involved a conditional use permit for a drive-through restaurant within the B-2, Urban Commercial, and Highway Corridor Overlay zoning districts on Tax Map Parcel 44L-1A. Commissioners were reminded that detailed timelines had been provided in their packets.

Ms. Barnes asked whether the April 25 deadline applied across the county and would require the project to reach the Board of Supervisors before that date. Ms. Wolfson responded that the extension request was intended to avoid timeline complications. Ms. Siegmund asked if a six-month extension was typical, and Ms. Wolfson confirmed that six months was the standard maximum extension that the Planning Commission was authorized to grant, with any additional extensions requiring Board approval.

Ms. Barnes asked whether applicants typically speak on extension requests, and staff noted that they generally do not unless Commissioners have specific questions. Ms. Barnes also confirmed that the item was not a public hearing.

Commissioner Shelton moved to approve the time-limit extension for PCR26-09, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Bratton. With no further comments or discussion, the Commission voted unanimously, 6-0 with one member absent, to approve the extension. The meeting then proceeded to the next agenda item regarding the Cardinal Forest Retail conditional use permit.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. CUP25156399; Conditional Use Permit – Cardinal Forest Retail – A request for a conditional use permit (CUP) to allow a drive-through facility associated with a restaurant within the B-2, Urban Commercial and Highway Corridor (HC) Overlay Zoning Districts on Tax Map Parcel No. 44L-1-A (Property). The Property consists of approximately 1.21 acres, located on the north side of Warrenton Road, approximately 100 feet to the east side of the intersection with Cardinal Forest Drive, within the Hartwood Election District. **(Time Limit: June 19, 2026)**

Staff project manager Emilie Wolfson presented the report for a conditional use permit request associated with the proposed Cardinal Forest Retail development on Warrenton Road. The applicant, Warrenton Road LLC, was seeking approval to allow a drive-through facility for a Chipotle restaurant within the B-2, Urban Commercial zoning district and the Highway Corridor Overlay in the Hartwood District. The 1.214-acre

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parcel, identified as Tax Map Parcel No. 44L-1-A, was located on the north side of Warrenton Road roughly 100 feet east of Cardinal Forest Drive. The site was currently undeveloped, consisting mainly of open grassy land, and had no existing access. It was governed both by proffers from Ordinance O88-117 and by a deed restriction limiting certain B-2 uses, though a drive-through restaurant was not among the prohibited activities.

Ms. Wolfson explained that the proposal included constructing a one-story Chipotle restaurant of approximately 2,585 square feet with an outdoor seating area of 440 square feet, as well as a separate 2,500-square-foot retail building. The plan provided 43 parking spaces, including two ADA-compliant spaces, and included sidewalk connections along Warrenton Road with an internal crosswalk. A potential additional sidewalk along Cardinal Forest Lane may be added if an easement could be secured. Vehicular access would come from Cardinal Forest Drive via a full-access entrance, in addition to internal drive aisles that would connect to the future Tractor Supply development immediately east of the site. The proposal included perimeter landscaping and buffering in line with county requirements, contained no anticipated impacts to wetlands or floodplains, and would be served by public water and sewer.

Conceptual architectural images were shared, and Ms. Wolfson noted that the site's location within the Highway Corridor Overlay required compliance with the Neighborhood Design Standards Plan. The applicant's design approach, which emphasized building form and character, appeared generally consistent with these standards. The proposed commercial use also aligned with Comprehensive Plan designations for Suburban land and the commercial corridor, supporting infill development and efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Regarding public facilities and transportation, the applicant submitted a Traffic Impact Analysis showing an estimated 1,534 daily trips. A right-turn taper was warranted on the northbound approach of Cardinal Forest Drive at the site entrance; no left-turn lane was required. The applicant also submitted an Access Management Exception request due to proximity to a signalized intersection, which VDOT had approved. Water and sewer capacity was available, stormwater would be addressed at the site plan stage, and no impacts were expected to schools, parks, or emergency services.

Ms. Wolfson concluded by reviewing recommended conditions, including substantial conformance with the general development plan, required sidewalks and crosswalks, compliance with architectural standards, screening of drive-through lanes and dumpsters, coordinated signage, a bike rack installation, and noise control measures for outdoor speakers. Staff found the proposal consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, compatible with surrounding uses, and beneficial for redevelopment of a vacant parcel. No negative impacts were identified. Staff recommended approval of CUP25156399 with the conditions outlined in Resolution R26-107. She then invited questions from the Commission and noted that the applicant was present to provide additional remarks.

Ms. Barnes opened the floor for questions to staff. Mr. Oats began by referencing a design depiction displayed during the briefing. He asked for clarification regarding access from Cardinal Forest, noting that based on the briefing comments, it sounded as though the design permitted only a right turn from Cardinal Forest. He asked whether he was interpreting the illustration correctly.

Ms. Wolfson responded that the access shown would be a full-access drive, not restricted to right turns. Mr. Oats continued by asking whether vehicles exiting the site would be able to cross over and then turn left at the traffic signal. Ms. Wolfson confirmed that this was accurate.

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Mr. Oats then requested that the presentation return to the previous visual—specifically, the slide showing the proposed layout. When Ms. Wolfson asked whether he was referring to the Generalized Development Plan (GDP), he affirmed and asked for the next slide. Ms. Wolfson clarified that the image on screen was the only GDP illustration included in her presentation. Mr. Oats redirected, pointing to a different image and asking what it was called. Ms. Wolfson identified it as a rendering. Mr. Oats asked if all angles of the rendering could be displayed. Ms. Wolfson explained that she had four images in the presentation. Mr. Oats noted that the staff report provided to commissioners included five, and he was specifically looking for one of them. Ms. Wolfson acknowledged that discrepancy, clarifying that the report included five renderings while her presentation included four. Mr. Oats explained the issue he was trying to understand: the rendering presented did not show the access point onto Cardinal Forest. Based on the image, it appeared to show access onto Warrenton Road instead, which caused confusion. He confirmed that the access under discussion would remain in place until the Tractor Supply development is completed. Ms. Wolfson confirmed this was correct. Mr. Oats concluded by noting he had additional questions but needed a moment to think them through.

Ms. Siegmund raised concerns regarding the proposed point of access on Cardinal Forest Drive. She noted that the location currently serves as a school bus stop. She questioned whether, when development applications are reviewed or approved, impacts on school transportation are communicated to the school system. She acknowledged this might not be the ideal group to ask but emphasized the importance of ensuring schools are aware of potential changes that could affect bus routing, travel times, and overall safety. She noted that the bus stop appears to be located at or near the HOA building and expressed uncertainty about how such impacts are mitigated or addressed. Ms. Wolfson responded that schools are notified when applications are circulated for review. They have the opportunity to comment and raise concerns. Staff does not specifically ask schools whether a project affects bus operations, but the school system may provide those comments if they choose to. Ms. Siegmund remarked, jokingly, that she was glad she attended the meeting.

Ms. Barnes followed by asking for clarification on who specifically receives the application when it is sent to the schools. She asked whether it goes to the School Board generally or specifically to transportation staff. Mr. Zuraf stated that applications are sent to School Board planning staff.

Ms. Caudill then shifted the discussion to proffers. She asked whether any transportation or access-related commitments from the existing proffers, dating back to approximately 1988, still apply to the parcel. Ms. Wolfson answered that they do not and confirmed this with another staff member, Jeff. Ms. Caudill followed up by asking whether any of the improvements required under those historical proffers had been completed. Ms. Wolfson said she assumed they had been. Ms. Caudill thanked staff.

Ms. Barnes invited Mr. Oats to return to his earlier line of questioning. Mr. Oats stated that he needed time to organize his thoughts. He returned to his concern about safety, reiterating that there is a bus stop directly at the light near the proposed exit for a drive-through use. He asked staff whether, once Tractor Supply is developed, the interparcel connection would be constructed, potentially diverting some traffic away from Cardinal Forest. Ms. Wolfson confirmed that the interparcel connection would be built. Mr. Oats confirmed his understanding that some traffic—though not all—would be diverted through the interparcel connection rather than Cardinal Forest. Ms. Wolfson agreed.

Ms. Barnes turned to Mr. Shelton. Mr. Shelton asked whether the stated daily traffic estimate of 1,500 vehicle movements included movements from both Cardinal Forest traffic and the potential retail uses. Ms. Wolfson responded that she believed this figure included pass-through traffic. A voice from the audience clarified that the number represented combined traffic from both the Chipotle and the accompanying retail

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building. Mr. Shelton acknowledged the earlier clarification about traffic counts, stating that the explanation aligned with what he had assumed.

Ms. Barnes returned the floor to Ms. Caudill. Ms. Caudill asked for the date of the traffic impact study. Ms. Wolfson stated that the study was completed on March 19, 2025. Ms. Caudill noted that portions of the report referenced data collected in 2024, suggesting that the analysis components may have been conducted earlier than the report completion date. Ms. Wolfson confirmed that the counts may have been taken prior to the final report and deferred further detail to the applicant. Ms. Caudill thanked her.

Ms. Barnes then recognized Mr. Oats, who asked a final question regarding potential mitigation for the proposed exit onto Cardinal Forest. He expressed concern about safety and timing, noting that they do not yet know when the Tractor Supply interparcel connection will be completed. Ms. Wolfson responded that Tractor Supply is currently in site plan review, and while she could not confirm an exact timeline, she believed construction within the next year was not out of the realm of possibility.

Ms. Siegmund said her question was similar to Mr. Oats' and explained that, based on both the application materials and the County's GIS, it did not appear that the interparcel connector (Fleet Road) currently reaches this parcel. She asked whether the long-term intent is for Fleet Road to extend to the site once Tractor Supply is built. She also raised concerns about the lack of a direct way to re-enter Route 17 (Warrenton Road) from the site, noting that vehicles would need to loop at the median near Cardinal Forest. She asked whether the completion of Fleet Road would then provide access back to Route 17, reducing reliance on Cardinal Forest. When her question sounded partly declarative, Ms. Wolfson asked for clarification. Ms. Siegmund clarified that she was asking whether there is a right-out onto Warrenton Road. Ms. Wolfson confirmed that none is currently proposed. She also confirmed that Fleet Road would connect to the parcel only when Tractor Supply is constructed.

Mr. Shelton asked about the hours of operation for the proposed business. Ms. Wolfson looked up the condition. Ms. Barnes suggested the hours were approximately 5:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Staff confirmed: 5:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Mr. Shelton noted he was asking due to potential impacts. Ms. Barnes then asked, jokingly, whether Chipotle serves breakfast. Ms. Caudill reacted humorously as well, and Ms. Barnes suggested this may be a question for the applicant. Ms. Wolfson clarified that the hours were provided by the applicant. Mr. Shelton indicated the matter would be addressed further.

Ms. Barnes proceeded with additional questions of her own. She asked whether vehicles exiting onto Cardinal Forest would be able to make a direct left turn without needing to perform a U-turn, given the median placement. Ms. Wolfson confirmed they would. Ms. Barnes then referenced the existing rock wall and fence along Warrenton Road that curves into the entrance area. She asked whether this HOA-owned feature would remain. Ms. Wolfson confirmed it is not proposed for removal. Turning to the buffer along the shared boundary with the HOA, Ms. Barnes asked what type of buffer and fencing were proposed. Ms. Wolfson stated that a 25-foot buffer with a 6-foot opaque fence is planned. While a 50-foot buffer is typically required, the fence allows the buffer to be reduced to 25 feet under DCSL standards. Ms. Barnes asked what types of trees would be planted. Ms. Wolfson explained that such details are not specified at this stage and are typically resolved during the site plan phase. Ms. Barnes stated her strong preference for a dense evergreen buffer with substantial visual screening and said she would discuss this with the applicant. Ms. Wolfson clarified that although specific species are not identified yet, the requirement is for a Type C buffer, which provides a higher number of plant units per linear foot. Ms. Barnes asked whether Type C buffers include a mix of deciduous, evergreen, and understory plantings. Ms. Wolfson reiterated that plant species and composition are finalized at site plan unless the Commission requests additional specificity through proffer discussions with the applicant, which staff did not deem necessary at this stage.

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Ms. Barnes opened with questions about delivery hours. She noted that the application did not include conditions limiting delivery times and expressed concern about potential late-night deliveries. She stated her intention to discuss establishing a defined delivery window. Ms. Wolfson stated she was open to including such a condition but suggested the applicant should clarify their delivery schedule and business model. Ms. Barnes continued by raising concerns about the nearby school bus stop located at the proposed access point on Cardinal Forest. She asked whether there would be signage—such as “Bus Stop,” flashing lights, or other warnings—to alert drivers. Ms. Wolfson said she did not know the answer. Ms. Barnes said she would follow up with the applicant, noting that some form of signage or flashing alert might be important for safety. She asked who would authorize signage installation. Ms. Wolfson explained that if the sign is located within the public right-of-way, it would fall under VDOT’s authority. Mr. Zuraf added that such a sign could potentially be added as a condition, but it would need to be written as subject to VDOT approval. Ms. Barnes acknowledged this and instructed staff (directing the comment to Mr. Harvey) to remember this point for later in the meeting when conditions are discussed. She asked whether there were any final questions for staff. Hearing none, she thanked the staff team.

Ms. Barnes then invited the applicant to come forward to resume the presentation, welcoming them back. Jeff Harvey, representing Legacy Engineering, addressed the Commission. He introduced himself and identified the project team present, including Bill Vakos of Vakos Realty Services—the parent company of Warrenton Road Investments LLC—and Michael Young of Grove Slade, who would address any transportation-related questions. Mr. Harvey provided background on the property, noting that it was rezoned in 1988 as part of the broader Cardinal Forest project, which consisted of three components: the present-day Cardinal Forest neighborhood, a second residential tract later known as Berea Knowles, and the subject commercial parcel. He explained that the property carries unusual deed restrictions, including a prohibition on sit-down restaurants but an allowance for fast-food uses. He emphasized that the applicant has consistently tried to select tenants compatible with the neighborhood and has declined several potential users out of concern for community fit.

Mr. Harvey displayed an image highlighting the HOA’s two entrance-feature parcels (in red) and the subject parcel (in blue). He also clarified that, although an interparcel connection will exist between this site and the future Tractor Supply property, Fleet Road will not be extended directly through Tractor Supply to the applicant’s site. Instead, drivers would access Fleet Road by traveling through Tractor Supply’s parking lot to La Rose Drive. He noted that the applicant has provided multiple easements along Warrenton Road that enabled construction of Lidl and Tractor Supply, including water and sewer easements. The site itself is only 1.2 acres—too small for typical commercial multi-tenant development—which is why the proposal includes only two tenants and a modest total building footprint of roughly 5,100 square feet, with Chipotle occupying about half. Regarding access, Mr. Harvey explained that VDOT does not typically permit new entrances onto Route 17, given its national highway system designation and priority for traffic flow. VDOT reviewed the proposed access on Cardinal Forest Drive, granted an Access Management Exception, and approved the entrance location and design. He stated that the applicant will provide a painted left-turn reserve area for vehicles approaching from Cardinal Forest, a right-turn taper into the site, and extended median striping to facilitate a safe left turn out of the site without encouraging U-turn movements.

Mr. Harvey then reviewed sidewalk requirements in the Highway Corridor Overlay District. The applicant has provided sidewalks along their own frontages on Route 17 and Cardinal Forest. However, completing the sidewalk on the HOA parcel requires HOA consent for right-of-way or easements and may involve challenges, including VDOT’s prohibition on retaining walls in the right-of-way, limited space between the wall and curb, and possible utility conflicts. He noted that design exceptions might be necessary if a conforming sidewalk cannot be constructed.

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Turning to architecture, he confirmed that the building orientation and rectangular shape result from the dimensions of the parcel. Staff had previously explored whether the drive-through could be relocated to the opposite side of the building, but Chipotle requires the drive-through lane to be on the left due to its kitchen configuration. He added that Chipotle operates without an order board—customers must order via the app—but noted that future tenants might require one, which is why the County asked that the GDP include an order-board location.

Mr. Harvey concluded by stating that the conditional use permit meets the standards of the Zoning Ordinance. He asserted that the drive-through use is compatible with nearby commercial properties, does not create adverse impacts, does not hinder adjacent development, and aligns with the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Barnes invited questions from the Commission. Mr. Shelton asked the applicant to clarify the operational hours. He expressed concern about the proposed 5:30 a.m. opening time and its potential effects on school bus pick-up and drop-off activity. He addressed his question to Mr. Vakos, asking him to explain what type of operations would occur at 5:30 a.m. Ms. Barnes reminded the speaker to introduce himself before responding.

Bill Vakos introduced himself as a representative of the Vakos Companies, based in Spotsylvania County. He explained that Chipotle has been waiting nearly two years for this project to reach the current hearing stage. The application was filed the previous April and required an extension to proceed. An executed lease with Chipotle is in place, and the applicant remains hopeful they will develop the site. Mr. Vakos stated that due to the deed restrictions and the requirements of the Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD), prospective tenants must be informed that the entitlement process can take one to three years. Because of this, some prospective tenants have declined the site. He emphasized that the proposed operating hours (5:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.) were included to allow flexibility. He explained that Chipotle does not serve breakfast and would not open at 5:30 a.m., but if Chipotle were to withdraw due to delays, a future tenant—such as a coffee shop—might require early morning access. Establishing broader hours now avoids the need for future returns to the Commission. He concluded by saying he hoped this clarified the reasoning behind the stated hours.

Mr. Shelton then turned to traffic matters and requested clarification on the aggregate trip total of approximately 1,500 vehicle movements. He directed his question to the traffic consultant. Michael Young introduced himself as the traffic engineer with Grove Slade who conducted the traffic impact study. He explained that although the intended user is Chipotle, which does not operate during the morning peak, the traffic scoping process considered the possibility of a different future user with breakfast service. Therefore, the AM peak hour was evaluated. He further explained that the 1,500 daily trip estimate was generated using the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual, which aggregates data from comparable sites nationwide. For entitlement purposes, they used the “fast food with drive-through” land-use category, which yields conservative, higher trip estimates to ensure the analysis remains valid if the actual end user changes.

Ms. Barnes asked whether there were additional questions. She recognized Ms. Siegmund, followed by Mr. Oats. Ms. Siegmund prefaced her remarks by noting that the Chipotle near her home operates from 10:45 a.m. to 11 p.m., illustrating that Chipotle itself does not use the full 5:30 a.m.–11 p.m. range cited in the conditions. She acknowledged that the stated hours represent the allowable range, not necessarily what this tenant will implement. Her question concerned delivery timing. She referenced earlier documentation that discussed delivery hours and asked whether deliveries are intended to occur outside operating hours, or whether they may occur during operating hours as well.

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Jeff Harvey responded to Ms. Siegmund's question regarding delivery hours. He explained that VDOT requires traffic modeling using a full-sized tractor-trailer, even though such vehicles are not typically used for deliveries to fast-casual restaurants or small retail tenants on a site of this scale. Standard deliveries would occur using SU-40 box trucks (approximately 40 feet in length). Because VDOT required modeling of the larger vehicle, the GDP states that if a full tractor-trailer were ever used, deliveries would need to occur outside regular business hours due to maneuverability issues. A tractor-trailer would need to swing into parking spaces to turn, making daytime deliveries impractical. Ms. Siegmund then asked about parking and stacking capacity. She noted the site includes 43 parking spaces for both the restaurant and retail tenant and asked how many vehicles the drive-through could accommodate.

Mr. Harvey stated that County code requires a minimum of 150 feet of stacking for drive-through lanes, and the proposed layout significantly exceeds that amount. He estimated the queue could hold approximately 10 to 12 cars, based on typical 20-foot vehicle spacing plus additional buffer space.

Ms. Barnes invited further questions. Mr. Oats sought clarification regarding the nature of the drive-through. He asked whether the inclusion of a drive-through was intended to anticipate a possible future fast-food tenant if Chipotle ultimately does not occupy the site. Mr. Harvey confirmed that the design supports Chipotle now but also preserves flexibility for future tenants. Mr. Oats asked whether a tenant was already identified for the accompanying retail space. Mr. Vakos indicated that one was secured. Ms. Barnes reminded speakers to use the microphone so their comments are captured in the minutes. Mr. Oats then asked about the traffic study methodology. Specifically, he asked whether the trip generation inputs were based solely on the fast-food restaurant or included both the restaurant and the retail component. Mr. Vakos stated that the study included both uses and that the land-use category was chosen using the "worst-case scenario" trip-generating profile. He clarified that the traffic category used was intentionally conservative and would overstate traffic relative to Chipotle's actual operations.

Mr. Oats expressed that, as a Chipotle customer himself, he was unfamiliar with any Chipotle locations in Stafford that offer a drive-through. Mr. Vakos noted that his company had recently constructed a Chipotle with a Chipotlane drive-up window at Levels Road and Route 208 in Spotsylvania. He explained that users order exclusively via the app, which qualifies it as a drive-through for zoning purposes. Mr. Oats then shifted to questions about access from Route 17. He asked whether the applicant ever attempted to pursue an entrance directly onto Warrenton Road and whether the denial was based on spacing requirements.

Mr. Harvey responded that the applicant did not apply for such access because VDOT's standards would not permit it. VDOT requires minimum spacing between commercial entrances along Route 17 that exceeds the length of the applicant's frontage. Therefore, even a right-in-only entrance would not meet access spacing requirements. Traffic engineer Michael Young confirmed that the spacing constraints made a Route 17 entrance infeasible. Mr. Oats summarized his understanding—there is simply insufficient frontage to meet VDOT's spacing minimums—and staff affirmed that interpretation.

Traffic engineer Michael Young continued responding to Mr. Oats' questions regarding access limitations on Route 17. Mr. Young explained that although the applicant did not formally submit a request to VDOT for a Route 17 entrance, the team discussed the possibility during the scoping process. VDOT historically protects its primary corridors—such as U.S. 17, U.S. 1, and Route 3—from additional access points due to safety and traffic flow priorities. He noted that while VDOT granted an Access Management Exception for the entrance on Cardinal Forest, they were clear that no new access to Route 17 would be allowed. He stated that VDOT would only consider such an entrance if the applicant had no alternative frontage, which is not the case because the site has frontage on Cardinal Forest Drive. This made pursuing Route 17 access impractical. He reiterated that the lot's limited frontage along Route 17 could not meet VDOT's required

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spacing standards for commercial entrances. Mr. Oats confirmed his understanding that the frontage on Cardinal Forest Drive counts as the alternate access, and Mr. Young agreed. He further clarified that although Fleet Road provides existing access to Route 17 through Tractor Supply, the applicant cannot construct a new entrance themselves; they can only build an internal connection to the Tractor Supply parking lot if and when that development is constructed. Mr. Oats asked whether the applicant would need to modify signage after Tractor Supply is built. Mr. Young replied that any signage updates would primarily be internal to the site and would not require VDOT review. He added that drivers coming from Route 17 would naturally adjust based on available connections.

Ms. Caudill asked about community engagement efforts. Referring to earlier comments that the applicant sought a tenant compatible with the neighborhood, she asked whether the applicant had held meetings or gathered input from nearby residents. Mr. Harvey responded that he would allow Mr. Vakos to elaborate on past discussions with various parties. He explained that his attempts to meet with the Cardinal Forest HOA began in September. He exchanged a few phone calls and emails with the HOA's management company, including as recently as the past month. The HOA indicated they may not be willing to provide the right-of-way needed for the proposed sidewalk on HOA property. However, Mr. Harvey said the HOA did not offer feedback from residents themselves.

Ms. Caudill asked whether any resident-level input had been provided. Mr. Harvey confirmed that none had been received. He reiterated that he had offered multiple times to meet with the HOA board but had not received a response.

Ms. Barnes asked whether there were any follow-up questions for the applicant. She then raised a safety concern related to the school bus stop located near the site's only entrance/exit on Cardinal Forest Drive. She asked Jeff Harvey—and invited Ms. Siegmund to weigh in—whether a warning sign such as “School Bus Stop Ahead” could be added, and who would be responsible for installing such signage. She expressed interest in creatively identifying a condition that could enhance safety for children near the bus stop. Mr. Harvey stated that he has seen “School Bus Stop Ahead” signs used on roadways and deferred to Mr. Zuraf regarding the specifics of installation and responsibility. Ms. Barnes asked who typically installs such signs—VDOT, the schools, or the applicant. Ms. Siegmund explained that schools do not install them; VDOT does. She added that in addition to roadway signage, on-site signage could also be appropriate, because foot traffic is expected to increase as students walk to and from the bus stop, the new high school, and nearby HOA recreation areas. She emphasized the need to consider safety for pedestrians leaving the site. Ms. Barnes remarked that she could easily envision high-school students walking directly from the bus stop to Chipotle—which would benefit the business—but the pedestrian activity further heightened her safety concerns. She asked how they could coordinate with VDOT to explore adding signage. Mr. Shelton offered firsthand insight, explaining that the preschool at Richland Baptist Church had to apply directly to VDOT for approval to install a school crossing sign. The applicant was responsible for purchasing the sign, while VDOT handled installation. He added that a flashing sign was considered but cost approximately \$6,000, so the preschool opted for a stationary sign.

Mr. Zuraf stated he could draft a condition addressing the signage during the public hearing, ensuring the language reflected the need for VDOT approval. Ms. Barnes supported creating a condition requiring coordination with VDOT and clarifying that installation would be handled appropriately during the site plan phase. Mr. Zuraf confirmed that, if conditioned, the applicant would install the signage as part of site development. Mr. Harvey stated that the applicant was willing to accept such a condition.

Ms. Barnes then moved to the sidewalk discussion, noting that the HOA had indicated they did not want a sidewalk constructed on their parcel. She observed that although a sidewalk may not be built, pedestrians

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would still walk the edge of the property because it is a natural footpath. She expressed appreciation for the aesthetic of the HOA's stone wall and hopes that the entrance feature would remain undisturbed. She suggested that the matter could be discussed further during the public hearing.

Ms. Barnes then asked if there were any remaining questions. Mr. Oats offered a brief correction, acknowledging that he previously stated no Chipotle in Stafford had a drive-through, but his colleague pointed out that one does exist in Embrey Mill, though it appeared infrequently used.

Ms. Barnes thanked the applicant team and formally opened the public hearing. She invited members of the public to the podium, explained the three-minute speaking limit, and welcomed the first speaker as they approached.

Curtis Peck of the Hartwood District stated that he formally opposes the conditional use permit for the Cardinal Forest Retail project, arguing that it fails to meet the harmony and safety standards required under Section 28-185 of the zoning ordinance. He explained that Cardinal Forest Drive and Norfolk Street are already heavily used as a cut-through route between Truslow Road and U.S. 17, and that motorists frequently disregard speed limits and stop signs, creating safety risks for families in the neighborhood. While acknowledging those observations as anecdotal, he presented several documented concerns. He noted that the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was completed before the opening of Hartwood High School and Falls Run Elementary School—both of which will significantly increase traffic at the intersection. He cited the Highway Capacity Manual's definition of Level of Service (LOS) E, stating that the intersection already operates at or near full capacity, with limited usable traffic gaps and heightened vulnerability to breakdowns, queuing, and unsafe driver behavior during peak times. Mr. Peck referenced Stafford County's Comprehensive Plan, specifically Policy 7.7.7, which sets a goal of LOS C for intersections. He highlighted that staff acknowledges the intersection currently operates at LOS E and argued that adding approximately 1,500 daily trips contradicts the County's own policy objectives. He described the cumulative effect as "death by a thousand cuts," where even small increases in volume push an already overburdened intersection into failure, redirecting additional vehicles through Cardinal Forest's neighborhood streets. He emphasized that the TIA relies on average delay figures that do not reflect the lived experience of residents, stating that a 5% increase in delay may translate to dozens of additional cut-through trips per day. He also stressed that the TIA does not account for pedestrian safety impacts on neighborhood children. Mr. Peck concluded by asserting that adding 1,500 trips to an intersection already at 100% capacity is "an act of discord, not harmony," and therefore does not meet the requirements of Section 28-185(d). He urged the Commission to deny the permit.

Mark Fingerholz of the Hartwood District stated that he also opposes the project and raised several technical and procedural concerns. He began by questioning the approval of the site entrance, which he believes does not meet functional distance requirements. He noted that the Access Management Exception appears to reference conditions applicable to a right-in/right-out configuration, whereas this entrance is full-movement. He expressed concern that the design will cause backup onto Warrenton Road. Regarding the proposed sidewalk, Mr. Fingerholz clarified that no detailed discussions have occurred with the HOA. He stated that the HOA's property management company had forwarded plan materials but that the HOA board—of which he is president—had not engaged directly with the applicant. He said he personally would welcome a sidewalk but stressed that significant additional dialogue would be required, given that the sidewalk would be on HOA property. Mr. Fingerholz identified multiple areas in which the project relies upon the future Tractor Supply development, including: the traffic study assumptions, the auto-turn analysis (which requires trucks to maneuver onto the Tractor Supply property), and stormwater management coordination. He noted that Tractor Supply's approvals are several years old and that construction materials have sat on-site for years, making the timeline uncertain. He questioned whether

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stormwater infrastructure had been sized for both properties. He also pointed out that the widening of Warrenton Road to six lanes between GEICO and Walmart was not addressed in the traffic analysis. Regarding the buffer, he stated that the plan shows only a 17.5-foot buffer adjacent to the HOA—not the 25 feet previously cited by staff—and asked for clarification. Mr. Fingerholz also reiterated concerns about alternative locations, noting there are other Route 17 parcels better suited for a drive-through user and already configured for such development. He concluded by highlighting that many of the applicant's plans assume Tractor Supply will be built, but after years of inactivity, this dependency raises uncertainty about the viability and safety of the proposed site design.

Samantha Ortiz of the Hartwood District expressed strong opposition to the proposed development and stated she agreed with the concerns raised by previous speakers. She emphasized ongoing neighborhood safety issues and described how traffic has steadily increased, particularly since the rear entrance began receiving additional volume associated with the new schools. She explained that the neighborhood is now confronted with increased traffic from both the back entrance and the proposed development at the front. She said that even before the school openings, drivers frequently used the neighborhood as a cut-through when avoiding congestion on I-95 or Route 1. Over the past five years, the neighborhood has transitioned to a younger demographic with many new families and small children, which has increased outdoor play and pedestrian activity. She said the proposed development would bring additional turning movements and traffic near the bus stop—which she noted is also a handicap-accessible stop—creating heightened safety risks. Ms. Ortiz urged the Commission to reconsider the project and asked for denial.

Molly Denim of the Hartwood District stated that the proposal does not pass a basic sanity check due to the number of waivers, exceptions, and workarounds needed to make the project feasible. She argued that the packet materials do not adequately depict how the development will appear from the neighborhood side, even though the project sits at the community's primary entrance and directly in front of at least one homeowner's driveway. She referenced an alternative access road that she said could route traffic to Route 17 without entering the neighborhood, giving travelers the option to go either direction on U.S. 17. She argued this alternative would avoid significant neighborhood disruption. Ms. Denim also emphasized the presence of two new schools adjacent to the area. According to her, the increase in children walking and biking, combined with inexperienced high-school drivers, heightens safety concerns that the application does not adequately address. She expressed major skepticism that the Tractor Supply development will be built soon, noting that construction materials have been stored on the property "for years." She said the applicant could collaborate with Tractor Supply to construct the access road simultaneously rather than relying on uncertain future improvements. She also doubted that the Cardinal Forest entrance would ever be closed once opened, even if the interparcel connection eventually comes online. Ms. Denim stressed that she is not opposed to Chipotle or development generally but opposes neighborhood-disruptive design choices when safer alternatives exist. She requested denial of the CUP.

Adam Fairchild of the Hartwood District stated that he lived at the corner of Norfolk Street and Cardinal Forest Drive and already witnessed speeding, tire-squealing, and significant cut-through activity near his home. With three children, he expressed concern for their safety, especially with a business proposed to operate until 11 p.m. He believed the added traffic, noise, and late-evening activity will disturb residents. He noted that the proposed site backs directly onto the community's pool and tennis complex. Children routinely ride their bicycles to the area in summer, and he believes increased traffic and turning movements from the restaurant would create additional hazards. He also raised concerns about odors, trash, and potential pests—including rats and flies—that fast-food establishments can attract, which he argued would negatively affect the pool environment despite buffering. Mr. Fairchild stated that although the property was rezoned in 1988, much of the neighborhood was not constructed until around 2000. He suggested the current built environment and demographics differ significantly from the conditions anticipated when the

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zoning was adopted. He also noted the presence of multiple unused or “brownfield” commercial sites along Route 17—including empty shopping centers—that could accommodate a restaurant without introducing safety or traffic burdens to an established neighborhood. He warned that adding an estimated 1,500 daily trips would make neighborhood entry and exit more difficult and would negatively affect residents’ quality of life. He asked the Commission to consider the neighborhood’s perspective and deny the request.

Jennifer Fingerholz of the Hartwood District stated that she and her family live directly across from the proposed site and provided the Commission with photos illustrating the view from her home. She clarified that she is not opposed to the Chipotle, the drive-through, or development of the parcel generally. She acknowledged that while a Chipotle already exists two and a half miles away, she supports commercial investment that helps offset tax burdens. However, she strongly opposed the proposed entrance on Cardinal Forest Drive, which she described as a residential neighborhood street. She focused on several concerns: Traffic Study Gaps – She argued the 2024 traffic study is outdated and does not account for the two new schools, their associated spirit nights, or after-game gatherings that could increase restaurant traffic. She also questioned the study’s assumption that the restaurant would be busier in the morning peak than the afternoon, which does not match the typical Chipotle business model. Route 17 Widening – She noted that the study does not address the planned six-lane widening of Route 17. Entrance Proximity – She said the proposed entrance is too close to the Route 17 intersection to allow safe stopping distances, and it is located precisely at the existing neighborhood bus stop. Inconsistency with Prior Developer Representations – She stated that when the Tractor Supply project was approved, residents were told no entrance would be permitted onto Cardinal Forest because of the intersection’s traffic volume and the short distance to Route 17. Tractor Supply Dependency – She noted that if Tractor Supply had been completed as anticipated, a connection to the existing Fleet Road service corridor would already exist, and the Chipotle site would likely connect to it instead. Commercial Access Availability – She explained that Fleet Road already connects to Route 17 at multiple commercial intersections, including Stafford Lakes Parkway (with Take 5, Pizza Hut, Aldi, and Urgent Care) and Berea Church Road (with GEICO and the Giant shopping center). Those locations are built to handle commercial traffic—unlike residential Cardinal Forest. Ms. Fingerholz stated that the developer’s materials focus on supporting this single business, but in reality the entrance will eventually support three: the restaurant, another retail tenant, and Tractor Supply. She calculated travel times showing that the Fleet Road access point is only seconds away from the parcel. She reiterated support for the Chipotle itself but urged the Commission to require the entrance to connect to Fleet Road instead of Cardinal Forest Drive. She asked the Commission to deny the CUP as presented.

Sean Fitzpatrick of the Hartwood District stated that he lived on Cardinal Forest Drive and appreciated the Commission’s consideration of neighborhood concerns. He explained that he regularly walks the streets with his dogs and sees many neighborhood children playing, biking, and walking to the tennis courts, pool, and playgrounds located just 100 feet from the proposed entrance. He emphasized that while the applicant’s diagrams highlight proximity to Route 17, they do not illustrate the equally close proximity to neighborhood recreation amenities in the opposite direction. He expressed concern that increased traffic turning into and out of Cardinal Forest Drive would pose serious safety risks for pedestrians and children at play. He concluded by stating that while the parcel can and likely will be developed, placing the entrance on a neighborhood street is unsafe and inappropriate. He encouraged the Commission to look carefully at satellite imagery to understand the close spatial relationship between the proposed entrance and community gathering areas.

Brenda Brietner of the Hartwood District spoke from her experience as a 15-year school bus driver and 15-year construction worker. She stated that construction of the new school behind her home has already caused issues, including vibrations and structural concerns such as window shaking and basement leaks. She noted that no vibration monitoring was done during that work, and residents were left to deal with the

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impacts. She emphasized her concern for children who will walk through the area to and from the new school and the bus stop, describing the additional traffic from Route 17 as a dangerous mix. She reported witnessing multiple crashes on Route 17 over the past five years involving drivers attempting to beat the light at the intersection. Ms. Brietner said adding a restaurant entrance to the neighborhood—directly in the path of school-related pedestrian traffic—is unsafe. She urged the Commission not to allow a subdivision entrance to serve as the access point for a drive-through restaurant.

Kristen Maxson of the Falmouth District raised concerns about inconsistencies and confusing information within the application materials and public documents. She noted that the timeline of signatures and dates differed between the written agenda and the hearing presentation—specifically, the applicant’s signature dated April 11, 2025; VDOT’s dated March 12, 2025; and references in testimony to a 2024 traffic study. She said these inconsistencies make it difficult for the public to understand whether the application materials are current or accurate. She also noted discrepancies in property naming and parcel identification numbers. Online GIS results return parcels labeled differently (e.g., “12 Cardinal Forest Drive,” “SR-1491,” or “Parcel A”) than the name used in the agenda. She said this mismatch creates confusion about which parcel is being considered. Ms. Maxson added that various sections of the application appeared incomplete or contradictory: amended proffer information was crossed out, “match lines” and “roofline” were marked “not applicable,” neighboring owner lists were absent, the legal description did not match the tax map number, technical appendices were empty, and signed scoping materials lacked content. She concluded by noting that this volume of inconsistencies can be confusing for residents who are trying to understand the proposal and thanked the Commission for its time.

Frank Guzman of the Hartwood District explained that he lived at the entrance to Cardinal Forest Drive and has witnessed numerous vehicles failing to stop at the intersection near his home. He described the situation as frightening, especially for parents with children walking or crossing in the area. He asked the Commission to consider another dimension—the potential criminal element that additional activity may bring. He noted that police and fire vehicles frequently use Cardinal Forest Drive as a cut-through between Route 17 and Truslow Road, but increased commercial activity may lead to more late-night traffic and potentially undesirable behavior. He said he often hears sirens late at night along Route 17 and expressed concern that additional traffic and late-night operations would increase disturbances. He stated that while he appreciates the work of law enforcement officers living in the community, residents deserve quiet and safety at home. He urged the Commission to seriously consider residents’ comments and oppose the development.

Adam Pawlik of the Hartwood District stated that he has lived in the neighborhood since 2002 and has observed major changes along Route 17, including increased development, more traffic signals, and significant speeding. He walks and bikes daily and said he regularly witnesses drivers traveling far above the 25-mph speed limit. He noted that many neighborhood children ride their bikes around Cardinal Forest during after-school hours and in summer. He expressed concern that adding more traffic near the neighborhood entrance will create dangerous conditions for children and families. Mr. Pawlik emphasized that he supports business development and is self-employed, but believes new commercial growth should prioritize safety and quality of life. He said there are many vacant commercial spaces along Route 17—including empty parcels and unused shopping center pads—that should be redeveloped before pushing new construction onto neighborhood-adjacent land. He urged the Commission to consider long-term safety and the type of community residents want to build. He concluded by noting that Stafford County is beginning to resemble high-density areas like those he left in California and asked the Commission to protect quality of life.

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Karen Saword of the Hartwood District explained that while she did not have technical data to offer, she wanted to share perspective based on experience and common sense. She cautioned that the County sets rules and guidelines for a reason—primarily to ensure safety—and expressed concern that granting multiple exceptions or alterations signals that a project may not be appropriate for its proposed location. She questioned whether there is any precedent in Stafford County for a commercial entrance directly at the entrance to a residential neighborhood, stating she could not think of a comparable example. She pointed out that Fleet Road already exists as an alternative access point and questioned why a neighborhood entrance should bear the burden of commercial traffic. Ms. Saword asked the Commission to consider practical scenarios: vehicles turning quickly from Route 17, vehicles exiting the restaurant, vehicles waiting at median openings, and neighborhood residents entering or exiting at the same location. She said these overlapping movements create unnecessary conflicts and urged the Commission to rely on gut instinct and common sense. She concluded by asking the Commission to prioritize safety, consistency with established guidelines, and the welfare of children and families living near the proposed entrance.

Chris Denning of the Garrisonville District explained that he did not live in Cardinal Forest but wanted to speak in support of the residents who had testified earlier. He stated that he has experienced similar situations where development occurred without fully considering the impacts on nearby neighborhoods. He said the speakers before him raised thoughtful, well-reasoned concerns that deserve careful consideration. He noted that he visits the Chipotle in Embrey Mill about once a week and is familiar with its drive-through configuration. In his experience, the drive-through rarely has more than three cars in line, and while parking lot traffic can require brief pauses, it is generally manageable. He shared this perspective to offer context but nonetheless encouraged the Commission to listen closely to neighborhood residents, as they know their area best. He stated that development should not proceed if it is not good for the people directly affected. He closed by urging thoughtful evaluation of residents' suggestions.

Marvin McFarland of the Hartwood District stated that he lived directly across from the proposed development and has lived in Stafford County since 2007. He chose the area because of its schools, quality of life, and safety. He expressed significant concern about how the proposed development would affect neighborhood safety and quality of life for his family, especially his special-needs son. He explained that his son uses the bus stop located directly across the street from the proposed site entrance. Special-needs buses require extra time—deploying a lift, loading the child, and securing them safely—often causing impatient drivers to attempt to maneuver around the bus. He stated this already presents daily safety risks, and adding commercial traffic will exacerbate the dangers. Mr. McFarland also noted that the traffic light at the Cardinal Forest/Route 17 intersection frequently takes two minutes to cycle, leading many drivers to accelerate aggressively to avoid missing the light. He believes this behavior will conflict dangerously with vehicles exiting a new drive-through across the street. He added that noise is already a significant issue. Cars waiting at the light often play extremely loud music, causing items in his house—including chandeliers—to rattle. Increased traffic and late-night operations from the proposed development would worsen this disturbance. He urged the Commission to consider these impacts on nearby families.

Ms. Barnes thanked the final speakers, asked for any remaining public comments, and, seeing none, closed the public hearing. She then invited the applicant to return to the podium to address concerns raised during testimony.

Mr. Harvey returned to the podium to address public comments. He began by reminding the Commission that the property's commercial use was determined nearly forty years ago when it was originally rezoned. The question before the Commission now is not whether commercial use is appropriate, but whether the proposed commercial building may include a drive-through window. He emphasized that conditional use permits allow the County to impose conditions that can improve compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods.

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Mr. Harvey addressed several topics raised during the hearing:

- Traffic signal timing: He stated that the applicant proposed an adjustment to improve outbound movement from Cardinal Forest Drive. VDOT rejected the proposal because Route 17 traffic is prioritized under their policies, and they would not shift signal timing to benefit the side street.
- Route 17 widening: He noted that the generalized development plan shows the ultimate right-of-way consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and the applicant is willing to dedicate required right-of-way. He believed this is already a condition of approval.
- Stormwater management: Mr. Harvey explained that the Tractor Supply stormwater pond was sized to accommodate runoff from the subject development. According to Mr. Vakos, Tractor Supply intends to open by the end of the year, though project delays have occurred.
- Timing of the traffic study: He clarified that County procedures require the traffic study to be completed prior to application submission. Therefore, the study predates the application and was completed before the two new schools and the Truslow–Route 17 connector road were built. He suggested the new connector road may reduce cut-through traffic in Cardinal Forest by providing a more direct route.
- Safety and quality-of-life concerns: Mr. Harvey stated he could not directly address issues such as loud music, neighborhood speeding, or non-project-related disturbances, though he understood residents' frustrations. He did not believe the addition of a drive-through window would meaningfully worsen those existing issues. He concluded by offering to answer any further Commission questions.

Ms. Siegmund asked about the AM peak hours used in the traffic analysis. She questioned whether peak-hour trip generation appropriately accounts for a fast-casual restaurant that does not serve breakfast. She also asked whether the trip-generation software distinguishes between two-meal establishments (like Chipotle) and three-meal fast-food restaurants. Traffic engineer Michael Young responded that the ITE trip-generation dataset includes traditional fast-food restaurants with breakfast service. These restaurants generate more traffic overall than a Chipotle, particularly during the morning peak. He explained that the applicant used the more intensive category intentionally to ensure the study remains valid even if a different tenant eventually occupies the site. Ms. Siegmund then shifted to questions regarding school transportation. She recalled past discussions about a potential footpath connecting Cardinal Forest to the new school and suggested that, given the specialized bus stop supporting a child with an IEP, the school system may need to request VDOT consideration of signal timing adjustments during school peak periods. She noted that similar requests have been successful when justified by documented need.

Ms. Caudill asked staff to clarify whether traffic studies must be completed before an application is filed. She noted that many applications come forward years after their initial traffic scoping discussions. Mr. Zuraf explained that traffic studies are initiated months before an application is submitted. The applicant's engineer works with County staff on a scoping document that defines study parameters. This preparatory work must be completed before the application is accepted, which is why studies often predate application filing.

Ms. Caudill asked Mr. Harvey to clarify comments made earlier regarding the drive-through placement. She recalled that the County had asked whether the drive-through window could be placed on the opposite side of the building but that the applicant had indicated this was not feasible. Mr. Harvey explained that the County had indeed suggested relocating the drive-through window to the right side of the building. However, Chipotle's kitchen layout requires the drive-through window to be on the left side. He added that this configuration also maximizes vehicle-stacking capacity on the site, enhancing operational flow. Ms. Caudill then expressed concern about community engagement. She noted that many residents spoke about not having been engaged by the applicant and said she would have similar expectations if a project were proposed near her home. She asked for specifics on outreach attempts. Mr. Harvey provided a timeline of communications with the HOA's management company, which serves as the intermediary for HOA matters.

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His first outreach occurred on September 30, consisting of a phone call and email to the property manager, Vickie Doyein. He provided the GDP and application materials and offered to meet with the HOA. On February 9, he followed up with another email regarding the public hearing date. On February 20, he emailed again about the County's request for a sidewalk on HOA property and asked whom he should speak with. On March 2, he spoke with the assistant community manager, Melissa Wilkins, who informed him that the HOA would oppose any request affecting their property. Mr. Harvey noted that he did not receive a request to meet directly with the HOA Board.

Mr. Shelton acknowledged the long-standing B-2 zoning and asked whether the applicant was willing to work with VDOT on installing a "School Bus Stop Ahead" sign. Mr. Harvey confirmed the applicant was willing. Mr. Shelton then asked whether the applicant would work directly with the HOA president on the sidewalk issue. Mr. Harvey again confirmed they would.

Ms. Barnes then asked about the northern buffer shown on the site plan. She noted that the plan shows a 17.5-foot "alternate buffer," though she understood the required buffer to be 25 feet. Mr. Harvey clarified that the ordinance requires a 25-foot buffer but allows it to be reduced by half with the installation of a privacy fence. Therefore, a 17.5-foot buffer meets the alternate standard. Ms. Barnes moved to the Tractor Supply project, noting inconsistent information and asking for clarification about its status. She referenced a public comment suggesting the project had been moved or replaced. Mr. Zuraf explained that staff has been working closely with Tractor Supply, which has been securing several required site easements. Three easements were recently recorded, and two additional easements were underway. Once completed, the County will be able to approve the Tractor Supply site plan. Mr. Zuraf stated that the project appears to be moving forward and that progress showed light at the end of the tunnel. Ms. Barnes asked staff to confirm whether the Tractor Supply project had been withdrawn or relocated. She noted a public comment suggesting the project had been switched to the Rock Hill District but clarified that a second Tractor Supply has been approved elsewhere and the two projects are separate. Mr. Zuraf confirmed the projects are independent and that the Cardinal Forest Tractor Supply remains active. Ms. Barnes observed that the Chipotle proposal appeared to rely on several Tractor Supply-related contingencies, including stormwater and interparcel access. She acknowledged the long delays but said they appear to stem from complex easement issues rather than County inaction. She then asked whether the entrance on Cardinal Forest Drive could be eliminated and replaced entirely by access through Tractor Supply or Fleet Road.

Applicant representative Bill Vakos responded directly that if such a condition were imposed, the applicant would withdraw the application. He added that Chipotle would not move forward under those circumstances.

Mr. Oats asked about project timing. He referenced Mr. Vakos's earlier statement that Tractor Supply expected to finish by the end of the year and asked when the Chipotle project would be completed if approved. Mr. Vakos explained that his engineering team can work only up to a certain point before the conditional use permit is decided. After CUP approval, they would pursue site plan approval and building permits. He said Tractor Supply must complete its project first because the applicant's stormwater system flows into Tractor Supply's stormwater facility. He reiterated that Tractor Supply told him they hope to open by January of next year. He confirmed that if Tractor Supply is delayed, then Chipotle would also be delayed. Mr. Oats then asked whether the drive-through was being requested primarily to provide flexibility in case Chipotle backs out. Mr. Vakos stated that the applicant intends to honor its lease with Chipotle. If Chipotle were to withdraw and the applicant lacked the approved CUP for a drive-through, the site would have to be marketed for non-drive-through commercial uses, some of which he implied would be less desirable for the neighborhood. The drive-through is included to meet Chipotle's needs—not merely to allow a future change in tenant.

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Ms. Barnes began by noting that if Chipotle does not ultimately occupy the site, the underlying B-2 zoning permits numerous by-right commercial uses. She gave an example—such as a 7-Eleven without fuel sales—which would not require a Conditional Use Permit. Mr. Vakos replied that there is already a 7-Eleven nearby but acknowledged that some compatible use would eventually occupy the property. He emphasized that any future by-right user would still have an entrance on Cardinal Forest Drive.

Ms. Siegmund then revisited an earlier comment referencing deed restrictions prohibiting sit-down restaurants. She asked for clarification. Mr. Vakos stated that the deed restrictions—dating back many years—prohibit a long list of uses, including sit-down restaurants, fuel sales, pet stores, hotels, warehouses, places of worship, nurseries, car washes, veterinary clinics, and more. He noted that a restaurant with a drive-through is permitted under the deed, but a sit-down restaurant without one is not. He emphasized that the restriction list is extensive.

Mr. Vakos then followed up on Mr. Shelton's earlier mention of costly flashing school-zone signage. He confirmed that if VDOT would allow an electrified or flashing sign, the applicant would be willing to install it. Mr. Shelton noted that VDOT initially opposed such signage in his past experience and required the applicant to pay the cost, but confirmed the applicant in that case installed the approved alternative.

Ms. Barnes thanked the applicant and turned to staff. She asked Mr. Zuraf whether he had drafted language for the additional condition discussed during the hearing. Mr. Zuraf read the proposed condition: "The applicant shall install school bus stop warning signage, if a school bus stop is present, prior to the first occupancy permit, to be generally located at the exit of the site onto Cardinal Forest Drive."

Ms. Barnes asked Mr. Shelton if he supported the phrasing. He confirmed that he did. Ms. Barnes then closed discussion with the applicant and returned the matter to the Commission. She recognized that the project is located in Mr. Shelton's district and invited him to indicate how he wished to proceed.

Mr. Shelton began deliberations by noting that the property has been zoned B-2 commercial for nearly 40 years. He emphasized that the Commission's role is limited to evaluating the conditional use permit (CUP) for a drive-through window, not the underlying commercial use, which is already permitted by right. He also highlighted that the Commission had requested certain concessions—such as school bus safety signage and cooperation with the HOA regarding sidewalk discussions—and that the applicant agreed to them. He moved to recommend approval of CUP25156399. Mr. Bratton seconded the motion.

Ms. Barnes opened the motion for discussion and invited comments from the Commission. Mr. Oats stated that the decision was difficult. He noted he is strongly pro-business, but acknowledged that if he lived in the neighborhood, he would struggle with the idea of a drive-through entrance located at a neighborhood street. He observed that many neighborhoods in Stafford do not have commercial entrances positioned like this. He added that because of VDOT restrictions, any development on this parcel—regardless of tenant—will likely require access via Cardinal Forest Drive. He commended both the developer and the residents for their respectful presentations and said he understood the concerns raised.

At this point, Ms. Barnes asked whether the motion needed to explicitly include the new condition regarding school bus signage. Staff confirmed it should. Mr. Shelton clarified that his motion included the bus-stop-ahead signage requirement. Staff noted that the sidewalk matter is not part of a written condition, only an applicant commitment. The Commission agreed the motion includes only the school-signage condition.

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Ms. Siegmund asked whether the school-signage condition required VDOT approval. Staff explained the signage would be installed on the applicant's property at the site exit, so VDOT approval was not necessary.

Ms. Caudill asked whether the motion included the applicant's commitment to coordinate with the HOA president. Staff clarified that this is not part of the CUP conditions but rather a voluntary effort by the applicant. The applicant acknowledged responsibility to re-engage directly with the HOA president, given that prior outreach attempts through management had not reached the Board.

Mr. Shelton added comments thanking staff, the applicant, and the public for their engagement. He reiterated that although safety concerns are understandable, the Commission must consider the longstanding B-2 zoning and that the CUP pertains only to the drive-through.

Ms. Caudill echoed appreciation for all parties and emphasized the value of public input. She expressed concern that the HOA president was not contacted directly and said some issues could have been resolved earlier had communication been clearer.

Mr. Bratton also noted the property's long-established commercial zoning and reiterated that the Commission can only decide on the CUP, not whether commercial development should occur.

Ms. Siegmund discussed comparable layouts in the region and said she had considered examples such as a McDonald's near Ferry Farm, which sits at the entrance of a neighborhood. She remarked on the deed restriction prohibiting sit-down restaurants and expressed surprise that, for decades, only drive-through restaurants had been legally permissible on the property. She noted that a drive-through like Chipotle's—opening later in the morning—may cause fewer morning conflicts with school transportation than other potential fast-food restaurants that could locate there.

Ms. Barnes acknowledged that the Commission was now deliberating and allowed the applicant to speak briefly when he offered a proposal. Mr. Vakos suggested amending the proposed hours of operation, shifting the opening time from 5:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. to avoid conflict with morning school bus activity.

Ms. Barnes accepted this adjustment and added it as a second new condition: hours limited to 9:00 AM to 11:00 PM. She confirmed with Mr. Shelton that he agreed to incorporate it into the motion.

Ms. Barnes then shared her own perspective. She stated that something will eventually be built on this parcel because the B-2 zoning is established and longstanding. If the matter were a rezoning, she would treat it very differently and request additional proffers. But as a CUP for a by-right restaurant use, the Commission's scope was narrower. She expressed concern that a less desirable use might be built if the CUP were denied. She also criticized the HOA management company for failing to relay communications from the applicant to the HOA Board, stating that much of the conflict could have been avoided. For these reasons, she indicated she would support the motion.

Mr. Oats briefly returned to clarify timing questions related to Tractor Supply's construction and the eventual interparcel connection. He confirmed with staff and the applicant that the Chipotle project would follow the Tractor Supply construction timeline.

Ms. Barnes summarized the motion: to approve CUP25156399 with two added conditions—installation of school bus stop warning signage at the site exit and limiting operating hours to 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. She called for a vote. The Commission voted 4-2 (*Ms. Caudill, Mr. Oats opposed*) in favor of the CUP, with one member absent (*Mr. Goldstein absent*). Ms. Barnes congratulated the applicant and strongly

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encouraged ongoing communication with the neighborhood. She then closed that agenda item and proceeded to New Business.

2. RC25156318; Zoning Reclassification – Buc-ee’s of Stafford – A proposed zoning reclassification with proffers, from the B-2, Urban Commercial Zoning District to the B-1, Convenience Commercial Zoning District on Tax Map Parcel Nos. 29-60C, 29-60D, 29-60E, 29-60F, 29-60G (portion), and 29-ROW, consisting of approximately 38.68 acres (Property), to allow a travel center with vehicle fuel sales and high-intensity commercial retail. The Property is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive, within the Garrisonville Election District. **(Time Limit: February 6, 2026 – Waived by Applicant) (History – Deferred at the October 29, 2025 meeting to the January 14, 2026 meeting) (Deferred to March 25, 2026 meeting)**
3. CUP24155520; Conditional Use Permit – Buc-ee’s of Stafford - A request for a conditional use permit (CUP) to permit vehicle fuel sales, high-intensity commercial retail, and a comprehensive sign plan in the B-1, Convenience Commercial Zoning District on Tax Map Parcel Nos. 29-60C, 29-60D, 29-60E, 29-60F, 29-60G (portion), and 29-ROW (Property). The Property consists of approximately 38.68 acres and is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive, within the Garrisonville Election District. The Property is subject to a concurrent request for a zoning reclassification to the B-1, Convenience Commercial Zoning District. **(Time Limit: February 6, 2026 – Waived by Applicant) (History – Deferred at the October 29, 2025 meeting to the January 14, 2026 meeting) (Deferred to March 25, 2026 meeting)**
4. RC24155568; Zoning Reclassification – Market at Austin Ridge – A proposed zoning reclassification from the A-1, Agricultural Zoning District to the B-2, Urban Commercial and M-2, Heavy Industrial Zoning Districts on Tax Map Parcel Nos. 29-75, 29-75A, 29-76, 29-76B, and 29-78, consisting of approximately 25.04 acres (Property). The Property is located along the south side of Courthouse Road, west of the intersection with future Austin Ridge Drive, within the Hartwood Election District. The Property is also subject to a concurrent request for a conditional use permit. **(Time Limit: June 5, 2026) (History – Deferred at the February 25, 2026 meeting to the March 25, 2026 meeting)**
5. CUP24155565; Conditional Use Permit – Market at Austin Ridge – A request for a conditional use permit (CUP) to allow multiple drive-through facilities and vehicle fuel sales in the B-2, Urban Commercial Zoning District, and multiple drive-through facilities, low intensity commercial retail uses, and medium intensity commercial retail uses in the M-2, Heavy Industrial Zoning District on Tax Map Parcel Nos. 29-75, 29-75A, 29-76, 29-76B, and 29-78 (Property). The Property consists of approximately 25.04 acres, located along the south side of Courthouse Road, west of the intersection with future Austin Ridge Drive, within the Hartwood Election District. The Property is also subject to a concurrent request for a zoning reclassification. **(Time Limit: June 5, 2026) (History – Deferred at the February 25, 2026 meeting to the March 25, 2026 meeting)**
6. RC24155845; Zoning Reclassification – Potomac Church Tech Center Proffer Amendment – A proposal to amend proffered conditions on Tax Map Parcel No. 39-71A, consisting of approximately 49.85 acres zoned B-2, Urban Commercial to modify proffers related to transportation, to incorporate language and requirements relating to the existing Water

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Infrastructure Agreement, to modify development phasing in relation to utility infrastructure requirements, and to adjust proffers related to water use. Other existing proffers applicable to the Property pursuant to Ordinance 023-27, dated November 14, 2023, would remain unchanged. The Property is located along the east side of Old Potomac Church Road, across from the intersection with South Campus Boulevard, within the Falmouth Election District. **(Time Limit: September 19, 2025) (History – Deferred at the June 11, 2025 meeting to the July 23, 2025 meeting; Deferred at the July 23, 2025 meeting to the August 27, 2025 meeting) (Deferred by Applicant, future date to be determined)**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

7. Application Time Extension – A request to grant a time limit extension for action for a Conditional Use Permit application, pursuant to Stafford County Code Sec. 28-185, “Conditional use permits,” for a project known as Cardinal Forest Retail.

Discussed before Public Hearings, Item 1.

8. Application Time Extension – A request to grant a time limit extension for action for a zoning reclassification application and a conditional use permit application, pursuant to Stafford County Code Sec. 28-162, “Review and requirements,” and Sec. 28-185, “Conditional use permits,” for a project known as Buc-ee’s of Stafford.

Mike Zuraf presented a request for a time-limit extension for the Buc-ee’s of Stafford zoning reclassification and conditional use permit applications. He explained that this request concerned the county’s 12-month deadline for a final Board of Supervisors decision after an application is deemed complete, not the Planning Commission’s separate 100-day public-hearing deadline. Mr. Zuraf emphasized that such extensions were common and helped ensure that applications do not remain inactive without applicant engagement. He noted that both Buc-ee’s applications were deemed complete on March 25, 2025, giving them a deadline of March 26, 2026, and that the applicant was requesting a four-month extension to July 26, 2026, to move forward efficiently. Staff recommended approval.

Ms. Caudill asked questions about the timing and whether this situation would have been avoided had an earlier meeting occurred. They also discussed the public confusion between deferrals and extensions, noting that Buc-ee’s appears on monthly public hearing schedules even when not under active discussion. Several commissioners stated they would support the extension because they had not received updated materials and could not vote responsibly without reviewing the complete application. One commissioner clarified for the public that denying the extension would not end the project but would require the applicant to restart the approval process.

After discussion, Commissioner Bratton moved to approve the extension, and Commissioner Shelton seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 6–0, with one Commissioner absent. The Commission then moved on to the Project Pipeline Report and the Planning Director’s Report.

PLANNING DIRECTOR’S REPORT

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9. Project Pipeline Report (For Information Only)

Mr. Zuraf provided the Planning Commission with the updated Project Pipeline Report, noting several scheduling adjustments to upcoming public hearings. The Accokeek Center item originally planned for the April 8 meeting would be moved to April 22. In its place, the Silverbrook Kennels application had been added to the April 8 agenda. He stated that additional scheduling adjustments may occur as staff continues to manage and advance multiple cases.

Ms. Barnes acknowledged the update and requested that the staff member responsible for the Silverbrook Kennels case contact her as soon as possible.

Mr. Zuraf also introduced two new Planning and Zoning Department staff members: Nathan Docherty, new planner, in attendance at the meeting, and Jasmine Bridges, new planner who began work earlier in the week. Both were assigned to the Long-Range Planning Division and would be presenting cases to the Commission in the future.

Ms. Barnes welcomed them and noted the Commission was an easy audience. Mr. Zuraf concluded his report.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Ms. Lucian stated she had no report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

10. Comprehensive Plan 5-Year Update Subcommittee
Next Meeting – Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 5:30 PM, ABC Conference Room

Ms. Caudill reported that the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee held its second meeting on March 4. During the meeting, members reviewed online public comments submitted to date, noting their importance in guiding ongoing revisions. The subcommittee worked through proposed updates to the Table of Contents, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2, focusing on improving organization, clarity, and alignment with Stafford County's long-term goals and priorities. She announced that the next subcommittee meeting would take place on March 19 at 5:30 PM in the ABC Conference Room at the Government Center. The meeting would begin the review of Chapter 3, which covered land use. Commissioner Caudill emphasized the significance of this chapter because land-use policy directly influenced growth, development patterns, infrastructure planning, and overall quality of life in Stafford County. She encouraged residents to attend upcoming meetings and continue submitting comments online, noting that community participation was essential to shaping the goals, objectives, and policies within the Comprehensive Plan.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Barnes stated that she did not have a formal report but expressed appreciation for staff efforts, acknowledging the extensive work on long-running projects such as Chipotle and others. She thanked Ms. Wolfson and all Stafford County staff involved for their continued commitment and for the quality of the presentations that evening. She also welcomed the new planning staff members introduced earlier in the meeting.

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Under Other Business, Ms. Barnes reviewed new Technical Review Committee (TRC) submissions. The list included: Sherwood on the River, Section 4; Arbors at Stafford; Raymond Church Family Life Center; Stafford Regional Airport – Fuel Tank. She noted these as the current TRC items moving into review.

The next agenda item was the Approval of Minutes, beginning with a motion to approve the November 12 Planning Commission meeting minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS

11. New TRC Submissions

- [26157007](#) – SHERWOOD ON THE RIVER SEC 4
 - A subconstruction plan for the creation of 4 residential lots and open space parcel located east of Kellan Drive between Wiley Lane and Locksley Lane on TM # 33-2, zoned A-1, consisting of 15.29 acres, within the Hartwood Election District.
- [26156992](#) – THE ARBORS AT STAFFORD
 - A major site plan for 170 unit age-restricted multi-family development located north of South Campus Boulevard between Richmond Highway and Old Potomac Church Road on TM 39-16, zoned B-3, consisting of 8.50 acres, within the Falmouth Election District.
- [26157003](#) – RAMOTH CHURCH - FAMILY LIFE CTR
 - A major site plan for gymnasium addition located at the corner of Ramoth Church Road and Kellogg Mill Road on TM 28-86, zoned A-1, consisting of 22.55 acres, within the Hartwood Election District.
- [26157015](#) – STAFFORD REG AIRPORT FUEL TANK
 - A major site plan to install a 5,000 gallon tank and containment area located south of Aviation Way between Ramoth Church Road and Mountain View Road on TM # 37-71, zoned M-1, consisting of 538.58 acres, within the Hartwood Election District.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

12. November 12, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes_DRAFT

Commissioner Shelton moved to approve the minutes from the November 12 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Oats seconded the motion. Ms. Barnes restated the motion and asked for discussion; none was offered. Before voting, Ms. Barnes confirmed that two Commissioners would abstain due to not being present at the referenced meeting. The motion passed with four approvals, two abstentions and one absent.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:34 PM, Chairman Barnes adjourned the March 11, 2026, Stafford County Planning Commission meeting.