

STAFFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

March 25, 2026

The meeting of the Stafford County Planning Commission of Wednesday, March 25, 2026, was called to order at 6:00 PM by Planning Commission Chair Kristen Barnes, in the Board of Supervisors Chambers of the George L. Gordon, Jr., Government Center.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Zuraf, Lauren Lucian, Stacie Stinnette, Amy Taylor

CALL TO ORDER:

Ms. Barnes called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

INVOCATION:

Mr. Shelton led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mr. Goldstein led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Mr. Bratton called the roll, with all members present, and determined there was a quorum.

DECLARATIONS OF DISQUALIFICATIONS:

There were no declarations of disqualifications. Mr. Zuraf provided a correction to Item 1 on the agenda regarding the reclassification of our market at Austin Ridge, stating that it references rezoning to B-2 urban commercial and M-2 heavy industrial, but the application has been changed and is only for B-2 urban commercial.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:

Ms. Barnes opened the Public Presentations portion of the meeting.

Darla Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said she received a community survey in the mail last week, which prompted her to reflect on the trajectory of the county. She stated that citizens participated in surveys in 2022 and 2024 in good faith, believing the results and comprehensive plan would serve as collective blueprints to preserve Stafford's unique character. She questioned how many development decisions actually consider these surveys. Ms. Stencavage said the 2024 Stafford County Community Survey results were clear: Residents rated the transportation system and the design of residential and commercial areas

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lowest. She stated that the community called for slower residential growth and prioritizing infrastructure before increasing density to improve quality of life.

Ms. Stencavage stated that despite these priorities, decisions continued to diverge from community preferences. She stated that after the 2024 survey, the Planning Commission recommended approval for the Stafford Technology Campus, which proposed redesignating over 500 acres of rural agricultural land for industrial data centers and contradicted the comprehensive plan's goal of preserving rural landscapes and historical buffer zones. Ms. Stencavage stated that the Commission's approval of high-intensity rezonings—often without finished traffic impact studies—continued to worsen congestion, a top concern for residents. She said approving major projects funneling thousands of new vehicle trips onto roads already failing level-of-service standards prioritized short-term development over community safety and daily well-being.

Ms. Stencavage questioned why taxpayer money and staff time are spent on surveys and comprehensive plan reviews if results are disregarded for rezoning applications. She emphasized that if these documents are not used as a guiding principle for decisions, they become expensive exercises in paperwork, and the visions mapped out by the community should be reflected in the votes cast. She said for the process to remain transparent and meaningful, and for taxpayer investment to be respected, it is essential that Stafford County officials make decisions aligned with community input.

Julia Lewis, Falmouth District, stated that she appreciates the hours county officials spend preparing and reviewing applications. Ms. Lewis said two weeks ago, the vote to award the CUP for the Chipotle drive-through in Cardinal Forest will cause a traffic bottleneck at the community entrance, and any business-to-customer operation increases traffic and is the price of growth. She noted that many intersections in Stafford County are congested, failing traffic impact analyses before new businesses arrive, and described serious congestion at Highway 1 and Highway 17—with only two lanes in each direction, forcing drivers to wait two light cycles. She said when I-95 is backed up, traffic worsens, which does not align with county transportation goals. She stated that emergency vehicles and school buses still somehow get through the intersection. Ms. Lewis said the area is a choke point because only two lanes exist and left turn lanes are inaccessible when traffic is heavy. She said she hopes officials can someday improve the intersection of Highway 1 and 17, but until then, residents must rely on the grace of God for emergency traffic and remain patient through multiple light cycles.

Jennifer Stratton, Garrisonville District, thanked officials for approving the standalone emergency room on Route 17 a few weeks ago. She noted that May is National Stroke Awareness Month and recently marked the two-year anniversary of her stroke. Ms. Stratton said quick 911 response from Aquia District and Fire Department enabled her to be airlifted to VCU for a successful neurosurgery. She stated that Mary Washington's new neurosurgeon has performed 20 thrombectomies since December, and Stafford Hospital is now a stroke-certified facility. Ms. Stratton said past approval to extend Austin Ridge Drive and Mine Road to Courthouse Road helped reduce hospital commute times. She stated that as Stafford grows, officials must prioritize public safety and ensure emergency vehicles have 20 feet of clearance as required by county ordinance. Ms. Stratton urged the Commission to remember the thousands of families and homes in Widewater, Embrey Mill, Austin Ridge, and Hampton Oaks who rely on timely hospital access.

Adrienne Malin, Garrisonville District, said she is a retired federal agent and spent years working in large metropolitan areas but grew up in the Midwest, where growth was measured and focused on quality of life.

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She said this perspective brings her to speak tonight, as the county is experiencing rapid expansion, and the strain is felt daily. She said congestion on roads is among the worst nationally, schools are being built quickly to keep up, and public safety faces more demands with limited resources. Ms. Malin stated that when systems are pushed beyond capacity, risks rise. She said traffic congestion affects emergency response and officer safety; staffing shortages impact hiring and retaining teachers and law enforcement, especially with better pay elsewhere.

Ms. Malin stated that school safety is essential, yet staffing remains a challenge. She said these issues result from growth outpacing infrastructure, staffing, and planning—and responsible growth means asking what new development requires and if the county is prepared to support it. She stated that a community is defined by how well it functions, not how fast it grows, and urged the Commission to consider infrastructure strain and safety. Ms. Malin said everyone wants a strong tax base and low taxes, but safe roads, good schools, and public safety require balance and long-term decisions. She stated that decisions are not solely the Commission's responsibility, acknowledged officials' hard work, and asked them to weigh each decision for responsible growth.

Fashid Hakimyar, Falmouth District, stated that he is CEO of the Coliseum Sport Resort. He said his family includes two daughters aged 14 and 16, describing his family as athletic and stating that he has traveled extensively to East Coast facilities over the past four or five years to observe developments in the sport industry. He said he and his family proposed building a sport resort in Stafford County, a \$350 million investment projected to generate \$25 million in direct county revenue. He stated that the facility could host large tournaments nearly every week, drawing about 6,000 attendees. Mr. Hakimyar stated that Stafford currently has 1,200 rooms and emphasized the need for additional lodging development.

Mr. Hakimyar noted that direct tax revenue from the Coliseum would be \$15 million, with meal and lodging taxes contributing another \$10 million annually. He stated that he applied for land on Austin Ridge and is in contact with the landowner, describing himself as a potential applicant for the site. He said his vision is to transform the location into an iconic destination. He stated that he is working with one of the top 10 architects in the world and cited inspiration from the Marine Corps Museum, aiming to create a landmark building for Stafford, a project expected to generate nearly \$250 million. Mr. Hakimyar said the Coliseum Sport Resort would be locally owned, and the tax revenue would remain in Stafford County. He stated that construction would create 1,700 to 2,100 jobs and operation would provide 200 to 500 direct jobs, supporting another 2,500 jobs in related industries. He said he has communicated with Stafford Economic Development to propose a private-public partnership, and there are ongoing discussions with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to ensure local ownership and revenue retention for the coliseum.

Brad Brimhall, Hartwood District, stated that he is the father of five children and a citizen of Stafford County. Mr. Brimhall said the Coliseum Sports Resort offers a business that supports all citizens, regardless of age or interest, and benefits the county through greater health, wellness, and capability. He stated that the facility accommodates all levels—from recreational and lifestyle activities to high-level performance for those seeking scholarships after high school. Mr. Brimhall said beginners, toddlers learning their first sport, and retirees exploring new interests all have opportunities with this. He emphasized that he advocates for the Coliseum Sports Resort because it offers something for everyone, promotes healthy lifestyles, and provides a revenue-generating opportunity for Stafford County, which is a win-win for citizens, families, and the community.

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Tammy Burkhardt, Rock Hill District, stated that she has been a resident here for 28 years and had the privilege of working with Buddy Secor and Holly Hazard on Towering Concerns Phase One. She said no one thought they were battling growth back then or had a chance to bury KV Lines 230—but they went through all the steps and got it done, with five miles buried. She said now in Phase Two, she never thought they would be facing data centers, Buc-ee's, and so forth. She noted that this is now a KV 500 line coming from Lake Anna to Fauquier County, which will decimate Stafford County.

Ms. Burkhardt said they met with Delegate Stacey Carroll and [the Senator] about HB1491, which passed and is expected to be signed July 1, 2026. She stated that the bill will help them. Ms. Burkhardt said the group entered the meeting with a goal of 700 feet from a dwelling and left with 150, hoping to return for 300 feet. She stated that five miles already underground will become above ground at 500 KV, and the Shelton's Run subdivision was told their tot lot would be removed due to the substation. Ms. Burkhardt said 28 subdivisions and 900 homes or more would be affected, including Rodney Thompson and Amy Clay. She said they met with an attorney on March 5th at Colonial Forge, and he said they needed three times the number of people to fill Colonial Forge. She said 20 years ago they did that, but this is a much bigger disaster with the data center and growth. Ms. Burkhardt urged the Commission to join Tower Concerns. She said they restarted as a 501 (c)3 and are working to notify subdivisions such Embrey Mills and Austin Ridge, and she urged everyone to join Towering Concerns and fight this together.

Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, stated that at the work session on February 24, 2026, it was noted that the data revenue center kickback is three to four years out: "BPOL advertised the discussion will derail the meetings." Ms. Maxson said two data center projects are connected to other budgets, including legal budgets as quoted. She said expensive complex property is involved and final bills cover 10 to 15 years. Ms. Maxson said data centers are attracted to projects based on a gentleman's agreement. Ms. Maxson stated that all quotes are from February 24, 2026. She stated that on March 17, 2026, reclaimed water totals six million gallons per day, with 95% allocated to two data centers. Ms. Maxson noted that 3 hours and 12 minutes into the hearing, a supervisor stated that there was a loophole if the wording is not right.

Ms. Maxson stated that emergency situations and potable water must be watched closely and bridging must be monitored. She said questions remain about how much water is used for hydraulics or electronic hydraulics; TM4 was mentioned and questioned if it involves electric or hydraulic drive trains. She said reclaimed water use results in 60% evaporation and only 40% return—and before water is returned it cycles like a radiator until unusable and stated that the utilities department said touchable water is class one for bathing; receiving stream water quality criteria classifies Stafford waters as class two and three. Ms. Maxson said Stafford County's water rating for pollution must be questioned. She stated that data should be reviewed on pages 451, 460, and 601 of 793 pages from the March 17, 2026, Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Maxson stated that the next topic is the BZA from March 24, 2026. She said the BZA agenda was one page with no body, and the public called for meeting cancellation because bylaws were surpassed. Ms. Maxson said minutes for February 24 were not published, and meetings were reported as held or continued with no agenda. She said staff noted that the courts are proceeding, but taxpayers are paying for unfairness and blind processes. Ms. Maxson thanked the Commission and everyone who attended.

April McCarthy, Aquia District, said she has a general comment about data centers for the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and the developer, who is in attendance. Ms. McCarthy said the

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community faces sacrificing land, air quality, home values, and water quality, while also paying more for electricity. She stated that public opinion toward data centers is shifting due to the volume of applications and noted that communities nationwide are rejecting data centers, requiring companies to compete for available land.

Ms. McCarthy said the proposals must offer community benefits, given the number of options. She stated that current proposals do not provide jobs, entertainment, or tourism, and mentioned data center operators receive a tax break from Governor Yunkin. She said these companies should present written commitments outlining contributions to schools and community improvement. Ms. McCarthy stated that proposals should include renewable energy measures such as solar panels and reclaimed water systems. She said companies need to improve public perception, possibly by hiring a public relations professional, and emphasized that positive community actions may reduce opposition.

Ms. McCarthy stated that companies must not seek to maximize profit at the expense of the community and must justify why their proposal is better than others. She said the community has the necessary resources and land, and other communities are refusing these developments. She stated that companies should work to enhance the community if their projects negatively impact water and other resources. She thanked the Commission for their work.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ms. Barnes moved to Public Hearings, stating there were a couple on the agenda; however, they were still open but had been deferred. There was no Unfinished Business or New Business to discuss. She asked Mr. Zuraf if he had a report under Planning Director's Report.

1. 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)**
2. 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)**

Mr. Zuraf stated that Amy Taylor would be presenting items 1 and 2 together.

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Amy Taylor reported that these items are a revisit to the zoning reclassification and conditional use permit for Market at Austin Ridge. Ms. Taylor stated that this request is for a zoning reclassification from the A-1, Agricultural Zoning District to B-2, Urban Commercial to allow for development of various commercial and retail uses on 25.04 acres. She said the CUP is to allow multiple drive-thru facilities, vehicle fuel sales, mini storage warehouse, and storage warehouse facilities in the B-2 District. Ms. Taylor stated that this affects tax map parcels 29-75, 29-75A, 29-76, and 29-78 in the Hartwood District. She said the applicant is Courthouse West, LLC, and Jeff Harvey with Legacy Engineering represents the applicant.

Ms. Taylor stated that at the previous public hearing on February 25th, initial applications proposed a zoning reclassification from A-1, Agricultural District to B-2, Urban Commercial and M-2, Heavy Industrial for mixed-use commercial development. She said the initial proposal included three development options for various uses, including a data center, and a CUP for multiple drive-thru facilities, vehicle fuel sales, and low and medium intensity commercial uses within the proposed M-2 District. Ms. Taylor stated that two days before the February 25th hearing, the applicant amended the applications to remove the data center and revise the requested zoning districts to B-2 and M-1, Light Industrial instead of M-2, Heavy Industrial. She said the CUP application was amended to modify permitted uses in the M-1 District. Ms. Taylor stated that although the amended applications were discussed at the hearing, both were deferred to tonight's meeting because the scope of amendments required re-advertisement.

Ms. Taylor said the Commission raised issues for consideration with the amended applications: modifying the proposed zoning districts to B-2 for the entire property, narrowing the list of permitted uses within the M-1, Light Industrial District, providing additional evergreen trees and plantings in buffers adjacent to residential uses, considering proffered monetary contributions toward public safety or schools, and constructing a shared-use path along the south side of Courthouse Road. She stated that since February 25th, the applicant further amended the applications based on public hearing comments and recommendations. Ms. Taylor said the current zoning reclassification application eliminates the M-1 zoning district for a portion of the property and proposes B-2, Urban Commercial for the entire project. Ms. Taylor stated that as a result, the CUP application was amended to modify uses permitted within the newly proposed B-2 district, specifically permitting multiple drive-through facilities, vehicle fuel sales, a mini storage warehouse, and a storage warehouse facility. Ms. Taylor reported that the subject parcel is located along the south side of Courthouse Road, west of the intersection with Austin Ridge Drive; the property is currently zoned A-1, Agricultural and the surrounding zoning districts include Agricultural, Light Industrial, Urban Commercial, and Planned Development 2.

Ms. Taylor said existing conditions include a mix of open and wooded areas, with the frontage along Courthouse Road being largely open and the southern portion heavily wooded. She stated that several single-family dwellings and outbuildings have already been removed from the property. Ms. Taylor referenced the amended general development plans, and while the proposed zoning district has changed, the amended GDP maintains the same layout and proposed uses for both retail and hotel development options. She said proposed uses continue to include retail and commercial uses such as a grocery store, convenience store with fuel sales, multiple restaurants with and without drive-throughs, a child care center, office space, mini storage warehouse, and a hotel. Ms. Taylor noted that building designs remain consistent, with most buildings proposed as one story—but each development option includes buildings up to five stories and a maximum height of 65 feet. She stated that the mini storage warehouse will be located at the south end of the property and accessed from Austin Ridge Drive. Ms. Taylor said the facility is depicted as three buildings up to two stories and includes approximately 10,000 square feet of outdoor storage. Ms. Taylor stated that outdoor storage areas will be located behind the primary building and screened from

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public right-of-way and adjacent properties. She said site access and landscape buffers remain unchanged under both development options, and five new entrances are proposed along Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive, and adequate internal access and vehicular circulation is maintained for all drive-through locations.

Ms. Taylor referenced the architectural renderings reviewed at the last meeting, representing general design and materials for various buildings. Ms. Taylor stated that the GDP also includes design standards detailing guidelines for permitted exterior materials and colors for all buildings, streetscapes, signage, and landscaping within the development. She said the proposed guidelines and renderings are consistent with the architectural guidelines of the neighborhood design standards, a component of the comprehensive plan, and the proffers commit to the general design and theme of the commercial buildings as depicted. Ms. Taylor stated that proffers have been updated to eliminate those related to industrial zoning, with the remaining proffers unchanged. Ms. Taylor noted that everything remains the same except the prior M-1 discussion and anything related to data centers.

Ms. Taylor stated that regarding the CUP, it has been amended to accommodate specific uses within the B-2 district. She said the amended application includes conditions limiting the number of drive-thru facilities and fuel sales on the property; however, with the amended CUP application, additional conditions have been added for the proposed mini-storage and storage warehouse uses, and these new conditions are highlighted for clarity. Ms. Taylor stated that the conditions will limit development to no more than one mini-storage or storage warehouse facility, meaning only one or the other will be present; will stipulate that the facility must be located as shown on the GDP at the southern end of the property and at least 1,000 feet from Courthouse Road; will limit the height of the mini-storage and warehouse buildings; limit outdoor storage areas associated with the mini-storage; require outdoor storage to be screened for adjacent residential uses, specifically with an opaque fence; will limit hours of operation for the mini-storage warehouse from 6 AM to 10 PM daily. She said all other conditions previously associated with the CUP will also remain unchanged.

Ms. Taylor stated that staff finds several positive aspects to the proposal and believes the proposed development is consistent with many recommendations in the comprehensive plan, including land use recommendations; the uses are consistent with the pattern of commercial and retail development in the surrounding area; the development conforms to transportation policies by limiting maximum trip generation and providing multiple transportation improvements along Courthouse and Austin Ridge Drive; architectural concepts are consistent with the NDS plan; the commitment to exceed open space requirements and the proposed proffers; and conditions limit the scope of the development to ensure consistency with the proposed conceptual development. Ms. Taylor said staff finds one negative aspect: the GDP does not meet the minimum FAR requirements recommended for commercial development within the TDA.

Ms. Taylor stated that based on the amended application, staff finds the proposed commercial and retail uses are consistent with many recommendations of the comprehensive plan and specific recommendations for development within TDAs. She said staff is generally supportive of both applications and recommends approval of the zoning reclassification application with proffers pursuant to O26-07 and the CUP application with conditions pursuant to resolution R26-78, contingent on approval of the zoning reclassification application.

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Ms. Siegmund recalled that there was another administrative layer in the CUP for mini storage, self-storage facilities in the county now, and asked if that is what they are doing now, or whether that is a separate process if they were to approve this application tonight and the mini-storage came forward.

Ms. Taylor responded that there is no other requirement beyond the CUP; it is a permitted use within the B-2 district with a CUP, and so with the approval of that CUP, the applicant will then have these conditions imposed on them regarding development of that use if they so choose to move forward.

Ms. Siegmund said they also discussed at their last meeting the inclusion of an 8-foot multi-use path instead of a 5-foot sidewalk, and she asked if that was not possible or was just not of interest.

Ms. Taylor said staff made the same recommendation during the evaluation process, but the applicant declined to provide another multi-use path along the south side since there is one along the north side. She said the applicants were obviously aware, based on the prior public hearing, that this was a continued recommendation from the Planning Commission—but there was no specific comment to that or response to that request; it simply was not included with the revised proffers that came in with this last amendment.

Ms. Barnes commented that there is just a standard sidewalk.

Ms. Taylor confirmed that they are proposing a 5-foot sidewalk along both Courthouse and Austin Ridge Drive.

Ms. Barnes asked the applicant to come forward.

Mr. Jeff Harvey with Legacy Engineering, 641 Prince Edward Street, Fredericksburg, said they were happy to be here this evening, and he would keep his presentation brief.

Mr. Harvey said the applicant heard the Planning Commission's request and changed the application strictly to B-2, Urban Commercial. He stated that there is no reference to light industrial or heavy industrial zoning with this zoning reclassification application at this point. Mr. Harvey said the CUPs for mini-storage and storage warehouse are placeholders to give the applicant flexibility in what they can do with the property. He said as discussed in the last hearing, this property sits at a lower elevation than Courthouse Road; Austin Ridge Drive in this location is a dead end road, a dead end to a large industrial warehouse complex. He said the applicant has provided a commitment of a proffer that if there is a storage warehouse or mini-storage facility, it would be located at least 2,000 feet from Courthouse Road, so it would be in the far back part of the property if it ever occurs. He stated that the applicant is currently working with the Economic Development Department to look at alternatives for that back portion of the property, and they are hopeful to secure another user who would provide more revenue to the county and the applicant.

Mr. Harvey stated that with regard to the shared-use path issue raised at the last meeting, the VDOT road design manual for an urban arterial roadway has a typical street section, and development is required to comply with that typical street section. He stated that the typical street section has a shared-use path on one side of the road, 10 feet in width, as well as a 5-foot-wide sidewalk on the other side of the road. Mr. Harvey said you will see that exact same configuration at Mine Road, where there is a shared-use path on the east side of the roadway and a sidewalk on the west side of the roadway. Mr. Harvey stated that in this particular location on Courthouse Road, there is a shared-use path constructed on the north side of the roadway, so

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following VDOT standards, the sidewalk would be put on the south side where the project is located. He stated that the county's bicycle and pedestrian facilities plan has a typical detail for a shared-use path, but it only shows it on one side of the roadway.

Mr. Harvey said one other item was suggested by Chairman Barnes regarding buffers and inclusion of significant evergreens to maximize any screening to adjacent properties. He stated that the applicant is committed to any required plantings within those buffers being evergreen trees. Mr. Harvey noted that the GDP shows a privacy fence that will assist with screening.

Ms. Barnes asked if that was something that needs to be proffered or was something that can be taken care of during the regular process.

Mr. Harvey responded that it is in the proffer.

Ms. Barnes said in their impact statement, first page, it says this type of use presents an option for a nice transition between the commercial area along the courthouse road frontage and approved and constructed industrial warehouse development to the north, to the south of the property, and "future data center uses approved or pending for the area." She said that's an impact statement from the applicant but is not something that is written in stone, written in the ordinance, or that can be used as precedent down the line for a possible data center. Ms. Barnes emphasized that she does not want anyone looking back and saying they mentioned data center in the impact statement, and she just wanted to make sure that's not something that is in the ordinance or part of the reclassification.

Ms. Taylor clarified that they are referring to the potential future data center—the Austin Ridge Logistics Project that currently has a pending rezoning application for that very purpose.

Ms. Barnes opened the public hearing for this agenda item.

Bart Randall, Garrisonville District, said he appreciates the applicant making changes to the B-2 and removing M-1 and M-2, as it did not need to be there, which they realized that quickly after submitting their application. Mr. Randall stated that this provides the beginning of what he expects to be on the south side of Courthouse Road, an entire retail and business area along the road. Mr. Randall said his concern was about the multi-use path and noted Mr. Harvey's point about Embrey Mill having a multi-use path on one side and a sidewalk on the other. He stated that a simple 5-foot sidewalk would not suffice if Planning Commissioners consider what Courthouse Road would look like in 20 years. Mr. Randall said multiple businesses and pedestrian traffic will be on that side and a five-foot sidewalk will not be enough; a multi-use path is needed to mirror the one on the north side of Courthouse Road because this is for Stafford's future. Mr. Randall stated that if a 5-foot sidewalk were the only thing needed for Courthouse Road, that might be acceptable, but that is not how this will work. He said 10 years ago, no one expected the Embrey Mill complex to exist, and things are already happening on the other side of Courthouse Road. He stated that a multi-use path, 8 feet wide, is needed along with sit-down restaurants; he did not need drive-throughs as there were plenty of those. He stated that he appreciated the applicant bringing these proposals and thought it would be great and was absolutely needed. Mr. Randall said this was a visionary process that must be considered and the multi-use path was the right direction.

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Tom Mossey, Hartwood District, urged the Commission to approve the CUP. He said he has lived in the county from the early 1960s when his father was a First Lieutenant at Quantico. He said he had been a business owner in Stafford County for three years in the 80s and had been a homeowner in Stafford County since 1991; as such, he had witnessed all of the significant growth issues in Stafford over the past 30 or 40 years. He said his message is to urge the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to get moving on approving some of these new projects that will increase revenue to the county, and in particular, to reduce the tax burden on the homeowners. He said Stafford's homeowners have seen significant increases in their property taxes over recent years, and he would like to see these costs shifted more to the business community. He stated that the data centers, if planned and coordinated correctly, could be a boon for the county by providing significant source of tax revenue. He acknowledged that there are many contentious issues related to these data centers, but he believes all of those can be resolved when the county, the business community, and the citizens all come together to resolve the very serious budgetary issues they face.

Jeff Eastland, Rock Hill, said he sent an email to them in February regarding the original application for this project, expressing his opposition because of the industrial component, which had no place in this area and didn't align with the comp plan. He expressed his appreciation to the county staff, planning and zoning, and all who work very hard to massage this project back to its adherence to the zoning and development goals for the area and the targeted development area. He expressed his appreciation for everything they do for the county.

Kerri Sobolik, Hartwood District, said she had significant concerns when this application was first presented, but she is now encouraged by how the developer has responded thoughtfully to feedback from staff, the Planning Commission, and the community. She said the revised proposal now aligns with the comprehensive plan and the vision for the courthouse targeted development area. She said she is pleased to see the progress and looks forward to this project contributing to a more urban, town center-like environment that brings new opportunities and amenities closer to home for Stafford residents.

Alane Callander, Falmouth District, said she is glad the data center is out and the hotel is in, and she would like to see more sit-down restaurants. Ms. Callander said as she was reading the background report dated March 25th, she was puzzled by the text that says, "require commercial buildings to follow the general theme of the renderings as depicted on the GDP and establish architectural design standards for data center buildings." She said she hopes that's an editorial error and doesn't understand why that's still in there—as there will be no data center as part of this project.

Valerie Elliott stated that she is a native of Virginia and a local realtor representing taxpaying clients who own property here. Ms. Elliott said she is representing her clients as a realtor and wanted to learn how to best serve them, and decided to attend a Stafford County Planning Commission meeting. She said this was her second meeting and described the experience as eye-opening; she has learned a lot and continues to learn. Ms. Elliott said one of the most talked-about issues in the last meeting was Austin Ridge and the removal of the application for a data center within the market at Austin Ridge. She stated that she listened intently as citizens spoke against having a data center in Stafford. She said the opposition appeared well-organized, and in trying to help her clients, she asked why there was such opposition. She said she does not live in Stafford County but lives in Loudoun County, where there are many data centers in Ashburn and Sterling. She stated that recently news came out that a group offered Ashburn residents \$4 million per acre to buy their land for data centers.

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Ms. Elliott said Loudoun County has had data centers for years and the only recent problem, to her knowledge, was temporary noise from an older data center—an issue that would likely be resolved. She said Loudoun County is consistently ranked as the richest county in Northern Virginia, and in her opinion, the data centers have brought the county a wealth of revenue. Ms. Elliott said she hears fear from citizens opposing data centers and understands this fear is normal in the unknown. She stated that she was taught fear is an acronym for “false evidence appearing real.” She said retail opportunities are great for Stafford County at the market, but the county may miss out on significant revenue that even a small data center at Austin Ridge could bring. She stated that with a data center, there would be no traffic congestion from out-of-towners going to Buc-ee’s for brisket and gas if there was a data center. She said Buc-ee’s may not be the best source of revenue and could cause traffic nightmares, so the county may want to consider a data center at Austin Center Ridge. Ms. Elliott stated that the revenue from a data center would be much greater and encouraged the Commission and Board to look at Loudoun County as an example. She said opposition to data centers severely affects her clients’ ability to sell their property. She stated that her clients could have owned their property for a long time and they are tax-paying residents who pay their taxes faithfully.

Karen Fox, Hartwood District, said the data center is no longer part of the proposal, and that matters because it raised questions about compatibility, scale, and long-term fit. She said what is in front of them now is different. She stated that the commercial project is in a location where commercial growth is expected; it sits in the courthouse targeted development area. She said this is where the comprehensive plan directs this kind of development, and it fits what is already happening along this corridor; that is not a stretch and is consistent with the pattern that is already in place. She said it’s important to point out that the process worked—concerns were raised, the applicant made changes, and those changes were meaningful. She said what they have now is a project that is aligned with the plan, aligned with the location, and supported by the staff, and that alignment matters.

Tom Sablon, Hartwood District, said he owned the properties at 81 and 93 Cedar Lane that were adjacent to the storage area proposed. Mr. Sablon said because of the topography of that land, they were going to have to plant in order to shield what was going there from his properties—one has a house on it, and one is planned for a house to be built on it—large trees such as sequoias to block that area. Mr. Sablon said the area they are showing is a 25- or 50-foot buffer area, which is downhill from his flat land. He stated that when they have that, they will build the storage centers there and get their special zoning on the B-2, they are going to have to make a lot of compensation to block that. He stated that data centers’ biggest expense besides equipment is power usage, and data centers are going to become nuclear power plants, as they are already doing it in other places. He stated that it is right over the gigantic aquifer that Stafford has in that area; it is also next to I-95 and is a high security risk. He stated that even though they are not putting it, they don’t need an M-1 designation or M-2 designation for a data center. He stated that they are “back door making you ask for it” because you need an M-2 to have a power station, a power generating station. Mr. Sablon said if they are putting in data centers, they are going to have to have a cheap way of making power. He stated that they want to tie in with the data centers because the data centers are going to be inputting power into those power lines for growth, for everything else, but it is going to be nuclear power. Mr. Sablon said that is the big secret going on here. He said he would like to ask how many of the Board or Planning Commission have any financial ties, even at arm’s length, which may benefit them by approving data centers.

Darla Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said a lot of people support this development and were not the NIMBYs that people try to blame them for being. She said they want the development to ease their tax burden and to increase the attractiveness of Stafford County, but in the comp plan, the Embrey Mill portion,

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does focus on pedestrian orientation. She emphasized that they need to make sure they are building those pedestrian-oriented options into the plan well ahead of time—and that includes a larger sidewalk and more biking lanes. She encouraged them to focus on that whenever they are making a decision, and a lot of them would support this.

Kristin Maxson, Falmouth District, stated that the data center was not for this time, and M-2 had not been taken out properly. She said the staff report said the applicant did not meet the floor area ratio (FAR) quota, but it didn't say how it didn't meet it and didn't spell it out. She said the site that they showed states the old name of Jefferson Davis Highway, not Richmond Highway for this slide; it showed the radius. She asked why there was an old data reference, and said the application attachment says 9 of 39 pages, but only 21 are shown in the agenda today. She said the application project name is different and filed as "Courthouse Center," not as Market of Austin Ridge. She also noted that the VDOT rezoning package checklist is empty, and if no information is checked or marked, it has no weight for the hearing.

Ms. Maxson said the application is labeled Section 25.04-149 of Virginia law, which pertains to the allocation of residential density of education land, use categories specifically allowing for affordable housing for school district personnel; this section aims to address the need of workforce housing in relation to public education facilities. She said this describes multi-use laws passed in 2016 and has devoured Stafford County ever since adopted. She said it costs the county because the affordable housing is not affordable, and the education is not schools and becomes warped. She noted that B-2 existed in the application and is not edited out, and for the application listing of adjoining property owners, the affidavit addendum and the property owners are not within the application and are attached. She said this does not specify or ensure that all of those are contacted throughout the application, the life of the application. She also noted that the application is signed March 15, 2024, see page 1,026 of 2,450 pages, which is amazing to read.

There being no further speakers, Ms. Barnes closed the public hearing portion of the agenda item and asked the applicant to respond.

Mr. Harvey said he would continue the discussion on the shared-use path, noting that VDOT controls any construction activity occurring in the public street right-of-way and also maintains the sidewalks and shared-use paths. He stated that VDOT's standard for this type of roadway is to have a shared-use path on one side and a sidewalk on another. Mr. Harvey said it may be desirable to have a shared-use path on both sides, but the applicant is not willing to make a proffer to that effect because they are unsure VDOT would even accept for maintenance a shared-use path on the other side of the road. Mr. Harvey stated that based on the site configuration, it is not possible to physically put a shared-use path in that area. He stated that regarding screening to adjacent property, the applicant will meet all the code-compliant requirements, and all the plantings will be evergreen in nature. Mr. Harvey said the trees are not sequoias, but the county does have certain specifications on tree height and trunk caliper width when they're planted, which will be guaranteed during site plan and final inspection. Mr. Harvey said regarding the FAR, as noted in the staff report and also by Ms. Barnes, the targeted development areas in the county have a floor area ratio of 0.4—essentially means that 40% of your total land area can be under roof. He said to achieve that, you have to have at least a two-story building. Mr. Harvey said with your typical retail you see in the county, especially a retail use having a drive-thru, it's going to be located in a one-story building. He stated that is why the site and this type of development in general cannot meet the FAR that's envisioned in the targeted development area.

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Ms. Barnes asked if there were additional questions for staff. There were none. Ms. Barnes said she liked a larger evergreen and wished they could plant hundred-foot-tall trees, but those trees don't survive here, and it seemed the applicant was doing what was required for buffer. She stated that she would bring this item before the Commission and asked Mr. Shelton how he would like to proceed, given that it is in his district.

Mr. Shelton moved to approve the rezoning from A-1 to B-2 for Market at Austin Ridge, RC24155568, and Ordinance O26-07. Ms. Caudill seconded the motion.

Mr. Shelton commended the applicant, staff, and the public for their invaluable work in promoting economic development and revenue generation.

Ms. Caudill reiterated what Commissioner Shelton said and commented that she appreciates the applicant's consideration of public input and Planning Commission recommendations, as well as staff's hard work. She thanked the public for coming out and said it really makes a difference.

Ms. Barnes stated that the most important thing the Commission does is not taking a vote, because sometimes the Board goes in the opposite direction; the most important thing they do is starting the process with the public and working with the applicant. She noted that this is where the Planning Commission shines—making the application the best it can be, which they've done here. She added that it also gives them an opportunity to get to know the community better, and an opportunity for the public to get to know the Commission better.

Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously (7–0).

Mr. Shelton moved to approve CUP24155565 for multiple drive-through facilities at Market at Austin Ridge. Mr. Bratton seconded the motion.

Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously (7–0).

[The Commission took a brief recess.]

3. 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 the March 25, 2026 meeting)**
4. 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 the March 25, 2026 meeting)

Mr. Zuraf stated that he would cover items 3 and 4 on the agenda as a combined presentation, noting that these are both requests for Buc-ee's in Stafford. Mr. Zuraf said the first was a zoning reclassification to rezone 38 acres from the B-2, Urban Commercial Zoning District to B-1, Convenience Commercial Zoning; the second request was a conditional use permit (CUP) to allow vehicle fuel sales, high-intensity commercial retail, and a comprehensive signage plan. Mr. Zuraf reported that this would allow development of a Buc-ee's Travel Center to be located within the Garrisonville District, and Buc-ee's was the applicant with Stan Beard as the primary contact.

Mr. Zuraf explained that the original public hearing for this project was held on October 29, 2025, and the item was deferred to allow the applicant to address comments received by the public and the Commission. Mr. Zuraf said during that time, the applicant waived the Planning Commission's 100-day time limit for the Commission to act on the case, which allowed the extension to go to this meeting. He stated that during the deferral time, the time limit for the entire application itself was extended to July 26, 2026. Mr. Zuraf stated that new information—a revised traffic impact analysis (TIA), amended proffers, revised signage plan, and a more detailed fiscal impact analysis—was received with the applications and included in the application package. He stated that the applicant provided responses to Commission questions from the original public hearing, and those were summarized in the staff report. He noted that he would go through a similar presentation as the last time due to the presence of new Commissioners, and there were likely new citizens present who were also not here previously.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the subject parcel was located at the northeast corner of Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive and included multiple parcels, including a portion of old right-of-way for the old alignment of Austin Ridge Drive. Mr. Zuraf stated that the current B-2 zoning was represented as a pink-shaded area on the map presented and was surrounded by other B-2 zoned areas to the north, south, and east; Plan Development-2 zoning was located to the west where Embrey Mill was. He noted that the B-2 zoning was part of three different zoning actions that occurred in 2003, 2015, and 2020, and as such, there are three different sets of proffers that currently exist over this area—with approval of this rezoning replacing all of those with a single set of proffers applying to this property.

Mr. Zuraf said the site was currently undeveloped, with a mix of trees and underbrush. He stated that it was previously rough graded and included several stormwater basins, and the topography was gradual across the site and slopes downward from west to east. He noted that a drainage channel with wetlands bisected the site near Sunflower Drive. Mr. Zuraf said general surrounding uses included single-family residential and undeveloped areas to the north, undeveloped areas to the east and south that were both planned commercial, Embrey Mill commercial area to the west, and planned age-restricted townhome units to the northwest. Mr. Zuraf said the Google Street view showed the site from Austin Ridge Drive.

Mr. Zuraf referenced the general development plan depicting the site layout for the proposed travel center, stating that the plan had not changed much from the prior version and the applicant included committed road improvements in the plan. He stated that the project had one single-story, 74,000-square-foot building for the main store, with the building centrally located on the site, and there would be 120 fuel pumps located on the west side of the site paralleling Austin Ridge Drive. He stated that five access points were proposed: one via direct separated-access ramp and lane off I-95 southbound, two directly off Austin Ridge Drive, and two off a newly constructed public road called Israel Rodriguez Drive. He noted that 831 parking spaces

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were proposed on the north and south sides of the store, with 12 dedicated bus RV spaces located on the north end of the site. Mr. Zuraf said an existing eight-foot shared-use path along Courthouse Road would be shifted to the north end of the site with other road improvements, and the applicant would maintain and rebuild the path. Mr. Zuraf stated that other sidewalk improvements were provided along Austin Ridge Drive and within the site. He said standard buffers and parking lot landscaping were shown in conformance with the zoning ordinance and a proffered 15-foot evergreen screening buffer along the north side of the drive included two rows of evergreen trees.

Mr. Zuraf stated that the applicant has provided several proffers with the zoning reclassification: requiring development of the site, buildings, and signage in accordance with the general development plan, building elevations, and signage plan; requiring additional evergreen screening along the north side; access provided as shown but also subject to modifications required as part of additional approvals. He added that the project was contingent on receiving other transportation approvals. Mr. Zuraf stated that in addition to the proffers, the applicant was required to provide a construction mitigation plan, which was requested by a Planning Commissioner at the last meeting.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the applicants have committed to several road improvements, including a series of Austin Ridge Drive/Courthouse Road intersection improvements, with a new change for three exclusive southbound left-turn lanes on Austin Ridge heading onto Courthouse Road. Mr. Zuraf said there were currently three left-turn lanes, but the third was a shared through and right movement, so it would be fully dedicated three left turns and one dedicated through lane continuing south across Courthouse Road. He stated that intersection controls on Austin Ridge Drive might be recommended in the Operational and Safety Analysis Report (OSAR), which was a separate approval required. He noted that a median-separated southbound right-turn slip lane would be constructed, providing direct access into the site from I-95. Mr. Zuraf stated that another new change was constructing or maintaining a third through lane on westbound Courthouse Road continuing through the Austin Ridge intersection and further west. He stated that the northbound 95 off-ramp would be widened to provide an additional dedicated ramp lane to eastbound Courthouse Road, and there was currently limited stacking on the westbound portion of that ramp. He added that Israel Rodriguez Drive and several trail and sidewalk improvements would be constructed, and other interchange improvements may be required by the OSAR report; a vacation of the right-of-way in the project area was required to allow development.

Mr. Zuraf reviewed staff analysis points: In consideration of the zoning change, the applicant was requesting rezoning from B-2 to B-1, as the retail store component of Buc-ee's was considered a high-intensity commercial retail use due to the traffic generated; the high-intensity commercial retail use was permitted in B-1 with the CUP but not in B-2. He explained that this was an anomaly of the zoning district and the reason the applicant was requesting the zoning change to B-1. Mr. Zuraf said this use would generate similar noise as other commercial uses, mainly from vehicle traffic, and the closest existing and planned residential uses were 420 and 200 feet to the north and northwest of the site. He stated that site lighting would generally be similar to other commercial establishments and would comply with the zoning ordinance, noting that fuel canopy lighting was brighter than regular parking lot lighting, with the larger-than-normal fuel canopy possibly generating greater light impacts. Mr. Zuraf stated that a double row of evergreen trees along the north would attempt to mitigate impacts, and a proposed condition would restrict the location of the fuel canopies farther north than currently shown.

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Mr. Zuraf reported that Buc-ee's was required to develop the TIA, and any similar-sized project would require a traffic study to determine transportation impacts and improvements. He stated that meetings with VDOT and county staff occurred prior to submitting applications to identify the study scope, and the traffic analysis was complete and had undergone six revisions. Mr. Zuraf said Buc-ee's would also be required to develop a signal justification report for new traffic signals, and these are typically completed after project approval closer to construction for accurate conditions. He stated that proposed modifications to the Exit 140 interchange required an OSAE involving the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and VDOT, currently being developed, with Buc-ee's required to provide mitigation for measures the OSAR identifies as their responsibility. Mr. Zuraf stated that a limited access control change needed approval by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), with a request made by the Board of Supervisors via resolution, and separate approval would be required even to request it. Mr. Zuraf stated that the stretch of Courthouse Road from the exit to Austin Ridge was considered limited access, meaning site entrances were not permitted, and a new access road across the site required special approval.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the TIA studied impacts on several surrounding signalized and unsignalized intersections along Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive, and there were two evaluation scenarios. He stated that Scenario A focused on impacts generated by Buc-ee's itself, and Scenario B considered background traffic generated by other planned and approved developments and county- and VDOT-recommended Scenario B for analysis and mitigation. He stated that estimated traffic generation was based on information from Buc-ee's six busiest sites and increased trips by 30%. Mr. Zuraf stated that the ITE manual was typically used for estimated trips, but since Buc-ee's was a unique use, counts from other sites were used. He stated that for comparison, by-right commercial development on the same site would generate roughly 8,300 trips per day. He referenced tables that identified traffic growth in the location and added traffic with Buc-ee's, with the recent increase attributed to the new Embrey Mill commercial area and Burns Corner. He stated that the county's comprehensive plan policy addressed traffic impacts and recommended projects maintain level of service C for intersections and road segments; improvements should not further degrade the level of service if C is not practical. He said delay levels were measured to test impacts of a specific use, and intersections not in conformance would experience service impacts below C grade and increased delay.

Mr. Zuraf stated that the Courthouse Road eastbound-westbound intersection was one of the Courthouse Road crossovers within the divergent diamond intersection, identified as Intersection #8. Mr. Zuraf said with the morning peak hour for year 2032, the intersection would have a 28.3-second delay without Buc-ee's and a 46.7-second delay with Buc-ee's, reducing service from C to D. He stated that traffic study also looked at intersection movements and calculated average delays; some movements might be more impacted negatively, and others might show improvement. He stated that staff pointed out the main intersection of concern was Intersection #4, Courthouse Road/Austin Ridge Drive, which showed an increase in delays on average of 24 seconds. He stated that the weekend peak-hour conditions anticipated a 24-second delay increase, and the staff report identified specific traffic movements experiencing delays contributing to this average increase. He stated that the study estimated vehicle queuing or stacking, showing a queue length of 1,900 feet on southbound Austin Ridge Drive in the worst case scenario. Mr. Zuraf said this extended along the entire frontage of the site from Courthouse Road to Israel Rodriguez Drive. He stated that in morning and afternoon peak hours, the project with proposed improvements would reduce overall delays but still create increased queuing lengths.

Mr. Zuraf said at this stage, the traffic study found the project with improvements would not fully mitigate impacts consistent with county comp plan goals, most notably at the Courthouse Road/Austin Ridge Drive

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intersection and along Austin Ridge Drive. Mr. Zuraf said regarding the OSAR, that report was still being developed and would identify transportation needs at the Exit 140 interchange and surrounding streets through 2048, as well as developing and evaluating solutions to address needs caused by Buc-ee's development. Mr. Zuraf added that the report would also identify whether additional transportation mitigation was needed, not due to Buc-ee's, but the proffers required Buc-ee's to implement OSAR recommendations.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the comprehensive plan land use map identified the site as within the courthouse targeted development area. He stated that the land use concept designated the property for commercial, retail, and office, supporting standalone commercial development and retail office uses. He said staff found the proposed use to be generally consistent with comprehensive plan land use recommendations and targeted development areas. He explained that Policy 2.1.3 of the comp plan listed characteristics that development proposals should strive to incorporate, including maintaining quality of life, mitigating degraded levels of service, and minimizing land-use conflicts. He said the applicant was proffering to follow the proposed building designs, and the neighborhood design standards element of the comp plan included architectural guidelines, with the elevations providing many of the recommended design features in that plan.

Regarding the CUP, Mr. Zuraf stated that the permit would allow vehicle fuel sales, high-intensity commercial retail, and approval of a comprehensive sign plan. He noted that these uses could generate greater impacts on surrounding properties and roadways, with fuel sales and high-intensity commercial retail typically generating more traffic than other uses allowed by right, and the traffic and light impact issues had been or would be addressed in the presentation.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the comprehensive sign plan was a separate issue and was submitted with the CUP application, outlining proposed locations and dimensions of signage—including freestanding signs, wall signs, and fuel canopy signs. Mr. Zuraf stated that the zoning ordinance allowed a comprehensive sign plan to establish signage details for the project, and some signage exceeded zoning ordinance standards but could be permitted through the CUP. He stated that three wall signs were proposed on the store's southwest and north facades, and each sign would be 285 square feet and similar to the freestanding sign with business name and logo. Mr. Zuraf said commercial signage standards permitted individual wall signs up to 200 square feet each; there were no changes to the wall signs from the prior version. Mr. Zuraf stated that a freestanding monument sign was proposed in the southeast corner adjacent to I-95 near Courthouse Road, and the sign height had been reduced from 60 feet to 45 feet, with the zoning ordinance limiting business signs to 30 feet in height. He added that the signage area was approximately 486 square feet, consisting of the business name and logo.

Mr. Zuraf reported that the applicant amended the signage plan to include two line-of-sight exhibits showing the monument sign's view from the closest homes in Austin Ridge and the approved undeveloped residential in Embrey Mill Phase 3A. He stated that the exhibits identified the originally proposed 60-foot sign, reduced to 45 feet. He said the exhibit showed the sign might be visible between the store and fuel pumps from Austin Ridge homes but would not appear taller than the proposed store and canopy. He noted that the sign would be blocked from view from Embrey Mill by the fuel canopy, and as a result, sign visibility from the closest homes should be minimal. Mr. Zuraf stated that Resolution R26-131 for approval included conditions requiring development in conformance with the general plan, location of access points, limiting fueling positions and store size, and requiring buildings to match renderings. He said conditions ensured

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clear travel ways for emergency access and required signage consistent with ordinance standards except for the monument sign height and wall sign maximum sizes as reviewed.

Mr. Zuraf stated that several positive aspects were found with the application: The proposed vehicle fuel sales and high-intensity commercial retail uses were consistent with comp plan land use recommendations and commercial development patterns in the area; the proposed architecture is consistent with comp plan guidelines; pedestrian improvements would help address comp plan needs; proffers ensured development was consistent with the application vision; the proposed wall and canopy signs were consistent with neighborhood design standards plan; and evergreen screening minimized impacts on adjacent properties.

Mr. Zuraf reported that staff also found negative aspects with the application: Although several transportation improvements are being offered to mitigate impacts, the traffic study identifies impacts—some significant—that are not mitigated in conformance with county comp plan transportation goals; it was uncertain how projects would comply with comp plan guidelines to develop, maintain, or improve the quality of life for all residents and minimize land use conflicts; and it is uncertain how light levels, due to the overall intensity of fueling pumps, may impact surrounding existing and planned residential uses.

Mr. Zuraf reported that staff recommends denial of the rezoning classification application pursuant to R26-130 due to the negative aspects. He said staff also recommends denial for the CUP due to the negative aspects. Mr. Zuraf stated that should the Commission recommend approval of the resolution, staff recommends that it be subject to approval of the concurrent zoning reclassification.

Ms. Barnes asked if there were questions for staff.

Ms. Siegmund said the staff report says the SJR and OSAR are required but not at this stage of the application, and she asked what the mechanism is for enforcement and at what point the applicant is required to have those complete.

Mr. Zuraf responded that the SJR would likely be required before site plan approval, because that is where a signal would likely be required. He emphasized that a signal may not be necessary right at the beginning of some projects and may happen later in the process, but since this is one single use, it would likely be at the time of the site plan. He explained that the OSAR is an entire different early traffic analysis and approval, and that must happen prior to site plan approval, as it may necessitate other improvements as well.

Ms. Siegmund said specific to this application, the fiscal impact statement discusses projected gross revenues for Stafford County but also indicates that it's about \$78,000 less projected expenditures for public services, and she asked what those expenditures might be.

Mr. Zuraf said he would need to defer to other staff for that, noting that they received this information late in the game.

Mr. Oats asked, in reference to the OSAR report, whether the date of 2048 is ongoing.

Mr. Zuraf responded that the applicant worked on a framework for how it would happen, and the applicant would then get into the details of developing that analysis and go through the review and FHWA.

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Mr. Oats asked for clarification on the mitigation aspects, given that the date is out to 2048.

Mr. Zuraf explained that there would be estimations on anticipated growth out that far, looking at factors such as average growth projections and what known projects may happen.

Mr. Oats said given the results and findings of that report, it sounds as though the mitigation aspects are deemed to be the responsibility of Buc-ee's—such as mitigating the traffic pattern.

Mr. Zuraf confirmed this, as the traffic would be attributable to their use.

Commissioner of the Revenue Scott Mayausky addressed the Commission.

Ms. Siegmund restated her previous question, stating that the fiscal impact statement talks about the projected gross revenues but also indicates there's approximately \$78,000 a year for public services, and she wondered what expenditures might be included under a public service.

Mr. Mayausky responded that he had focused primarily on the consumption and property taxes and was not aware of what the public services taxes would be—but his understanding is that it was a relatively small amount. He stated that he would find an answer and let them know, but it did not jump out at him when he was reviewing this.

Mr. Zuraf said the applicant may be able to expand on that since they developed the report.

Ms. Caudill asked how the applicant responded when staff requested additional mitigation on Road #4.

Mr. Zuraf responded that the latest changes show the three dedicated southbound left-turn lanes, and other staff members could provide additional information.

Matthew Lehane, Transportation Planning and Funding Manager, said the applicant has stated that they are looking toward the OSAR to mitigate any further impacts for the site, specifically for the Courthouse Road/Austin Ridge intersection.

Ms. Caudill asked for clarification that Buc-ee's is responsible for any additional improvements identified by the OSAR.

Mr. Lehane confirmed that this would be the case for any additional mitigation improvements due to the Buc-ee's traffic.

Mr. Shelton noted that the limited access control change at Exit 140 had to go through the CTB and asked Mr. Lehane if this would also entail the FHWA.

Mr. Lehane responded that it would, stating that he would defer to the applicant for specifics. He said he has not been through that process, but the applicant's consultant, Kimley-Horn, has on several occasions.

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Ms. Barnes asked if those were typically required before an application is approved, as it seems that there are still a lot of rather weighty pending approvals.

Mr. Lehane replied that in his experience, they have not had any projects come forward in the past few years that needed an OSAR—so there’s really no precedent for an applicant to do an OSAR before rezoning versus after a rezoning.

Ms. Barnes asked about approvals by the CTB or the FHWA, as those seem like really important pieces of information to make a decision.

Mr. Zuraf responded that the one example that I know of was the Centerport Gateway project; before it became a data center, there was a larger commercial project proposed that also needed CTB approval and went through the process before rezoning.

Mr. Shelton asked that when the time comes, the applicant explain what experience they have had with the CTB and FHWA in their two sites in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Goldstein asked staff to clarify how this use aligns with the comprehensive plan designation for this corridor and whether it is considered a neighborhood-serving use or regional destination use.

Mr. Zuraf responded that it would be more of a regional destination use. He said the comp plan does not get into and delineate that necessarily in this location, and it does support retail uses.

Mr. Goldstein asked if it was more for the community serving.

Mr. Zuraf said it does not get into that.

Mr. Goldstein asked how the scale of this facility—fueling positions and square footage—compared to typical B-1 uses in the county.

Mr. Zuraf replied that the scale of this use kind of is much larger than most other B-1 uses.

Ms. Barnes commented that staff says the traffic analysis is complete, but there are still 26 comments from VDOT, with perhaps four or five of those resolved and a few others deferred. She asked what it meant for a comment to be “deferred” and what it meant for them to be “unresolved,” noting that there are 26 comments in that status.

Mr. Zuraf explained that deferred means a comment is not necessary for the rezoning but may be necessary for the site plan, such as an access management exception or additional analysis on a roundabout. He said that “unresolved” means there are still issues to be discussed between VDOT and the applicant; a lot of those comments pointed toward number 24 and 25, which related to the two issues staff mentioned in the presentation.

Ms. Barnes asked if it is typical for those comments to be resolved before reclassification, because this seems like a lot of unresolved comments, which surprised her.

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Mr. Zuraf stated that it is probably a little bit more than normal, and there are usually a few comments left—but as long as they get through the meat of what the results are showing, that's usually to a point where we're good to move forward.

Ms. Barnes asked if this had taken an unusually long amount of time with VDOT because of the scale and the uniqueness of the project.

Mr. Zuraf stated that it is more so the uniqueness of the project, as there is a lot happening throughout this entire area with other approved projects that create the complexity and the changes proposed to the interchanges.

Ms. Barnes said she brought this up because they talk about and often hear comments regarding how long these projects take, but perhaps this is a unicorn of a project. She said she hasn't previously seen this many unresolved comments, which she has concerns about, and she wished that over the last couple of months there had been a way to get some of those resolved—and perhaps the applicant can address this.

Ms. Barnes commented that the report says the traffic analysis is complete, but it's based on 2026 data and she wondered if it was typical to have the traffic analysis complete right now, especially considering that this project isn't going to be finished until 2029. She said it seemed they would need a TIA based on what the conditions would be at the time of completion and to take into consideration factors such as the continued buildout of Embrey Mill, which is nowhere near being finished, as well as the Market at Austin Ridge.

Mr. Zuraf responded that if the project were to drag on too much longer, they will need to do a bit of reset—but that's why they are focusing on the 2032 results within the study, as that does look out and assume more of the buildout that's happening in the surrounding projects.

Ms. Barnes asked if the CTB involvement is always something necessary with a project or just because this one has to do with freeway off-ramp and traffic.

Mr. Zuraf said it pertains to this case in specific because there are sections of Courthouse Road that are called "limited access," where commercial entrances or other entrances are not permitted because of their close proximity to the interchange. He said to get a break or an entrance within that restricted area, there must be special approval, which is not the case with most projects.

Ms. Barnes said the Market at Austin Ridge or historically even Embrey Mill, that didn't require CTB or FHWA involvement and only required VDOT approval.

Mr. Zuraf confirmed this and said it is because the limited access ends at Austin Ridge Drive, and Market at Austin Ridge is to the west and thus outside of that limitation.

Ms. Barnes asked if he had ever seen a project of this size with this impact approved or moved on in the process with this much still outstanding, especially regarding VDOT.

Mr. Zuraf responded that he could not really answer that.

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Mr. Goldstein asked what the anticipated impacts were on nearby residential areas in terms of traffic noise and lighting, particularly at night.

Mr. Zuraf explained that with the latest designs and traffic patterns shown on the general development plan, they are diverting traffic away from the residents to the north, with left-turn movement only out of Israel Rodriguez Drive, but people could still head up that way and north on Austin Ridge Drive. He said it is not restricted necessarily at other access points, but the applicant is doing what they can to focus trips and direct people back towards Courthouse Road and I-95. He said there could be some greater lighting impacts with the number of fuel pumps and the size of these canopies because they are typically brighter, but the applicant must follow the County's lighting standards. He added that this use would probably have similar noise as any other commercial project that might happen on the project property.

Mr. Goldstein asked if there were proffers on an adjacent property that limited business types and hours of operation, which he recalled were enacted in 2014, next to Westgate; he believed these would negate those proffers.

Mr. Zuraf confirmed that the majority of those proffers still apply to the portion of the site Parcel 29-60G, north of the red line on his map shown, and it was almost a tiny pie-shaped portion within the very top of this site.

Mr. Goldstein asked if he knew what those proffers were.

Mr. Zuraf said that limits the size of any building on that portion to 10,200 square feet. He said there are several uses restricted in that area—such as car wash, convenience store, nightclub, recreational enterprise, auto service, auto repair—as well as a building height restriction of 20 feet. He said there are also hours of operation restrictions from 6 AM to 10 PM, Sunday through Thursday, and 6 AM to 11 PM, Friday and Saturday. He said those remain to the area north of the red line but would go away where it applies to this site.

Mr. Caudill asked staff to explain how the proposed interstate ramp access avoids creating congestion or safety conflicts at the Courthouse Road interchange.

Mr. Lehane explained that the ramp is split from the main intersection with Austin Ridge, so there is a median-divided slip lane that goes to Austin Ridge Drive.

Ms. Caudill asked Mr. Zuraf how much deviation from the GDP is permitted under general conformance, and whether that could result in a more impactful layout than what is shown tonight.

Mr. Zuraf said there could be slight adjustment to the location to accommodate site engineering with grades and other factors, but the proffers and the restrictions within the proposed conditions will help control that, such as the location and maximum number of fuel pumps and strict limit on building size. He added that their general footprint is going to stay the same, but there might be slight adjustments if needed.

Mr. Oats noted that the LOS is going from C to D as cited in the B scenario, with the delay increasing from an estimated 28.3 to 46.7 seconds with the traffic pattern, and he asked if Buc-ee's would be responsible for improving that pattern to reduce the delay.

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Mr. Zuraf responded that they would if it is determined to have a negative impact, whatever that increase might be. He said if there is very little impact now and it's doubling, it wouldn't—but once you're going above a C into the range of a D and an E, and of course F, and there's a doubling, that would be considered negative.

Ms. Siegmund asked if this Commission were to make a decision today without this information, where the responsibility rests to ensure these mitigations happen. She asked if it was site plan approval or occupancy permit, and how far down the line they would go.

Mr. Zuraf stated that it definitely happens later and would likely be before the applicant comes in for any site plan, because that's going to show up as part of the site plan approval or separate infrastructure approvals if there are things happening offsite.

Ms. Siegmund said they hear a lot about revenue, and she has paid particular attention to fiscal impact. She said when they talk about a penny on the tax rate, that's about \$2.5 million in revenue; net projected county revenues make that about \$1.9 and \$1.8, so that's three-quarters of a cent—with a savings of about \$35 a year for homeowners in Stafford, using an average of \$477,000. She asked Mr. Mayausky if her math was close.

Mr. Mayausky responded that her logic is correct, and she is definitely in the ballpark. He said in looking at the revenues, he felt they were extremely conservative with a bottom line of \$1.9 million or roughly \$2 million a year. He said staff has reached out to most of the localities on the East Coast that have a Buc-ee's, and if you created a range of tax revenue, their projections are at the bottom of that range. He said when you put it in the overall picture of the Stafford County tax base, it seems like a small number, but this would make them one of the top 10 taxpayers in the county, with a typical gas station generating \$350,000–\$400,000 worth of tax revenue per year. He added that Buc-ee's is generating considerably more than somebody in the same industry with a smaller footprint.

Ms. Barnes asked if that included gas tax, because counties don't get much from that.

Mr. Lehane explained that gas tax goes through the Potomac Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), which then comes to Stafford County for transportation uses, and that rate is currently about \$0.93. He recalled that Buc-ee's estimated generating \$1.8 million in gas tax revenue to start, with inflation obviously increasing that year to year.

Ms. Barnes asked how much of that Stafford gets.

Mr. Lehane responded that Stafford gets all of it—that's \$1.8 million that would go to Stafford County; annually in 2025, the County received about \$6.2 million total. He also confirmed that this is on top of the Buc-ee's projected net county revenues of \$1.876 million.

Mr. Lehane explained that in terms of the gas tax, there are about 470 pumps in the county, generating about \$6.2 million in 2025; Buc-ee's would bring in another 120 pumps and generate about \$1.8 million based on the data that was provided, in addition to the numbers she and Commissioner Siegmund had noted.

Ms. Barnes said that really should be somewhere in there.

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Ms. Siegmund said the footnote is misleading because it says the revenues are not included in the county's general fund budget because they're earmarked for specific [purposes] and can't be used for regular budget expenditures; they must be used specifically for those kind of earmarked projects. She asked for confirmation that this is the number that doesn't go to PRTC as a group to then divvy up; it would be Stafford's share of what goes to PRTC.

Mr. Lehane responded that the gas tax formula and table are quite complicated, but PRTC is the holder of Stafford's gas tax revenue. He said there is other gas tax money, but that goes to the state, and the county does not have a say in where that money comes from or where it goes, specifically.

Mr. Mayausky corrected his earlier statement and said the \$1.9 million does not include the gas tax—it is strictly the property taxes, utility taxes, meals tax, and local sales tax.

Ms. Barnes asked if, to Ms. Siegmund's question, the projected expenditures are \$78,119—and she surmised that most of that was for things like public safety, because Buc-ee's would not have expenses like children going to schools.

Mr. Mayausky stated that he was not entirely certain how that estimate was derived, but he would sit down with CFO Andrea Light to provide more detail.

Ms. Siegmund asked what PRTC money would be used for, because if that number is going to go up, it is essentially an asset—even if it is earmarked.

Mr. Lehane explained that the PRTC is through transportation funds, and examples of how it is currently being used include the Courthouse Road project just outside this building; Route 1 at Telegraph Road and Route 1 Woodstock, just north of here; and Berea Church Road in Hartwood. He said projects within the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as well as debt service for their 2019 bond, which was \$50 million, all of that would go toward those projects and future projects within the CIP.

Ms. Siegmund asked if Stafford County gets to decide autonomously how the funds are used from PRTC.

Mr. Lehane confirmed this and said there are other things such as VRE and Fredericksburg GO, but the net difference of that is a transportation fund they can spend at their discretion.

Ms. Barnes stated that as it is zoned right now as a B-2, it would have 8,300 trips by right, compared to around 20,000 with Buc-ee's. She said if they're going conservative on the taxes, they're probably going pretty conservative on that number too. She said in comparison with what they just did with the Market at Austin Ridge, that is 25 acres versus Buc-ee's at 47 acres. She said the fiscal impact for the Market is about \$1.9 million per year, which is roughly the same as they are seeing with Buc-ee's. Ms. Barnes asked if the county has considered other uses for that property that might bring in more—because if Austin Ridge is estimated to bring in \$1.9 million with only 25 acres at a B-2, it should be consistent on those Buc-ee's parcels. She asked staff what kind of research and background information they have on fiscal impact if they let it stay at B-2 and did something similar to the Market at Austin Ridge or even something as an extension of Embrey Mill.

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Mr. Zuraf responded that he does not have an answer to that, as staff is solely focused on the proposal before the county and is not really considering other uses and their potential impacts and fiscal benefits.

Mr. Oats asked for reiteration of all the gas stations in Stafford County as compared to Buc-ee's.

Mr. Mayausky explained that there are 471 gas pumps in Stafford County, which generated \$6.2 million in gas tax revenue in 2025; Buc-ee's has 120 pumps and is projected to generate about \$1.85 million in gas tax revenue, all to be held locally.

With no further questions for staff, Ms. Barnes asked for the applicant to address the Commission.

Karen Cohen of Gentry Locke Attorneys, 919 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia, stated that she would not take up a lot of time and would instead yield to their traffic engineers and Mr. Beard from Buc-ee's. Ms. Cohen said she would focus on some of the basic land-use principles that have come up in this discussion. She said as the staff report and Mr. Zuraf have said, the proposed use of a travel center is consistent with other similar uses here and is appropriate given the proximity to I-95.

Ms. Cohen stated that this use is appropriate for the B-2 commercial district because it is the highest-intensity commercial district, so high-intensity commercial retail should be permitted here—but they were told explicitly to rezone to B-1 because the zoning ordinance does not allow high-intensity retail in B-2, even though B-2 is the higher-intensity zone and it is allowed in B-1. She stated that her position has always been that this is clearly a scrivener's error in the ordinance and there are other typos as well; but however that got into the ordinance, it is pretty clearly a mistake. She said the point is, regardless, they need to come to the Commission and for the Board to take legislative action because there is no Buc-ee's without fuel, and vehicle fuel sales require a CUP, so a legislative permit is needed no matter what. She stated that there are existing proffers, and they would still need a proffer condition amendment to change those because what was previously proposed—nine buildings, four drive-thrus, and tons of local producing traffic—has proffers that do not match their plan as a single user. She stated that the design is well thought out for the travel center use, with plenty of internal room for flow to get people onto the site and back out to the interstate. She added that they are agnostic about the zoning but had to file the application in this manner. Ms. Cohen stated that from a land use perspective, this is not as intense as multiple retail uses and drive-thrus, but it is a different type of use—a travel center. She stated that the travel center is designed to pull cars from the interstate and must be designed to get them back to the interstate without adverse effects on the local community.

Ms. Cohen said the staff report and Mr. Zuraf's presentation showed many positive aspects of the project regarding its compliance with the comprehensive plan, and the high-intensity use is consistent with the land use and commercial development pattern; the architecture is consistent with the guidelines; the pedestrian improvements will address needs identified for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the comp plan. She stated that the proffers ensure the project will be what it says, with no confusion about the type of retailers, noting concerns about the proliferation of vape shops. She stated that with a travel center, you know what to expect and it will look like the plans shown, with evergreen screening and other benefits. She stated that the applicant has done everything required and requested: The fiscal impact analysis was provided, the construction mitigation proffer was added and pulled verbatim from an approved project, the fuel canopy lighting complies with the county's robust lighting ordinance, which is specific to fuel canopies. She added that Buc-ee's will comply fully with the lighting ordinance and responded by designing a lower lighting

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temperature and using fully shielded, full cutoff, downward-directed fixtures, consistent with the dark sky criteria. She emphasized that every question from the Planning Commission was answered, including concerns about sign visibility; even with line-of-sight studies showing the taller sign was barely visible, they reduced the sign by 15 feet to a total height of 45 feet. She stated that the sign is reasonable for interstate travelers and said it is diminutive compared to other signs for similar uses, being appropriate for its location and not causing viewshed problems.

Ms. Cohen stated that from a land use perspective, this is a good and permissible use—and one that ought to be approved as long as traffic is properly mitigated. She said the applicant respectfully disagrees with staff's ultimate conclusion that traffic was not mitigated and their use of a particularly difficult section to state that the applicant did comply with the traffic mitigation policy. Ms. Cohen emphasized that the comprehensive plan policy says "design to maintain a level of C," and where achieving a level of C is not practical, given existing transportation deficiencies, there is a non-degradation policy to avoid worsening the level of service. She emphasized that the policy recognizes that sometimes it may be impossible for performance to be maintained or for one individual applicant to provide all needed improvements. She noted that the applicant can contribute to transportation improvements, whether through cash or other means to improve the road network—and Buc-ee's has done exactly that. She said after two and a half years of discussions with county transportation and VDOT, they developed improvements, and their transportation engineers would present visuals of these improvements. She stated that the project is consistent with the comprehensive plan transportation policy, and improvements have led to some areas seeing better levels of service, with no degradation. She noted that there is one difficult area where improvements have been made, including those required by others, to help mitigate effects on the traffic network.

Ms. Cohen also pointed out that the applicant has proffered a legally binding commitment in the proffers that whatever the OSAR and federal, state, or local authorities determine is necessary to mitigate impacts, the applicant will be done. She said specific mitigation measures have been outlined based on the TIA findings, but there is a further layer of work needed because this project impacts the highway system and receives greater scrutiny, and Buc-ee's has proffered to comply with those requirements. She said there has been no failure to mitigate or comply with county policy, and everything requested has been done.

Mr. Shelton asked Ms. Cohen to confirm if they have 120 pumps proposed.

Ms. Cohen confirmed that it is 60 pumps and 120 fueling positions. She referenced a picture showing 13 bays and 17 bays, with each of those aisles having two pumps.

Mr. Shelton said gasoline emits toluene, a carcinogenic—and he asked from a risk management perspective whether there is a canopy and a vapor recovery system. He said since they have 120 fueling positions and the average number of fueling positions in many of stations in the county is 12 to 18, what they propose as a fire suppression system. He noted that Giant has adopted a fire suppression system in all of their stores to mitigate any potential for conflagration.

Ms. Cohen said she would let the Buc-ee's representatives address that because they have the knowledge and experience from what they've dealt with at their other stores.

Ms. Siegmund said what she is hearing from this process is that they are being asked to abdicate and basically trust that the people in Washington, D.C. and Richmond know what the people in Stafford need

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for traffic mitigation and just to assume they know what's best here, and that they'll then just require each other to give the county the absolute minimum to meet their needs, not Stafford's.

Ms. Cohen responded that she would let the traffic engineers and perhaps Mr. Lehane respond to her more about the process. She said she would not characterize it that way because this has gone through the standard process for the TIA or the 527, which comes from the state code. She said this part of the local process comes from the state code, and the applicant has complied with that—it's just that for this particular project, there's even more to be done. She added that she does not see it as an abdication, but that's just her take on it.

Mr. Oats asked for confirmation that approval for the traffic mitigation, a part of the approval process, is also on the county—in accordance with VDOT.

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Mr. David Capparuccini of Kimley-Horn, the engineering firm working on behalf of Buc-ee's, stated that local VDOT personnel or district-level people are part of the OSAR process; they sign off on it and are involved in the review. He said it's not just the central office in Richmond but the local VDOT personnel who are involved in the OSAR process, as well as Stafford County staff.

Mr. Stan Beard, director of real estate for Buc-ee's, said he would let the traffic engineers address traffic but would answer a few specific questions. He stated that what is happening here is really a referendum on whether they want Buc-ee's in Stafford or not, "period." Mr. Beard stated that they are following all rules presented to them—the rules are established, and they adhere to them, but there is no doubt they are working "with an 11-foot basket."

Mr. Beard stated that Buc-ee's operating under different circumstances, which became evident when Austin Ridge Market was approved. Mr. Beard stated that in the context of traffic, a vehicle trip per day should be considered equivalent regardless of the type of vehicle—whether made by a small car, electric vehicle, or large truck—a trip is a vehicle going in and out of a business. Mr. Beard stated that the vehicle trips per day were a maximum 35% increase, because the county wanted it, totaling 20,954. He stated that his focus is on impact, level of scrutiny in their review of reports, and mitigation measures.

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Mr. Beard said Market Ridge produces 11,576 vehicle trips per day; and Embrey Phase 3, approved late last year, generates 19,672 vehicle trips per day. He stated that the Embrey Wawa, just the Wawa and six surrounding fast food establishments, accounts for 19,460 vehicle trips per day. Mr. Beard stated that the data for Embrey Mill is referenced to a TIA completed by Patton, Harris, Rust & Associates in 1999, with Embrey Mill using that analysis in evaluating traffic impacts during rezoning. Mr. Beard stated that previous traffic impact analyses for others were three years old, while Buc-ee's is two months old and has already prompted questions regarding projections for 2026. Mr. Beard said what they are asking for and mitigating for is "unquestionably far beyond what anyone else has either been asked to do or has done."

Mr. Beard said the intersection improvements at Courthouse, Austin Ridge, Mine Road, Sunflower, and the diverging diamond interchange were the last phase of improvements for that interchange—and all prior development has done nothing but add driveways. Mr. Beard stated that their efforts are essentially doubling the capacity of that hard corner to facilitate access to stores, off and on the I-95 freeway. He stated that they will undergo OSAR, FHWA, and CTB approval processes—all of which they did in Rockingham County, with every requirement fulfilled and an OSAR totaling 1,000 pages. He noted that the traffic patterns in Rockingham County are identical to those proposed for the current site, though the volume here is greater. He added that there are not "a gazillion more cars" though, and they are mitigating for more than their share for more than the traffic they are generating.

Mr. Beard also stated that the claims about lighting are "absolutely untrue," and their fuel canopy lighting is consistent with other installations. He emphasized that their lighting system is comparable to Embrey Mill Plaza and Market Ridge at Austin Square. Mr. Beard said the county's comments regarding Wawa lighting were, "Site lighting would comply with Section 28-87 of the zoning ordinance." He said staff comments for Market Ridge and Embrey Phase 3 were, "Site lighting will be installed in compliance with Section 28-87 of the zoning ordinance." Mr. Beard stated that their site lighting will not be installed according to Section 28-87 of the zoning ordinance—as they will have a dark sky compliant lighting system, which is no one else in the county has. He said he heard the Commission say with Austin Ridge that they wish the applicant could plant 100-foot trees, but the ordinance does require them to do that.

Mr. Beard urged the Commission to ask the traffic engineers to explain the traffic, because it is explainable. He also said that Buc-ee's would not get a site plan approval until the OSAR, FHWA, and CTB have been approved, adding that they've known that all along, and that was an "easy answer."

Mr. Capparuccini referenced the planned improvements as shown on the screen and said they have learned a lot of lessons over the years to create safe and efficient ingress and egress to their site—specifically, to provide a lane that's right off the interstate and widening the southbound off-ramp that basically allows for ingress into the first entrance around the corner. He stated that this would require the fence as shown, the limited access line, to be relocated, which necessitates an OSAR and CTB approval. He said the ingress will enter the site, and everyone will be directed out to Israel Rodriguez Drive to the roundabout shown. He said there is a note prohibiting right turns, and no one will be allowed to go north from Bucc-ee's onto Austin Ridge Drive. Mr. Capparuccini said everyone will turn left out at that intersection and go back down Austin Ridge Drive to Courthouse Road. He stated that the Austin Ridge Drive and Courthouse Road intersection was widened as practical to produce left turns concurrent phasing so northbound and southbound left turns can turn together, and this resulted in a significant reduction in delay at the intersection.

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Mr. Capparuccini stated that in addition to the southbound ramp widening, they are proposing to widen the northbound ramp, which will accommodate queues for traffic turning toward their site or going west on Courthouse Road, so it does not block those turning east onto Courthouse Road. He noted that the exact dimensions shown on the screen are subject to the OSAR and could lengthen. Mr. Capparuccini stated that they took a conservative analysis to show the worst case scenario, as if Buc-ee's and all potential background development, even projects without a construction timeline, were built by 2032—and there is no expected level of service degradation for impacted intersections. He said the one exception is Austin Ridge Drive and Courthouse Road on weekends, with an increase of about 25 seconds per vehicle anticipated during the worst weekend peak. He also noted that the analysis includes Westgate, whose TIA was approved in 2012 but with no site plan yet submitted, and stated that a certain percentage of Westgate being built adds additional traffic to Austin Ridge Drive.

Mr. Capparuccini stated that at other intersections, including US Route 1 and Courthouse Road and the DDI interchange, some delay is expected, but both Stafford County staff and VDOT agree they are not responsible for mitigation at US Route 1 and Courthouse, with that increase being negligible. He stated that Courthouse and the DDI operates acceptably, according to their simulation model. Mr. Capparuccini said Stafford County staff recommends no additional mitigation for the DDI, US Route 1 and Hospital Center, or Courthouse Road and US Route 1. He said staff does recommend additional mitigation only for Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge, but Buc-ee's will be required to provide mitigation for any measures the OSAR identifies as their responsibility. He stated that regarding the OSAR, they have completed many across the state, including one for the Rockingham Buc-ee's store, which was approved, and said they are currently finalizing the New Kent County store. Mr. Capparuccini said it starts with a framework document outlining the study, which was signed off and approved with an email from VDOT today indicating only minor adjustments are needed. Mr. Capparuccini stated that after the document is signed by everyone, including the FHWA and local VDOT personnel, they will proceed with the OSAR, with the current timeline showing an 18-24 month process. He stated that when finished, the OSAR must identify all Buc-ee's traffic impacts and the mitigations they will be responsible for. He stated that the OSAR must then be approved by Stafford County staff and VDOT, and everyone must sign off. Mr. Capparuccini said once approved, the Stafford County Board must approve it for the CTB to approve any changes in the limited access.

Ms. Barnes said the Commission would ask questions related to traffic, and she would go first. Ms. Barnes said comment 25 in the TIA starts with, "SIM traffic, a micro-simulation tool, shows several movements operating at failing conditions with delays reaching into the hundreds or even thousands of seconds, as documented in Appendix D." She said she assumed that is all of the different delays, and asked him to clarify.

Mr. Capparuccini explained that it was actually a typo, and the LOS delay increases by only 25 seconds. He said VDOT is referring to some of the micro-simulation models that they have subsequently corrected, and they don't anticipate any delay in the hundreds or thousands of seconds.

Ms. Barnes said there is documentation in front of them that's telling us something, so they will need some clarification on that.

Ms. Siegmund stated that she called Rockingham to talk to a member of their Board of Supervisors to seek information, and she would like to find out what any colloquialisms actually mean. She said one of the things she learned was that Buc-ee's came in and built their own exit, and that's not what VDOT lets happen.

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She said she wanted to get a comparison on what they did for Rockingham and how that compares to the amount of work they propose to do here or anticipate having to do here.

Mr. Capparuccini responded that it's the same amount of work, if not more, to mitigate the traffic. He said there was already an exit there that needed to be expanded, so the ramps needed to be expanded to accommodate Buc-ee's traffic, so they would plan to do the same thing here.

Ms. Siegmund said when she asked her colleague on the Rockingham Board of Supervisors about the neighborliness of Buc-ee's, she named five businesses in the area that had no complaints. Ms. Siegmund said she asked what they would have done differently had they been building in a more residential area and told the Rockingham Board member that Stafford absolutely has homes within two miles. Ms. Siegmund stated that when she indicated that Stafford was looking at about having 4,000 homes within two miles, with the nearest homes being within a few hundred feet, there was a moment of silence and her colleague indicated that that would be very different and thought there might be some traffic concerns. Ms. Siegmund said she has done her own research and could not find a place where Buc-ee's went in next to existing residential and was able to manage the day-to-day. She said Stafford understands this is a regional travel center and that Buc-ee's is working hard to mitigate the increased traffic—meaning coming off of I-95 and into Stafford County—but she wondered how they were also going to mitigate just the regular local traffic.

Mr. Beard responded that this was raised at the last meeting, and one of their responses was to show multiple locations where they are closer to homes than here. He said he did not know if she had that.

Ms. Siegmund said what she saw was homes coming in after Buc-ee's was already there.

Mr. Beard said he would provide examples of where they built close to existing homes, and he would get those to her tomorrow.

Ms. Siegmund asked if the only opportunity for the public to weigh in on the OSAR process was when it comes to the Board of Supervisors, adding that this is the public's biggest concern.

Mr. Capparuccini responded that OSAR does require public outreach as part of the process, and those requirements vary but typically require a public meeting.

Ms. Caudill asked when Buc-ee's originally put in their application.

Mr. Zuraf responded that the CUP was originally submitted in February 2024, with the zoning reclassification application submitted one year later.

Ms. Barnes commented that this is not a referendum, this is a public hearing—and all the Commission does is make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which has the ultimate say.

[The Commission took a brief recess].

Ms. Barnes reconvened the meeting and read the rules and protocol for public speakers.

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Sean Matthews, Garrisonville District, stated that it looks like half the businesses within the Austin Ridge project the Commission just approved could be at risk if this is built. Mr. Mathews said using vehicle trips per day for a neighborhood is highly disingenuous when those vehicles are parked overnight or gone for the work day. He said the same goes for a shopping center with multiple entrances where primarily local residents will shop. Mr. Mathews stated that the vehicles Mr. Beard speaks of responsible for these trips already reside within the county; they are internal or captive trips, not passed by or external—and that’s the key difference. Mr. Mathews stated that the metrics Mr. Beard speaks of rely on comparisons that ignore this reality, and the audacity of such a comparison is intellectually dishonest.

Mr. Mathews said Buc-ee’s used the phrase, “We want to be a good neighbor,” but questioned what that actually means. He stated that a good neighbor respects the character of a community; doesn’t flood an area with constant noise, excessive lighting, and nonstop traffic; and fits in and doesn’t overwhelm. Mr. Mathews said he has to ask how a massive 24-7 travel center with 120 fuel positions meets that standard.

Mr. Mathews stated that this project isn’t designed for residents, but as a regional destination built to draw in drivers from miles away. He said that’s not speculation; in some markets, over 80% of Buc-ee’s customers come from outside 20 miles away. He said that means the majority of the traffic isn’t local and is being pulled from outside the community. Mr. Mathews stated that this isn’t a convenience stop but a destination. He said that’s why they want this location—not because of local residents, but because of the gridlock. Mr. Mathews said everyone heard tonight that there could be nearly a half mile backup in this area. He stated that is where many residents drive every day to get home in this area. Mr. Mathews stated that tax revenue is somewhere around \$2 million, which he said is a very small amount from a company that makes \$200 million a year at their bigger locations. He stated that as far north as this is, it will be their biggest location. Mr. Mathews stated that while the community bears the traffic infrastructure strain and long-term impact, the overwhelming financial benefit flows elsewhere. He said that’s not a partnership, that’s an imbalance.

Mr. Mathews stated that he wants to raise a serious concern about transparency. He said key submissions that normally go to VDOT are being deferred to later phases. Mr. Mathews said that’s not reassurance but delay. He stated that if this project is truly ready and appropriate for this location then the full impact, especially traffic, should be evaluated now—not after proposals and approvals are in place, because once it’s approved, any leverage is gone. He stated that for business of this size to be lacking so many parts of this application is kind of insulting to this county. Mr. Mathews stated that it suggests they believe this is a done deal. He urged the Commission to not defer this decision. Mr. Mathews said put it to vote tonight and let’s be done with it.

Janice Withrow, Hartwood District, said after nearly four decades of watching the county grow and change, she is in strong support of the Buc-ee’s project. She stated that this decision is more than one business and is about whether Stafford continues a long pattern of missed opportunities or finally chooses a high-quality project that strengthens the tax base, supports local businesses, and aligns with the county’s long-term vision for the Courthouse Road corridor. Ms. Withrow said Buc-ee’s brings hundreds of new jobs to Stafford, many of them full time with competitive pay and benefits. She stated that Buc-ee’s brings millions in new tax revenue paid largely by travelers on I-95 not by Stafford residents. Ms. Withrow said this is exactly the kind of economic development that helps fund schools, public safety and infrastructures without raising taxes.

Ms. Withrow stated that traffic concerns have been studied through a full VDOT review traffic impact analysis, and Buc-ee’s is committed to providing several improvements to the current infrastructure. Ms.

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Withrow said high-volume, high-efficiency traffic flow prevents backups and keeps vehicles moving safely. She stated that the site is directly off Exit 140, an interchange specifically designed for commercial activity—and if any location in Stafford is appropriate for a high-volume commercial use, it is here. Ms. Withrow said Buc-ee's is not a typical gas station. She stated that they are nationally recognized for cleanliness, safety and exceptional operations. Ms. Withrow said their stores are brightly lit, fully staffed and actively monitored. She stated that Buc-ee's does not allow overnight truck parking or idling which reduces noise and improves safety compared to many other travel centers.

Ms. Withrow said the Courthouse Road corridor has long been designated for commercial development and Stafford has already approved major projects here, including Austin Ridge commercial, Austin Ridge with proffers, and Embrey Mill Town Center. She said these approvals reflect a clear and longstanding vision for Courthouse Road as a commercial hub supporting surrounding neighborhoods; Buc-ee's fits squarely within that vision, and in many ways is a higher-quality operator than many by-right uses that can be built without any special approvals. She stated that as a longtime Stafford resident, she has seen firsthand over decades the county has approved thousands of new homes but nowhere near the level of commercial development needed to support the people moving here. Ms. Withrow said neighborhood after neighborhood has been improved, including Embrey Mill, Colonial Forge, Austin Ridge, Liberty Hall, Shelton Woods, and many more, yet the commercial growth that should accompany a population increase simply has not kept pace. Ms. Withrow said the result is predictable because roads are congested as residents have to leave the county for work, shopping, and dining. She stated that the tax base is overly dependent on homeowners since not enough businesses have been attracted to share the load.

Nancy Rueter, Garrisonville District, respectfully requested that the Commission deny RC25156318 rezoning classification of Buc-ee's at Stafford from B-2 to B-1. Ms. Rueter stated that this reclassification is not supported by the comprehensive plan, as B-2 is designed to ensure this property will support the local community. She said the very nature of the Buc-ee's organization and its gas station convenience stores is to support the traveling public, which is not supportive of developing a sense of community that other venues like sit down restaurants, concert, entertainment and sport establishments would promote. She added that a better alternative could be Stafford Sports Coliseum and the supporting businesses.

Ms. Rueter said there are many missing parts to this application including lack of approval by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, Federal Highway Administration and VDOT. She said this information is critical in making an informed decision regarding the application because of the tremendous increase in traffic of 20,000 plus per day vehicles associated with Buc-ee's and its impact on Austin Ridge and Courthouse Roads. Ms. Rueter stated that Buc-ee's organization is not completing their homework. She stated that as a senior citizen and for potential new friends she might make in the Embrey 55 and over community proposed across Austin Ridge from Buc-ee's, this is not a good location for a 24/7 operation. Ms. Rueter said noise and light pollution, in addition to exhaust fumes and gas fumes from the gas tank vents, produce an unhealthy environment. Ms. Rueter said delayed arrivals of fire and rescue created by excessive traffic can be a life-or-death scenario. She stated that she would not choose to live in this 55 and over community if Buc-ee's was across the street.

Ms. Rueter also asked that the Commission deny CUP 24155520 Buc-ee's of Stafford for vehicle fuel sales, high-intensity commercial retail and a comprehensive site plan, including the six tax map parcels in the noted application. She said this request is not consistent with a comprehensive plan, and in addition, this operation could incur additional costs to the county, including increased public safety costs, landfill costs,

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water usage costs, road maintenance costs and school transportation. Ms. Rueter said their decision is clear: Deny this rezoning reclassification and this CUP.

Ignacio Esteban, Garrisonville District, stated that his house is about a mile from this proposed location, and the traffic will be atrocious. Mr. Esteban said he attended the last public hearing and the town hall meeting and found them embarrassing. He stated that 60 to 2 was the count, and most people believed it should have been denied then. Mr. Esteban said it should have been deferred, and now it should be denied because another 120 gas pumps and a convenience store the size of a mini Walmart with 500 parking spots are unnecessary. He said they are not listening, although the people spoke clearly. Mr. Esteban stated that his major petition on change.org has over 2,600 signatures and can be viewed by anyone. He said he sent an email before, and it was well received. Mr. Esteban stated that hundreds of people from all over, not just the Garrisonville District, do not want Buc-ee's in the county. He said it is not a good fit, and the county should not be known for Buc-ee's. He stated that the Buc-ee's company received an F minus from the Better Business Bureau for poor customer service. He said the negative reputation is widespread and he does not want it in the area.

Mr. Esteban stated that as a retired federal law enforcement agent with 26 years of service, he believes Buc-ee's will bring higher crime. Mr. Esteban said there is no doubt crime will increase, referencing shootings, armed robberies, and violence. He stated that the area is peaceful and does not want to attract large crowds of 30,000 to 60,000 people on weekends. He said this is not good, especially since Buc-ee's will be open 24/7. Mr. Esteban stated that FBI statistics show gas stations and convenience stores open late are subject to more violent crime. He said Buc-ee's will bring more crime, violence, and accidents. Mr. Esteban stated that first responders will be needed more, costing more money. He said property values will depreciate and many people, including himself, will move out. Mr. Esteban stated that his home is in Austin Ridge and currently the community is peaceful and walkable. He said Buc-ee's will make it miserable. Mr. Esteban stated that the proposal should be denied as staff has recommended. He said the charade must end before the numbers get even bigger.

Judith May, Rock Hill District, said she has lived in Stafford County since 1980, when Garrisonville Road was one road in, one road out, and it took you 20 minutes to get to I-95—with two gas stations, a KFC, a McDonald's, and the Bond Food grocery store. She said she also owns a business in Stafford County, J&J Upholstery and Drapery.

Ms. May said she knew there were traffic concerns with Buc-ee's coming to Stafford but saw the company trying to work with VDOT and other places to solve it. Ms. May stated that she was 100% supportive of bringing Buc-ee's to Stafford County, primarily because of the tax revenue. Ms. May said gas tax would be \$1.9 million, and another \$1.9 million would come in general sales and food tax on top of that, and that was a conservative number—with those taxes to be paid mostly by travelers on I-95. Ms. May said Stafford County residents needed a break. She stated that she had lived through tax increase after tax increase and food taxes that went up every year because they had to support the number of people in the schools in the district and that the roads were a mess right now. Ms. May said jobs would be created on top of the tax revenue. She stated that many kids who couldn't go to college, or people who couldn't afford to go to college or didn't have high end jobs in Stafford, could benefit from a starting salary of \$18 to \$20 an hour for cashier work and cleaning bathrooms. Ms. May said benefits included a 401K matched at 6% and three weeks of vacation every year. She stated that it was time for Stafford County to open up and let something other than Stafford County residents pay all the taxes in the county.

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Ms. May said she would frequent Buc-ee's, and she had been to Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida and had no issues going off any of the exits or getting back. Ms. May said she thought that with Buc-ee's behind it and their company, they would take care of whatever traffic needed to be addressed to get income into Stafford County. She stated that she lived within four miles of where the Buc-ee's was. Ms. May said she remembered not wanting Embrey Mill there, and that it got there anyway because it didn't matter. She stated that with the income Buc-ee's could generate and the jobs they would create for unskilled labor and the amount they start at, it was time to open up and let something else come in to bring some revenue into the county.

Bart Randall, Garrisonville District, said he had a prepared statement but wanted to make other comments instead. Mr. Randall said there were many questions and many remained unanswered. He said the staff report was completely contradicted by the applicant. Mr. Randall said the applicant provided information that staff did not present. He said staff presented a 1,900 foot stacking and showed a level of service that went from D to E without mitigation. Mr. Randall said the applicant disputed this and claimed all mitigations were in place. He said all this indicated the project was not ready for a vote and not prepared. Mr. Randall stated that a year and a half or two years into this process, there was still disagreement about the information and uncertainty about having the correct information. He stated that it was unclear how the board was supposed to proceed.

Mr. Randall said he served four years on the Planning Commission, and its sole purpose was to ensure all details associated with an application were addressed for timely presentation to the board. He said there was a lot of work left to do and many aspects had not been resolved. Mr. Randall said there were still unanswered questions. He said he still had questions from VDOT that remained unresolved. Mr. Randall stated that Buc-ee's is a large company with extensive experience. He stated that there may be reasons why questions were left unanswered. Mr. Randall stated that Stafford County has a standard of not voting on anything unless there is a complete understanding of what is being voted on. He said the applicant advised to rely on the OSAR and to follow its recommendations.

Mr. Randall stated that if the board disagreed, the applicant could not disprove the board's position or force the application to proceed. He said the application had already been approved and was final. Mr. Randall stated that more information from the applicant could provide a clearer understanding of mitigation steps. He said the OSAR was not complete and would take 24 to 48 months according to the document, with an additional 18 months to finish and then begin construction. Mr. Randall stated that it would take six years before tax revenue could be expected. Mr. Randall stated that there was a standard to uphold for this application and all future applications. He said incomplete packages were not accepted, moved forward, voted on, or processed until they were complete. Mr. Randall said everything he heard indicated they were far from completion. He recommended deferral until the applicant and staff could present a complete package.

Marie Gozzi, Garrisonville District, said she just wanted to riff off on what everybody has been saying today: traffic, traffic, jobs. She stated that the traffic TIA has been submitted four times, and VDOT still is not satisfied with it, and that report in right in front of them. She said they elected to defer several comments to a later phase of the project, and Buc-ee's was comfortable with a cursory review—but she is not and nor should they be. She noted that it says this will degrade service to a level of F by 2032, and it shows movement operating at failing conditions. She said it's a big company, and they should have had their act together a lot more than submitting it three more times.

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Ms. Gozzi also said that at \$20 an hour, you come up with around \$40,000, and she wondered how many of these jobs would be full-time versus part-time. She noted that here in Virginia, there is state tax, federal tax, and Social Security, and by the time you take those out, you're still living in your dad's basement ordering in pizza on Friday nights. She emphasized that she didn't think this is the right place for this project, and while she appreciated the lawyer's glowing review, that's lipstick on a beaver. She recommended that they bury the beaver now. Ms. Gozzi said they've had a year and a half, almost two years; they're a big company, and they're professional. She stated that they've got big guns from Richmond working on their side, and they still haven't gotten over the threshold. She recommended that they take their chances with somebody else and develop that portion into things that will really reflect well on the community of Stafford.

Cindy Simpson, Garrisonville District, said she is a 26-year resident of Austin Ridge and was present to urge the Commission to follow the professional recommendations of county staff and deny the Buc-ee's application and CUP. She stated that while the applicant spent the last year attempting to engineer their way out of a bad location, no amount of additional turn lanes or traffic signals can fix the fundamental reality. Ms. Simpson said this project is a massive deviation from the very core of the comprehensive plan. She stated that the facts of the third submittal from February show even with the proposed signal at Sunflower Drive and expansion of Courthouse Road, there would be over 21,000 new daily trips. Ms. Simpson said VDOT's comments are clear and multiple intersections will drop to a level of service F. She stated that this is not just a letter grade but is a failure of infrastructure.

Ms. Simpson said that by approving this, the Commission would be knowingly voting for gridlock. She stated that the proposed Sunflower signal is not a benefit to the neighborhood but a gatekeeper for a crisis. Ms. Simpson said it forces residents to compete with out-of-state travelers just to leave their own driveways and get their children to school safely. She stated that this is an industrial scale use being forced into a residential adjacent corridor. Ms. Simpson said beyond the traffic, there is a deeper issue of trust. She stated that the comprehensive plan and targeted development area were designed to give the community a predictable, stable future.

Ms. Simpson said the community was promised managed growth. She stated that instead, there is a pattern of zoning by exception. Ms. Simpson said every time a high intensity developer arrives, the rules seem to bend. She stated that changing the current zoning at this location just to accommodate 120 gas pumps is not following the plan but rewriting it on the fly. Ms. Simpson said when the comprehensive plan is constantly deviated from to chase proper dollars, the plan ceases to be a vision and becomes a for sale sign. She stated that the zoning map cannot be treated as a draft always subject to the highest bidder. Ms. Simpson said Stafford County is more than a pit stop on I-95, and it is a community of neighborhoods. She stated that the Commission should prioritize the residents who live here over the travelers passing through. Ms. Simpson said the Commission should stand by staff's recommendation, respect the integrity of the comprehensive plan, and deny the application and CUP.

Jess Marcon-Zabecki, Garrisonville District, stated that the Buc-ee's proposal is the wrong project in the wrong place and should be rejected. She stated that it does not align with Stafford's comprehensive plan, which calls for sustainable, responsible growth that protects the environment and improves residents' quality of life. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki said it does not contribute to a pleasing community character as described in Goal Two, Policy 2.1.3 of the plan. She said it harms quality of life and turns the community into a pit stop off of I-95, and this is not the future residents have asked for. She said she is the parent of

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two young children, ages seven and three, and this is not theoretical for her. She said this is about the air her children breathe, the roads they travel, and the community they grow up in.

Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that the development of Buc-ee's would bring 20,000 additional car trips every day. She stated that this would mean more pollution, more particulate matter, more emissions, and more risk of asthma, heart disease, and long-term health problems. She said it is not possible to value public health while approving a project that knowingly worsens the air. She stated that claims about little impact on schools are not believable. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that when I-95 backs up, traffic will spill onto Mine Road and Austin Ridge Drive, which would become cut-through routes. She stated that this endangers neighborhoods and Anthony Burns Elementary School. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that the facility will consume 50,000 gallons of water and sewer every day, millions every year. She stated that the county is already facing serious water challenges from old pipes, facilities, flooding risks, and changing rainfall patterns.

Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that approving this project with this level of demand is irresponsible. She stated that residents want thoughtful development, local businesses, family-friendly spaces, and places where kids and teens can safely gather. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that the community is already lacking in critical third spaces due to poor urban design. She stated that third spaces are not schools or homes but places to combat teen loneliness, foster belonging, and support cognitive development. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki said a massive highway gas station does not meet that need and undermines it. She stated that Buc-ee's did not adequately mitigate traffic concerns or fully address the Planning Commission's concerns. She stated that this alone should be enough to deny the proposal. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that if a project cannot stand up to full transparency it should not move forward.

Ms. Marcon-Zabecki emphasized that this is about priorities. She stated that the question is whether corporate profit is the priority because Buc-ee's lead has already said there are others who can provide equal benefit with a smaller footprint. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki stated that the health, safety, and future of Stafford residents should be prioritized. She stated that the community cannot rely on a corporation to do the right thing—this responsibility belongs to the officials. Ms. Marcon-Zabecki said the Buc-ee's proposal should be rejected.

Extension of Meeting Time

Ms. Siegmund moved to extend the Commission meeting past 10:00 PM. Mr. Shelton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (7–0).

Elena Prokos, Rock Hill District, stated that the biggest issue right now in her book is traffic. Ms. Prokos stated that the company hired by Buc-ee's conducted a traffic impact analysis and then VDOT came in and cited several questions and observations about the results. She stated that VDOT wrote, "There is significant degradation in the build scenario and have no identified mitigation." Ms. Prokos stated that there were also VDOT concerns about the effectiveness of the roundabout. She said Buc-ee's reply, according to the Fredericksburg Advance, was "We understand that detailed design will require refinements that can be further vetted during the site plan review process." Ms. Prokos stated that this was not an adequate answer that gives her confidence Buc-ee's will be responsible for traffic mitigations.

Ms. Prokos said normally, she feels everyone is entitled to what they like or don't like as long as it does not affect her directly, and the traffic situation likely will affect her. She said she shops at Embrey Mill

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frequently and will not be there if a Buc-ee's is approved. Ms. Prokos stated that she would rather see commercial development that encourages good health both physically and mentally. She said her favorite thing to do is spend time with nature, and it is really hard for her to understand how local pro-Buc-ee's citizens would consider Buc-ee's a place to have fun and a place to eat a high-fat, salty sandwich. She said it just seems we do not need another business that will hurt smaller businesses, encourage people to buy things they don't need, and then to eat food they also don't need while fighting traffic snafus. Ms. Prokos stated that for the above reasons she asks not for deferral but for denial.

Jeff Eastland, Rock Hill District, said he had sent an email to them on Monday, and he appreciates the responses he received. Mr. Eastland said he outlined his opposition to the project and listed several points. He stated that 120 fuel stations would emit toxic volatile organic compounds including toluene, a solvent known to cause nervous disorders; benzene, a known carcinogen; ethyl benzene, linked to respiratory diseases; xylene; and other compounds contributing to air pollution. He stated that 833 parking spaces would create a large impervious surface for runoff. Mr. Eastland stated that runoff would consist of microplastics from tires, leaking antifreeze, spilled gas, and motor oil, all eventually flushing into the watershed and wetlands. He stated that 100 toilets would flush ever-scarce potable water down the drain simply so people could use the bathroom off I-95, and this is not a smart use of water.

Mr. Eastland said traffic is a major concern and stated that regardless of the exact number, cars going in and out would create an unmitigated disaster at an already problematic intersection. He stated that studies show when a Buc-ee's is established, adjacent small businesses close every time. He stated that a Better Business Bureau survey rated 38 Buc-ee's locations, giving 33 of them an F for poor customer service, lack of transparency, rudeness, and lack of response to complaints. He said that judging by the way the gentleman addressed the staff and Commission, he can see why.

Mr. Eastland stated that Stafford used to have a large travel center at Route 17 and I-95 called Service Town; although it was also a truck stop, it was a 24-7 travel center, and the place was a nightmare. He stated that as a probation officer, he knew the Sheriff's Department and Commonwealth's Attorney couldn't wait to get rid of it. He stated that there were juvenile runaways, underage sex trafficking, and drug dealing. Mr. Eastland said on Christmas Eve 1977, a 17-year-old boy on probation was shot and killed at the travel center in a drug deal gone wrong. He stated that when a huge, brightly lit, 24-hour service center is built, consequences can be expected. Mr. Eastland said he urges denial of the project and stated that the only beavers belonging in Stafford are those that swim in the Potomac Run wetland.

Darla Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said because the applicant has failed to provide substantial evidence that this development is consistent with the established character of the community, specifically under Stafford County Code 28-161 regarding reclassifications, and because the applicant has failed to provide substantial evidence that the infrastructure can handle the strain from this proposed development, specifically under Stafford County Code Section 28-185 regarding CUPs, she urged them to recommend denial of this application—which fails on all accounts. She said when beavers enter an area, they rarely bring benefits but instead leave a long list of detrimental effects: They cut down priceless trees, cause extensive property damage, and create issues with water and infrastructure; their dams lower oxygen levels in waterways and spread the parasite that causes beaver fever. She noted that a close look at this application reveals that allowing this beaver to build in Stafford would inflict similar damaging effects.

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Ms. Stencavage said one of the most immediate issues is a different kind of beaver fever—an obsession that overlooks the real-world consequences of this massive development. She asked them not to be fooled and look beyond the hype, as this project acts as a parasite. She said the development will erode the quality of life for every Stafford resident and leave residents to pick up the tab for its economic shortcomings. She stated that like beavers reducing oxygen in dams, Buc-ee's requires the wholesale clear-cutting of the local canopy and replacing oxygen-producing trees with acres of heat-trapping asphalt; and as a beaver clogs movement on a river, this development puts residents at risk by clogging vital emergency routes. She said when every second counts, families throughout the county will face significant delays for fire, police, and EMS teams to reach those in need.

Ms. Stencavage said this highlights the most undeniable parasite this beaver would bring: endless, gridlocked traffic. She said red is the signature color for Buc-ee's, which is appropriate since it also means stop—as stopped traffic and Buc-ee's go hand in hand. She pointed out that their own TIA confirms this, even with their outdated data, and shows paralyzing congestion that will elevate stress and cause economic issues through lost productivity and wasted time. She stated that she is wearing black to remind them of these dire consequences, and they cannot allow beaver fever to sway their thinking. Ms. Stencavage urged the Commission to uphold the county's standards and recommend denial of the Buc-ee's application.

Rachell Stanley, Garrisonville District, asked that they stop talking about the project in broad terms and start talking about what it actually means for the people who live in Stafford County. She stated that the headline of \$1.5 million in annual revenue comes directly from the fiscal impact on Page 4 and sounds impressive but really isn't, as on Page 5 of that same report, it shows that equals 0.43% of the county's budget, which is less than 1%. She stated that for the average household in Stafford County, that's about \$2 per month. Ms. Stanley said that's what this project delivers to taxpayers—which is not relief or meaningful services but pocket change.

Ms. Stanley stated that the biggest number being used to sell this project is \$1.6 million in fuel tax revenue, and this is where the argument completely starts to fall apart. She stated that if you go back to Page 4 of the report, it clearly states that \$1.6 million does not go directly to Stafford County and is not included in the county's actual revenue. She stated that the money goes to the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, and Stafford does not control that budget, nor can the county use it for general services, tax relief, or county operations. She stated that it will support regional services and is not guaranteed direct funding to Stafford County. Ms. Stanley stated that the PRTC supports services in Prince William, Spotsylvania, Stafford, the cities of Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park. She added that the numbers being given come with a warning and said if you look at Page 5 of the report, it states everything is a projection and an assumption, which is inherently uncertain and not guaranteed revenue. She stated that the 74-square-foot development from Page 2 on the report is a high-volume regional destination, and somehow the \$78,000 expense per year on Page 5 doesn't reflect reality, as it doesn't account for increased law enforcement, emergency services, and infrastructure for the future.

Julia Lewis, Falmouth District, said she is speaking in support of Buc-ee's. Ms. Lewis said she would like to address the three negative reasons staff is giving to deny this application. Ms. Lewis stated that number one is traffic impacts not mitigated in conformance with the county's comprehensive transportation goals. She said this is true at many intersections in the county, and at routes 1 and 17, she wishes that there was only a 24-second delay. Ms. Lewis said there will be traffic, and this style of intersection is the optimal

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design to handle it. She stated that staff acknowledges Buc-ee's is already making many improvements to mitigate it, and traffic is the sound of a cash register singing when people line up to shop anywhere.

Ms. Lewis stated that number two is uncertainty about how the project will comply with the comp plan guideline encouraging development to maintain or improve the quality of life for all residents and minimize land-use conflicts. She said Buc-ee's will help the quality of life for residents, stating that Buc-ee's will give travelers a reason to stop in Stafford County, spend money here, and promote local civil war and colonial tourism. She noted that Buc-ee's will provide 200 good-paying jobs and \$1.9 million in tax revenue, and all those meals the hungry travelers buy have a 1% meals tax that funds teachers' salaries. Ms. Lewis said the water from those toilet flushes will go to the Aquia Wastewater Treatment Plant to become reclaimed water and be resold to data centers. She stated that there will be improvements to roads that the community will not have to pay for. Ms. Lewis said Buc-ee's will more than improve the quality of life for many here.

Ms. Lewis stated that number three is uncertainty about how light levels due to the overall intensity may impact surrounding existing and planned residential uses. She said almost everybody on this board voted on the new Drew location at Cliff Farm. Ms. Lewis stated that staff recommended and the board approved the school board to put their parking lot with lights on from sundown to sunrise, 35 feet from the property line of the neighbors. She said this dark sky neighborhood will be lit up like Viva Las Vegas. Ms. Lewis stated that this does not improve the quality of life for all the residents in this comp plan.

Ms. Lewis said she is shocked by the people who say they do not need the money in tax revenue or the meals tax for underpaid teachers who may need to get one of those 200 high-paying jobs to make ends meet. Ms. Lewis stated that the not in my backyard folks do not have the 600-plus acres of data centers in theirs like they do in Falmouth. She said they are all one Stafford and they all get to do the hard things that create tax revenue to keep the lights on. Ms. Lewis stated that Buc-ee's will build faster than a speeding bullet, not like the project that was abandoned on this land years ago. She said Buc-ee's has a raving fan base who love to spend money there. Ms. Lewis stated that if the board is not ready to vote on this tonight, then it should be deferred.

Peter Stencavage, Garrisonville District, said that in past meetings and also in the general public comments, he has heard a lot about quality of life and community. He said with that in mind, he brought a book and would quote from the forward to the book: "Conservation is getting nowhere because it is incompatible with our Abrahamic concept of land. We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us, but when we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Mr. Stencavage said he and his wife have lived in Stafford since 2013 and raised a family here. He said most of them have probably lived here much longer, and he would like to ask what community means to them and what it means to a Texas-based billion-dollar corporation like Buc-ee's—a corporation that has sued other government jurisdictions where they've been located and one that has sidestepped the issues and concerns of the Stafford community. He said Buc-ee's is deferring comments on several VDOT issues to a later phase, and he'd like to ask why, posing that the community and county should have all the data needed to make an informed decision. He said the proffers have also not been updated lately. He likened this project to Pandora's Box and noted that Buc-ee's will generate many complicated problems: traffic, air and water pollution, increased crime, increased first responder times, and more. He stated that at the bottom of

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Pandora's Box was hope, and he hoped they would vote against Buc-ee's and consider all the potential problems when voting on this issue.

James Bennett, Garrisonville District, said he has been an Austin Ridge resident for 10 years, and new traffic was bad when he moved here with his family. Mr. Bennett stated that over the last decade, Stafford County has listened to residents and made strategic investments with the state to help alleviate traffic, specifically on Courthouse Road and I-95. He said these actions have greatly improved the quality of life for residents—resulting in increased home values and collecting more in property taxes due to those increased values, with roughly a third of that revenue coming from real estate taxes. He said this Buc-ee's location will decrease nearby home values due to traffic gridlock at Courthouse Road and Austin Ridge Drive caused by the lack of necessary traffic mitigations, negatively impacting the county's property tax revenue for Embrey Mill, Austin Ridge and other high-value properties and neighborhoods within a three-mile radius.

Mr. Bennett stated that the only way for Buc-ee's to mitigate traffic impacts is to build flyovers directly from their parking lot to I-95 on ramps that divert exiting traffic off local roads, similar to the HOV flyovers that we see on I-95. He said Buc-ee's projected county revenue of under \$2 million a year, excluding the gas tax, won't make a dent in offsetting loss of property tax revenue at the proposed location. Mr. Bennett stated that Austin Ridge residents alone pay nearly \$5 million a year in property taxes, which isn't much compared to the county's \$1 billion dollar budget, but if you add projected losses from other neighborhoods, annual net losses will get into the tens of millions in future value dollars in just a few short years—resulting in cascading negative impacts to schools, teacher pay, public safety projects, government operations, and overall quality of life all amidst rising inflationary costs and rising population growth. He stated that this proposed location is a long-term financial loser for Stafford County, and people won't want to live here if they can't get here or leave here easily.

Mr. Bennett urged the Commission not to move this forward and stated that it is important to continue their tradition of listening to residents, doing the right thing, and not ruining the county for current and future generations.

Jennifer Stratton, Garrisonville District, said she would start off with the question of, if they deny or defer this project, they are sending the message that Stafford is not open for business. Ms. Stratton said being open for business does not mean approving every project, especially when it does not align with the county's goals. She stated that five years ago, Fountain Park was approved with the promise of creating a sense of identity and becoming the economic and cultural heart of the community, and she said they are looking forward to that development.

Ms. Stratton stated that Embrey Mill Town Center was built to serve residents with dining, retail, and everyday services, and she said many are excited for similar thoughtful development at the Market at Austin Ridge. She stated that the parcels northeast of Courthouse and Austin Ridge Road were expected to be developed in line with what residents and businesses anticipated, and she said people do not move to the area for or to avoid traffic. Ms. Stratton said residents choose to live there for access to services, community spaces, and amenities that simplify daily life. She stated that living next to a tourist destination with heavy 24-hour traffic would detract from the community that was promised, and she said this concern extends beyond residents. Ms. Stratton stated that businesses invested in the corridor based on the county's vision, expecting to be part of a connected community, and she said approving a project that creates a barrier instead of a connection affects those businesses. She stated that something so large and traffic-heavy could push

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local residents away and prioritize pass-through visitors, and she said this represents a shift in direction rather than a partnership.

Ms. Stratton stated that the same standards should be applied to all businesses, and she said a project with this level of traffic impact and mitigation would not be approved without a clear, workable solution. She stated that VDOT has indicated the area is not ready, and she said the question becomes why this project is treated differently. Ms. Stratton stated that businesses are watching Stafford County for consistency, reliability, and support of the long-term vision. She said the current decision sends a message, and she stated that Stafford should be open for business by planning carefully, growing responsibly, and honoring commitments. Ms. Stratton said she asks for denial of the application for these reasons, emphasizing that Stafford is open for business, but only for the right buyer.

Stephen Cook, Garrisonville District, said he went on holiday last year and passed a sign for Buc-ee's on the way down that said, "233 miles to your local Buc-ee's." He pointed out that 233 miles from here is just south of New York City, which is a huge area and only one direction of the four points on a compass. He said this means they are not looking for locals; they are looking for people outside the area; they are looking for people farther away to come into this area to gridlock roads that are currently functioning fairly well. He said the DDI interchange has been an asset, and they have also done well with other measures.

Mr. Cook said this area has a commuter lot and much up and coming development at the moment, including Embrey Mill, and the other side of Embrey Mill where Sunflower is, which still has shops put into it, plus another road there that runs parallel to it and more housing. He said if Buc-ee's gets built and has the median in between, the trucks going there to service those stores cannot turn left because the median stops them, which means they have to go up to Sunflower and find a way through or go to the next set of lights and U-turn. He noted that these trucks will be full, some with very large items.

Mr. Cook stated that he does not think Buc-ee's is right for this area, and they have heard of other things that are right for this area—and it's worthwhile for them to listen to what those options are. He said although his children are grown now, they still use places such as Embrey Mill for sports and other amenities. He stated that he would like to see more of that.

Adrian Malin, Garrisonville District, said she is here to respectfully ask the Commission to defer any recommendations on Buc-ee's applications for conditional use and zoning reclassification until the Planning Commission has received the information and details they've asked for tonight. Ms. Malin said she is not anti-Buc-ee's, but she is against it at the current location. Ms. Malin said her concerns surround safety and quality of life for students, teachers, administrators, and bus drivers, and the daily reality of getting children safely to school. She said it is not vehicles or travelers, but humans who live, work, and pay taxes in this community.

Ms. Malin stated that the existing TIA was created originally in 2023 and has been updated since that time. She stated that growth is still happening in this area that cannot be accounted for right now. She stated that she recognizes it also considers an increase. She said it is approximately 2% annual growth, particularly at peak times, and it is not going to address the community's needs. Ms. Malin said since the original TIA, the upcoming market at Austin Ridge was added, which Mr. Beard had difficulty naming because he does not live in this community. She said the senior living community was just approved off Sunflower and

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additional houses have been built in Embrey Mill in the 55 and up area. Ms. Malin said most importantly, the TIA does not consider the impact of student transportation.

Ms. Malin said five months from now, more than 800 students currently at Brooke Point High School are being rezoned to the other high school on the west side of 95. She said some Colonial Ford students already live east of 95 and require daily travel across this corridor to reach school. She said these changes will introduce additional school buses, parent drop offs, and newly licensed student drivers into the same intersections analyzed in the TIA. Ms. Malin stated that the Buc-ee's application repeatedly states that the proposed development will not impact schools or recreational facilities. She said with all due respect, this is preposterous. Ms. Malin said anyone who has lived in Virginia for even one week understands that anything can impact traffic and traffic impacts everything, including quality of life.

Ms. Malin said it is also preposterous to say it will not impact Route 1 and Courthouse Road. She said today, northbound 95 shut down due to an accident and every traveler was getting off and going north on Route 1 to Courthouse Road. She said she waited five traffic lights to get through to go westbound on Courthouse Road and missed her daughter going to school. Ms. Malin said before approving a development expected to generate more than 21,000 vehicle and 25,000 vehicle trips per day, the Commission should consider how it will impact bus drivers, student drivers, teachers, and county citizens traveling this corridor. She said good planning requires good information and asked them to defer the application until it was all provided.

Ms. Fitzgerald said she supports Buc-ee's and has attended previous meetings, but stated this was her first time speaking. She said Jennifer had raised good points to rebut and stated she had many things to say but little time. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that Buc-ee's is doing a great job trying to mitigate traffic issues and cannot control VDOT, adding that she feels the board may already be predisposed to a decision. She stated she hopes the board is open to understanding the complexities of dealing with VDOT, both federal and state. She said Buc-ee's is doing the best it can, but stated that aside from Buc-ee's, other businesses are not present, although they once had an opportunity to obtain land.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the economic development team could not proffer those other businesses to come and said the board cannot work with that situation. She said traffic continues to be discussed, but stated that the board just approved the marketplace, which is going to bring more cars. She said approving residential units, apartment complexes, and senior facilities will all contribute to existing traffic patterns and problems; she stated that Buc-ee's is needed in the area. She said the community needs something new and stated not everyone can attend or wants to attend college. She added that some school teachers or others may need second or third jobs, and maybe some panhandlers might find employment as well.

Ms. Fitzgerald stated that Buc-ee's deserves a chance and said the community needs other things, not vape shops. She said the marketplace has placeholders for storage facilities but stated that there are no placeholders with Buc-ee's. She stated that Stafford needs income and a tax base and said she thinks Buc-ee's is a good fit, not a bad one. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that Buc-ee's is an organization and said there will not be sex traffickers present, adding they are simply not going to be present, and stated she supports Buc-ee's and wishes the board would consider it.

Chris Schwartz, Hartwood District, addressed the Commission and said he noticed on the site plan that Buc-ee's is going to tie their sewer into an existing 4-inch horse main and was curious how the waste products of 40,000 people a day are going to end up there. He stated that he is concerned about the upgrades they're

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going to have to do to the wastewater treatment facility. He said he also hasn't heard anything about the amount of trash this facility is going to generate in a day, and having been to Buc-ee's up and down the East Coast, he has seen them have to supplement their dumpsters with huge 12-yard dumpsters—which he described as a nightmare and an “insane asylum on wheels.” He said that his children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews are up and down this road every day, and now would mix it up with road-tired, impatient drivers who are not used to negotiating the crisscross intersection. He said they are asking for a tragedy, and it's not going to be good for Stafford and ultimately for Buc-ee's. He asked the Commission to please reconsider this.

Ms. Lloyd stated that large, high-volume travel centers like Buc-ee's create significant traffic and public health impacts, and traffic congestion around them can delay EMS, fire, and police response times. Ms. Lloyd stated that traffic congestion is a well-documented public health risk, as vehicle emissions increase sharply at lower speeds during idling. Ms. Lloyd stated that the EPA and the World Health Organization recognize that passenger vehicle emissions aggravate respiratory ailments such as asthma and bronchitis, increase cancer and heart disease risks, and there is strong evidence that emissions harm the developing brain of a fetus and increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease. She said Austin Ridge Drive will be significantly impacted by Buc-ee's traffic, and of most concern is excess traffic that will increase the time it takes for emergency vehicles to get to Stafford Hospital.

Ms. Lloyd stated that it will also impact the safety of children walking to and from Anthony Burns School. She said for these reasons, this proposal absolutely does not serve the best interest of the community. Ms. Lloyd stated that the increased traffic, pollution, and safety hazards pose real and lasting risks to residents' health, children's safety, and emergency response times. She said until these impacts are carefully and responsibly addressed, approving this project would place unnecessary strain on the neighborhood and compromise the well-being of current and future residents. Ms. Lloyd stated that the community wants to consider a sports complex in lieu of a gas station. She said residents love it here, raised their children here, hiked the trails, and appreciate the green space. Ms. Lloyd stated that the community does not want its airspace polluted with this monstrous travel center.

Eric Rudenshiols said there has been a lot of important information and many opinions. He stated that he should preface his remarks by mentioning he was raised by a grandmother who took a very dim view of gas station barbecue, but that was not the topic he wanted to address. He said he wanted to discuss traffic from I-95. He stated that he is a commuter who drives to D.C. every day and has done so since his hair was full and dark. Mr. Rudenshiols said he has witnessed everything on these roads, and it does not take much to jam up 95. Mr. Rudenshiols said moving many extra cars and channeling them into one choke point would be a disaster every day. He stated that 610 is already maxed out with local traffic, and rush hour causes backups both ways nearly every day. Mr. Rudenshiols said traffic lights contribute to the congestion and that the backups extend all the way up and continue on the interstate when returning home in the evening.

Mr. Rudenshiols said nothing can be done about local traffic, and 630 is growing significantly; he commutes out of 630 and has watched its development. Mr. Rudenshiols stated that Occoquan serves as a built-in choke point every day and is a nightmare for drivers, with those in the main lanes paying to use the toll lanes to bypass Occoquan, which is similar to what is being created here. Mr. Rudenshiols stated that Austin Ridge and Route 1 are the escape routes for 95 and are used frequently to get through the area. He said adding a giant gas station to this residential area is adding insult to injury. Mr. Rudenshiols stated that when the project was first considered, nothing else was on the table—and a sports complex now appears much

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more attractive in comparison. Mr. Rudenshiols said if an immediate decision is not required, it would be worthwhile to compare the two options and consider which offers the county a better quality of life.

Kevin Booker, Garrisonville District, stated that Commissioner Siegmund had asked a very good question about an access road into the project—and Buc-ee’s responded with something like, “VDOT said this, whatever, whatever, whatever.”

Mr. Booker said on July 31, 2012, the State of Virginia entered into an agreement for a public-private partnership with Transurban, which subsequently established a subsidiary called “95 Hot Lanes, LLC” out of Delaware to build the hot lanes. He stated that hot lanes are broken into two sections—95 North and 95 South Corridor—and Stafford is in the 95 South Corridor. Mr. Booker stated that one of the stipulations of that contract is a compensation event, which are triggered if any new development occurs regarding the farm bridge complex, 95 South, or the Route 1 Corridor. He stated that this means the department and Transurban as the concessionaire, along with the State of Virginia, would have to pay them. Mr. Booker said the State of Virginia gave themselves an out in the contract, retaining the right to add any new roads or projects as long as they pay for them and give the concessionaire the first opportunity at the contract.

Mr. Booker said when someone asks about a ramp into the project, the State of Virginia is not going to pay for a ramp into the project. He said they are not going to do it. He stated that when local community projects are approved, any roads inside or around those projects can be approved, but anything connecting to I-95 must go through VDOT. Mr. Booker stated that VDOT will reject it because they do not want to pay for it themselves, and this is why there have been various traffic schemes designed to try to fit the project in. Mr. Booker stated that the contract from July 31, 2012 is for 73 years, so if approved, it will remain for another 59 years.

[The Commission took a brief recess].

Jeremy Whitmer, Garrisonville District, said he lives in the Austin Ridge development and had points to make about traffic, health, and safety, but all of these issues had been addressed eloquently by previous speakers. He said he wished to focus on two points: The Planning Commission’s responsibility is to evaluate and plan for the development of the community. He stated that he heard the Buc-ee’s team say tonight that their plan fits within the land use requirements and policy that governs how the Planning Commission develops Stafford County, but he did not hear any sense of community from them. He said Buc-ee’s expressed a desire to pull cars from I-95 and put them back on, which sounded to him like they were looking to shoehorn a piece of Stafford County into Buc-ee’s simply for profit, rather than building a business in alignment with the communities here.

Mr. Whitmer stated that the developers of the previous project appeared to be interested in being part of the community. Mr. Whitmer said he would echo the sentiment that the community should be open to businesses willing to be part of it. He stated that there are many open questions about the traffic impact analysis, VDOT studies, and various proffers. Mr. Whitmer said the words “unique,” “not comparable,” and “larger than anything else in the county” had been used. He stated that the Chairwoman referred to the project as a “unicorn,” and he stated that hope is not a strategy, trust me is not a strategy, and answering questions later is not a strategy for a project of this magnitude. He said tax revenue and gas revenue would go up, and while those things may be true, he stated that he is not against Buc-ee’s or any other business. Mr. Whitmer

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stated that if Buc-ee's is willing to address these questions early in the process before requesting approval, it is reasonable to have them as part of the community, but only after those questions are addressed.

Mr. Maroney said he was a truck driver by trade and had worked in the profession for years. He stated that although Buc-ee's was not a truck stop, he appreciated the establishment and would always support it. Mr. Maroney said his family considered Buc-ee's comparable to the experience of visiting a Hard Rock Café, noting that some people traveled around the world to visit every location. He stated that individuals did this for Buc-ee's as well, describing it as a place for creating family memories and collecting shirts, which became part of their journeys. Mr. Maroney said he was frustrated with ongoing discussions about traffic. He stated that he drove an 18-wheeler and experienced challenges entering locations with a tractor trailer and a 53-foot trailer, emphasizing that no one wanted to allow access and expressing his belief that concerns about traffic were exaggerated. He said traffic had always been an issue, as mentioned earlier.

Mr. Maroney stated that Route 3 previously consisted of a two-lane road on a golf course but had since become problematic. He said people avoided Route 3 during peak times and preferred to visit during the week. He stated that Route 610 also began as a two-lane road and now presented difficulties, especially at the intersection with Route 1 and 610. Mr. Maroney said that despite improvements, many did not understand the traffic patterns. He stated that the new interchange on Route 17 confused drivers, as GPS systems had not yet adapted to the changes, resulting in bottlenecks. He said people relied on GPS to determine the best route, which contributed to congestion. Mr. Maroney stated that as a truck driver, he found Buc-ee's facilities exceptionally clean, unlike Wawa or Sheetz. He said he kept photographs on his phone of 711 stations with bags covering pumps due to malfunction or emptiness. He stated that if confronted with a situation where Wawa had 14 pumps out of service, Buc-ee's offered substantially more options, providing access to 116 additional pumps.

Mr. Maroney stated that having availability and access to facilities was essential and considered it an obvious benefit. He said he was a truck driver and did not possess advanced education or expertise in statistics, but he prioritized taking his family to safe, well-lit locations with clean bathrooms and food rather than to truck stops where trafficking occurred. He stated that organizations such as Truckers Against Trafficking addressed those concerns. Mr. Maroney said he preferred establishments where his family felt safe and cared for. He stated that he appreciated Mr. Beard's efforts to address safety issues and applauded the board for listening to public input. Mr. Maroney said he was grateful for the opportunity to speak and was surprised he managed to do so without paperwork or his phone.

Norbert Smith, Garrisonville District, said he had never been to a planning board meeting before and was impressed with the questions they asked and their due diligence, adding that he compliments staff for their efforts on getting information disseminated. Mr. Smith said he had lived in Stafford for 22 years and every day during that time, except for a brief period during COVID, he traveled up and down I-95 to the Pentagon or further north. Mr. Smith said traffic will continue to increase, and that was the main point. He stated that as people discussed the facts, there was an adage about considering the facts, the choices, and the second and third effects of decisions made now for the future.

Mr. Smith said he respected Buc-ee's business model but believed it was the wrong project for Stafford. He stated that the numbers were open to dispute and that several points had been raised about certainty, tax revenue, and other factors. Mr. Smith said it was not a matter of doing nothing or accepting Buc-ee's, but that there were other options available. Mr. Smith stated that the county should consider what fits better

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into the Stafford model and that he had not read the entire plan for Stafford County development. He said there might be other options that would work better for the county and improve quality of life. Mr. Smith said traffic will inevitably increase. He stated that he was the father of three children and that his oldest, now 32, attended Colonial Forge when it was a small two-lane road. He said every time there was a football game, someone ended up in the ditch on the eastbound lane due to the curve.

Mr. Smith said improvements had been made and it was good to see progress in the county. He stated that the county had finally addressed those issues and expressed hope that new high schools would also have better safety. Mr. Smith said he did not believe this was the right time for a Buc-ee's in Stafford. He stated that Buc-ee's was a regional interstate stop and that the board had not previously dealt with such a large project. Mr. Smith stated that the impact of this type of project should be compared to previous projects. He said he had no issue with Buc-ee's being located at a rural interstate exit with plenty of room and not adjacent to communities. Mr. Smith stated that Buc-ee's would provide information as requested.

Carl Kline, Garrisonville District, said he did not have anything that they haven't already heard from multiple people so he would not waste their time, but this has been going on for 18–24 months and has been a huge investment in staff and Commission time. He said Buc-ee's has obviously spent an inordinate amount of money to put the package together, but what's important is Stafford County staff time. Mr. Kline emphasized that professional staff has made a recommendation that this be denied, and they should really consider that and deny it—as it is not the right place and not the right thing.

Sam Reed, Falmouth District, said as a retired pilot, he would like to take them up to 20,000 feet above all the details and factoids they have been throwing around. Mr. Reed said he had visited 11 different Buc-ee's locations and stated that there are 36 Buc-ee's in Texas. He said this gentleman's presentation tonight was one of the best, stating that it was emotional and fact-based. Mr. Reed stated that Buc-ee's regularly works through issues with local Planning Commissions and local governments, which involves back and forth about answering questions, clarifying proffers, and clarifying infrastructure plans. He stated that he would caution against denying the application, saying Buc-ee's could be a real cash cow for Stafford County. Mr. Reed stated that Buc-ee's is often referred to as their \$300 gas stop because they typically do not buy gas but purchase food, shirts, knickknacks, and other items. He stated that Buc-ee's locations have virtually no crime and the cleanest restrooms in the country. Mr. Reed said he wanted to give a 20,000 foot view and stated that the application should not be denied. He said if more information is needed, it should be deferred, and stated that both representatives have promised to return and provide any information required.

Kristi Lindberg, Garrisonville District, said Buc-ee's tried to paint their vehicle trips per day as less than other local businesses, but that's apples to oranges. She stated that Buc-ee's is literally trying to pull in as much traffic off of I-95 as they can and funnel it into one intersection, both directions. She said this is not serving the local residents but is instead a travel destination with 10,000 cars a day all dumping onto Austin Ridge Drive—which is the only way out of Buc-ee's and back to the interstate, according to the plan. Ms. Lindberg noted that this is the intersection a lot of residents use to get out to 95 and onto Route 1, and it is between them and the hospital.

Ms. Lindberg said the schools must go through the diverging diamond intersection to get to Colonial Forge, and the only dedicated lane mentioned is off of southbound 95; all that northbound traffic will have to use the diamond, and all the outbound traffic must use Austin Ridge Drive and the DDI. She noted that local traffic is probably going to feel pressured to go instead up to 610, which can already get backed up,

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especially with drivers diverting because of any issues on 95—and she only sees that getting worse. Ms. Lindberg added that businesses located this close to residential areas should be for the benefit of local residents and shouldn't negatively impact local residents for the benefit of folks who are just passing through. She acknowledged that that Buc-ee's is trying to mitigate the issue, but this piece of land is the right place for it as a travel destination pit stop.

Kristen Coia, Garrisonville District, said the difference between trip counts with Buc-ee's and other trips attributed to Embrey Mill is significant, as the latter trips are largely attributed to people that already live within the county. She said she lives just beyond the Austin Ridge and Courthouse intersection and has never had to wait through multiple cycles of the traffic light. She stated that when she goes to Publix, she sees her neighbors, but she isn't going to see them at Buc-ee's, as their business caters to people passing through town and is not being built for the residents of Stafford or to grow this community.

Ms. Coia said Buc-ee's is here to grow the company P&L, so she will speak in language they understand: dollars and cents. Ms. Coia stated that they are projecting \$2 million annual tax revenue. She stated that Stafford's projected tax revenue in fiscal year 26 is \$399 million. She said at that volume, \$2 million is about half a percent. Ms. Coia said that's a rounding error. She stated that for reference to other construction projects that this might aid, the improvements at Route 1 and Courthouse Road is costing upwards of \$30 million, and they would need 15 years of Buc-ee's to cover that. She said a common theme throughout these meetings has been that they could use this \$2 million to pay Stafford County schools, police officers, and firefighters more. Ms. Coia asked them to unpack that hypothetical situation. She stated that there are about 5,000 FTEs in Stafford County schools, and about 200 police officers and 100 career firefighters in the county, totaling 5,300 employees. She stated that if paid twice a month, that equates to an additional \$15.72 per paycheck before taxes—which doesn't even cover half a tank of cheap Buc-ee's gas. She said even if that doubles, it doesn't move the needle. Ms. Coia said this \$2 million annually pales in comparison to the amount of money residents, including herself, spend leaving Stafford County every weekend to take advantage of better dining, shopping, and entertainment options located in other counties. Ms. Coia stated that it's evident the direction Stafford County taxpaying residents want to see their communities grow in is not the direction of Buc-ee's.

Ms. Tongueneka Lewis, Garrisonville District, asked the Planning Commission to deny the Buc-ee's application, as Stafford County should be developing things for its residents. She stated that she heard earlier about a potential sports complex, and maybe that is what the county needs. She stated that the county could spend money, and others could come into Stafford County to spend money with them and possibly shop at local stores. Ms. Lewis said Buc-ee's would bring someone off of 95, drop them into Stafford County at Buc-ee's, and send them back out. She stated that there would be more traffic on the regular lanes on 95. Ms. Lewis noted that it would also increase the prices of the hot lanes, which are already astronomical. She stated that she would like for the Commission to think about what the county actually needs and what residents want. Ms. Lewis said she walks her neighborhood a couple of times a week and would not do so if there were a gas station that large. She stated that she sees her neighbors walking up and down, and kids riding their bikes up and down Mine Road. Ms. Lewis said she wants the Commission to think about the community and what it actually needs.

Abby Carter, Falmouth District, said she thought of a few things while reading the GDP and this application. Ms. Carter said she would like to draw attention to Section 5.1 of the traffic impact study, which is based on 2021 traffic counts taken during the COVID era. She stated that some people had gone back to work but

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in this area, there are many federal workers who were not going back to work then. Ms. Carter said any traffic count done during that period in this area was probably not adequate for future projections. She stated that someone mentioned earlier the starting pay at Buc-ee's was going to be \$18 an hour—and teenagers in Stafford County do not work for \$18 an hour. She stated that she has been unable to find any teenager to clean stalls at the barn for \$21 an hour.

Cherie Smith, Garrisonville District, said she is within the marker of 200 to 300 feet from the property in question and reminded everyone of their due diligence regarding what they say they are going to do. Ms. Smith read a statement: "Into so whoever home that I enter, I will enter and help the sick." She stated that she will abstain from all integrity of doing wrong or doing harm, especially from the abuse of the body of a man or a woman. She stated that whosoever she sees in her profession, she will treat them in honor and due diligence as a human being. Ms. Smith stated that if she carries this oath out, her reputation should be known, but if she breaks this oath, her reputation should not be known. She said that as a physician, she has taken that oath to do no harm. Ms. Smith stated that others have also taken an oath. She stated that the oath says they are to protect the public health, safety, convenience, and the welfare of the citizens of Stafford County. Ms. Smith stated that they also swear to the plans for the future development of the community, ensuring that transportation, utilities, public services, and planning for residents, agriculture, and business needs are met in balance. She said she brought this up because she listened to their statement.

Ms. Smith said Mr. Beard was correct when he got up and expressed frustration, saying that they do not want him here. She stated that it is not that Buc-ee's does not want to be here, but that they do not want Buc-ee's at that site. Ms. Smith said it is clear that Buc-ee's does not belong in a residential area. She stated that she listened to the point that Buc-ee's wants to forego all of the profits. Ms. Smith said she is one of the original individuals on Booth Court in 2004. She stated that they worked with the last owner of the organization and came up with profits that would benefit everyone, both landowners and non-landowners. Ms. Smith said those profits benefited them. She stated that there is a roundabout directly behind her property. Ms. Smith said all the noise and chaos from the roundabout will come into her home. She stated that if a line is drawn from the site of Buc-ee's sign to the end, it crosses over her house. Ms. Smith stated that she is in the direct line of sight of the sign, so it impacts her. She said she understands that everyone wants Buc-ee's and that is fine, but believes it should be placed somewhere else. Ms. Smith said they do not need Buc-ee's in a residential area. She stated that her last point relates to the increase in traffic. Ms. Smith stated that in 24 seconds, there is a flashover in a house fire. She stated that in 24 seconds, a person's survival rate for myocardial infarction decreases by 4%. Ms. Smith stated that in 24 seconds, a person with internal hemorrhaging loses a pint of blood.

Gary Smith expressed his strong support for bringing Buc-ee's to Stafford County. Mr. Smith stated that the project represents more than a travel stop; it is an investment in the community, growth, and identity. Mr. Smith said Buc-ee's has built a national reputation for excellence and is known for clean facilities, friendly service, and a family-oriented environment. Mr. Smith said this is not a typical gas station; Buc-ee's is a destination that brings travelers, families, and neighbors together while promoting local pride. Mr. Smith stated that Buc-ee's means hundreds of new jobs with competitive pay and benefits for Stafford residents. He stated that it will generate significant local tax revenue, which can be reinvested in schools, infrastructure, and public safety. He stated that it sends a clear signal to other businesses that Stafford County is open for smart, responsible development. Mr. Smith said beyond the numbers, Buc-ee's fits the character of the region. He stated that the company is hard working, welcoming, and forward looking. Mr. Smith stated that their commitment to cleanliness, efficiency, and quality customer service aligns perfectly with the values held in Stafford. He stated that he urges them to seize this opportunity to enhance the local

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economy, reduce travel burdens for commuters, and put Stafford County on the map as a stop people want to make and not just one they pass by.

Eric Fick, Garrisonville District, addressed the Commission. Mr. Fick said he really liked Buc-ee's brisket sandwiches, fudge, honey roasted almonds and clean restrooms and openly admitted he often found a Buc-ee's when and where he needed it the most as he drove down the interstates of America, which he did a lot. He said he usually found Buc-ee's in the middle of nowhere with nothing else around for a reason. Mr. Fick said the last couple of hours were spent discussing versions of these reasons in great detail. He stated that there were exceptions to these observations but they were still exceptions. Mr. Fick stated that the discussion was not about Buc-ee's in general but about Buc-ee's on a specific lot in Stafford, Virginia. He stated that as a preamble, he bought his home in Austin Ridge in 2003. Mr. Fick stated that his home was on Patriot Way and Austin Ridge Road ran directly behind his house, approximately 75 feet from his dining room table where he and his wife raised six kids. He stated that at the time, it was not a big deal because they were at the end of the line and Mine Road dead-ended into Austin Ridge Road and Austin Ridge Road itself dead-ended about a half mile past his house. Mr. Fick stated that thanks to the deliberate and meaningful work of the Commission, both Austin Ridge and Mine Road now extended through to Courthouse Road, which was a very good thing for local access by reducing congestion on Garrisonville Road and for emergency response. He said he was the beneficiary of accelerated emergency response last spring when his daughter's car was totaled on Austin Ridge Road, less than a quarter mile from his dining room table, due to the impatience of an aggressive driver fed up with diverted I-95 traffic stuck on Austin Ridge Road. Mr. Fick stated that the decision to extend those roadways was deliberately made in the interest of improving quality of life and emergency response for the voting and taxpaying residents of Stafford, and despite that accident, he remained grateful for them.

Mr. Fick stated that the proposal under consideration stood to reverse much of the good work of the commission's predecessors, creating instead of resolving congestion and traffic delays in his neighborhood, literally in his backyard, and decreasing quality of life for thousands of Stafford residents. Mr. Fick asked for those who were pleased Buc-ee's would bring new unskilled jobs to Stafford to look around—as there were plenty of "Help Wanted" signs in Stafford awaiting eager beavers and hardworking employees. Mr. Fick said he urged the commission to recommend disapproval of the Buc-ee's proposal or at least require them to select a location with significantly lower impact to already overcrowded roadways. He said he thanked the commission for their time and for the record, he always made room for over-the-road truck drivers.

Sandy Dowden, Garrisonville District, addressed the Commission and said she lives in Austin Ridge. She said a lot of her comments have been said already, but she did want to point out that Exit 140 is a hospital exit, which is a basic necessary service. Ms. Dowden said it is important to be careful with decisions to ensure emergency vehicles can get through, and that time is also crucial in emergencies because it could affect the hospital rating. She stated that some research should be done because a negative impact would be very detrimental, and apps like Waze direct people through unexpected roads, increasing traffic in areas people never anticipated. Ms. Dowden said even with efforts to manage traffic, the area will still be very busy. She said she lives in Austin Ridge and sees many teenagers and middle schoolers in the community. She stated that although she has enjoyed visiting Buc-ee's, she does not see much foot traffic and believes no one has discussed teenagers hanging out at Buc-ee's or whether the business is prepared for that—which is a significant concern. Ms. Dowden stated that the recreation center is very close to Buc-ee's, with children playing on the soccer fields, and she does not think this proximity is a good idea. Ms. Dowden said these concerns should be considered for the community.

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Chris Denning, Garrisonville District, said he was a Stafford County High School graduate in the class of 1996 and was very proud of that. Mr. Denning said after a 20-year military career he came back to Stafford on purpose because he loves this place, and for 22 years, he traveled the world and the country and often bragged about Stafford's history. Mr. Denning stated that if the approval goes through, he will look forward to bragging about Stafford being the East Coast's favorite toilet. He said he is 100% against Buc-ee's in this location immediately adjacent to his neighbors' homes and businesses that they love. Mr. Denning stated that he strongly prefers the Coliseum Sports Resort because it would support approved Fountain Park at downtown Stafford, bring better jobs, more tax revenue, increase property values, create more business, and improve the quality of life with all the traffic.

Mr. Denning stated that Buc-ee's would totally disrupt the Fountain Park project, which has already been approved, and this disruption would impact local businesses, local residents, and all of the traffic in and around the area. Mr. Denning said he noted that last month, Commissioner Barnes liked the term "cannibalization analysis" when Sheetz was discussed, and he wondered if that type of analysis has been done regarding the impact on local businesses already present. Mr. Denning said he is against Buc-ee's but urges a deferral since Buc-ee's has not put together a complete application despite having two years and counting. He stated that he has noticed the majority of Buc-ee's missing work involves traffic, its impacts, and mitigations. Mr. Denning said it is his belief Buc-ee's is pulling out all the stops to get approval while everyone is still in the dark about the true impact. He stated that citizens and the Board of Supervisors deserve a full understanding before Buc-ee's is given further consideration. Mr. Denning said people need to know how Buc-ee's will impact traffic, including school buses, emergency services, commuters, and local traffic not just on Courthouse and Austin Ridge but also I-95, Route 1, Garrisonville Road, Mine Road, and more.

Mr. Denning stated that he wants to read items from VDOT's report on Buc-ee's traffic impact analysis. He said one item notes several movements and approaches experienced significant delay degradation in the build scenario and have no identified mitigations. Mr. Denning stated that VDOT noted Buc-ee's ignored questions and deferred several comments to a later phase of the project. He stated that VDOT noted Buc-ee's has not shown how large fueling vehicles can maneuver the site and says Buc-ee's will degrade traffic service levels to an F by 2032, causing traffic to back up almost two kilometers with delays lasting thousands of seconds. He said not to worry because it's just a typo. Mr. Denning stated that the first page of Buc-ee's most recent update to the OSAR framework gives more cause for worry but he wants to point out Buc-ee's has said people should trust them and it will all be covered and taken care of. Mr. Denning stated that he wonders what happens if people do not agree with the state's assessment and others and how enforcement will occur if there are disagreements or different preferences—and he does not know what that mechanism is.

Andrew Primmer, Rock Hill District, said he was in Northern Virginia but has lived in Stafford for five years, buying a house here because he wanted land and areas to raise his kids. Mr. Primmer said Stafford has changed significantly over the past five years. He stated that when he looks at Route 610 from Stafford Marketplace down to the tractor supply, he finds Wawas, fast food restaurants, car washes, and numerous self-storage units. Mr. Primmer said the development is repetitive along the stretch. He stated that everyone who spoke before him and those who will speak after him have said different things need to come to Stafford. Mr. Primmer said new businesses should come to Stafford. He stated that the opportunity is being given now. Mr. Primmer said although it is a gas station, it is not five Wawas within a three-mile radius or five Starbucks. He stated that it is a new business that will bring well-paying jobs. Mr. Primmer said he often jokes about his retirement plan being a Buc-ee's car wash manager because they make \$120,000 a

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year, which is more than his earnings as a surgical assistant working 40 hours a week plus call. Mr. Primmer stated that the Coliseum mentioned by others is similar to Jiffy Lube Live or Fred Nat's and brings traffic. He said the request is not for anything more than that and stated that Buc-ee's will bring more people and tourism. Mr. Primmer urged the Commission to vote yes.

Monica Womack, Aquia District, addressed the Commission and asked them to consider the 4,500 Facebook followers, Stafford fans for Buc-ee's. Ms. Womack said there were 115 chairs tonight but acknowledged that 4,500 residents wanted Buc-ee's in Stafford. She stated that a realtor accurately described Loudoun County as the richest in Virginia and highlighted fear of the unknown. Ms. Womack said Dumfries had similar concerns when The Rose casino opened but stated that crime did not increase. She said most casinos attract crime, but it did not happen there. She stated that none of the worst fears were realized. Ms. Womack said Stafford would not receive much money from Buc-ee's and stated that speed cameras in Spartan and Lyon Road could generate revenue to make Stafford the richest county. She said health concerns about the land exist as it could become a data center and stated that such centers in California and Ohio negatively impacted mortality. She said there are five data centers under consideration and stated that it is better to know one's enemy if there is one, but she does not believe Buc-ee's is an enemy and loves Buc-ee's. Ms. Womack said crime fears are unrealistic and stated that traffic is inevitable in the national capital region, adding that residents could have chosen Tampa to avoid it. She stated that a casino opening on Thornton will also bring traffic.

Brad Baber, Rock Hill District, addressed the Commission. Mr. Baber said he had observed that one of the main concerns raised during the evening was traffic. He stated that he moved to Stafford County in 1977 on Garrisonville Road when there were no traffic lights and more farms than houses. He said those now complaining about traffic are, in his view, the ones who contributed to it, though they may not realize it. He stated that he witnessed the area's changes from the beginning. He said traffic has become a way of life as Stafford has grown into part of Northern Virginia. He stated that when traveling to the Giant Food on 610, he sometimes must plan his trip carefully due to congestion from people entering or leaving "Gooberville." Mr. Baber said he was not here to complain, but simply to speak. He stated that he supports Buc-ee's, emphasizing that the community knows what to expect from Buc-ee's. He said other types of businesses might open in the area, such as more storage facilities or convenience stores like Sheetz or Wawa, but he supports Buc-ee's specifically. He stated that while some have expressed opposition to Buc-ee's, he has not heard or read any negative comments about the company itself, only concerns regarding its location in Stafford. He said he wishes the commission would recommend Buc-ee's for Stafford, believing it would give travelers on I-95 a reason to stop and something positive to discuss about the community.

Connie Barrow, Rock Hill District, thanked the Planning Commission and staff for their hard work and time. Ms. Barrow urged the Commission to deny this application. Ms. Barrow said she had been aware of the other meetings held over the past few months and was present at the high school and attended the last Planning Commission meeting. Ms. Barrow said she did not hear any different tone or additional information that would provide a sufficient sense of adequacy to move forward with approval. Ms. Barrow stated that the application should be denied. Ms. Barrow stated that Stafford County residents living next to this development would lose quality of life and risk their health and safety. Ms. Barrow stated that she knows this area very well, lives about four miles from there, and considers Grounds Bistro on Shields Road one of her third places, a spot she visits at least once a week where the staff know her name and her order. Ms. Barrow stated that she worries about the livelihood of residents in that area if the project becomes reality. Ms. Barrow stated that she worries seriously for the children who feel safe in their neighborhood and play there. Ms. Barrow stated that she worries for those at Embrey Mill Park soccer fields and for

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parents who consider the area a safe space to drop off their kids, with children going across to Publix. Ms. Barrow stated that people unfamiliar with the double diamond traffic pattern would face unknowns, which is the reason the exit ramp was chosen, but it brings uncertainties for those not familiar with it. Ms. Barrow stated that fire and emergency services are inadequate because fire station 15 is in the design phase and not expected to be completed until fiscal year 29 or 30. Ms. Barrow stated that this area will lack adequate emergency services, which is important given the presence of 60 pumps and one million gallons of fuel per month.

Kristen Maxson, Falmouth District, stated that it's not surprising with the heavy budget crunch here that they are scheduled with Buc-ee's of Stafford. Ms. Maxson said the impacts are not flushed out. She stated that this is a reminder of the flushing water process which is also a concern with river intakes. She stated that now the river is the dumping ground for utilities for overflow recycled water processing and that was given on February 19th, 2026 utilities. Ms. Maxson stated that pages end March 17, 2026. She stated that former Austin Ridge Drive is to be vacated which was 1.11 acres of public property and will be acquired as part of the development but as the 27, 2012 which was laws that we just heard maybe that was commercial. Ms. Maxson said it is hard to know, but East Road is a vacant land commercial highway inside and also a targeted development area specified as commercial not public apparently. She stated that this affects using that road for public needs and that it became commercial as a row. Ms. Maxson stated that this can be a non-negotiable point at a later build with the public utilities or other and that this would be problematic. She stated that page 2041 of the agenda defines 29-RHO to be 1.12 acres adjacent to 29-60C but the public cannot see it labeled. Ms. Maxson said the reason for this is unclear. She stated that 29-RHO is included in the fuel sales as R26-131. She stated that the public believes this land was taken when 95 was built. Ms. Maxson said traffic impact has not been mitigated and the study does not fit with the comp plan specification. She stated that land was from the 1990s from Austin Ridge build so the Austin Ridge community should speak for it.

Janess Maroney, Rock Hill District, addressed the Commission. Ms. Maroney said she had visited several Buc-ee's locations and found them to be places where she could feel safe, spend time with her family, and enjoy her visit. She stated that one of the busiest Buc-ee's she visited allowed her to enter, park, and get gas quickly, obtain everything she needed, and promptly return to the road. She said she enjoyed her experience there. Ms. Maroney stated that she had worked at a Sheetz near the hospital for over two years and did not feel safe at that gas station due to numerous issues. She said those problems did not occur at Buc-ee's. Ms. Maroney stated that she expected Buc-ee's would be a safe, clean, and exceptional place for families, friends, and even members of the Facebook community who appreciate Buc-ee's to come together and enjoy a sense of community. She said she supported Buc-ee's and hoped consideration would be given to the positive impact on families and friends.

Ken Hodges, Griffis-Widewater District, said he lives in Oak Ridge and was not expecting to speak this evening, but listening to the discussion prompted him to address the group. He stated that the traffic issue at Buc-ee's is not a concern. Mr. Hodges said he has visited more than 15 Buc-ee's locations and has never experienced difficulty entering or exiting any of them. He stated that the traffic consistently moves smoothly. He stated that the Buc-ee's in Tennessee is among the largest outside of Texas and there has never been a traffic problem there. Mr. Hodges stated that Stafford encompasses more than just Embrey Mills and Austin Ridge. He stated that most Stafford residents look forward to having a Buc-ee's and hope to see one built. Mr. Hodges said voting against Buc-ee's would disappoint many Stafford residents who are not present but care about the project and desire something besides a self-storage facility or Chick-fil-A in their

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community. He stated that he supports Buc-ee's. He stated that he hopes the commission will give the proposal consideration and said the triple meat sandwich is excellent.

Rodney Womack said he was an Austin Ridge original homebuilder when Austin Ridge ended at Tavern and he has seen a lot of growth in Austin Ridge. He said he was not planning to speak tonight but stated that on behalf of his family, they raised four kids here and all of them love Buc-ee's. Mr. Womack stated that his daughters live in Tennessee and he has to go through 2 Buc-ee's locations to visit them and stops when he can. He said that as the young lady mentioned, they just returned from Miami a couple weeks ago and stated that Daytona is the busiest Buc-ee's he has ever visited. He said there was quite a bit of traffic but stated that it was not difficult to negotiate and get into and out of Buc-ee's.

Mr. Womack said that regarding the many traffic concerns, that is not a Buc-ee's issue. He stated that VDOT did not do the diverging diamond as they should have and said there could have been a better way to get traffic off the interstate to Austin Ridge without drivers having to go to the courthouse and then make a right turn at a light. He stated that nevertheless, VDOT is doing the best they can with what they have. Mr. Womack stated that if people do not understand that they have to work with VDOT to meet VDOT's requirements, then that is unfortunate. He said that in this area, with the educated people present, one would think they would understand that. He said that what the gentleman mentioned about there being a referendum is true and stated that people simply do not want Buc-ee's here.

Mr. Womack said at his church, when they had the discussion and he asked people who opposed Buc-ee's what they did not like or whether they had ever been to Buc-ee's, all of them said they had never been to a Buc-ee's. He stated that if someone has not been to a Buc-ee's, they should go to Staunton and experience it to see what it is like. Mr. Womack said to vote yes for Buc-ee's and stated that he looks forward to it if it is approved. He said he may not go every day but will probably get gas there often and stated that he wants something at the location where trees were cut down 15 years ago. He said he walks that road and stated that people already drive down it as if it is a three-way, so adding Buc-ee's will not change that. He said people will still drive 50 or 60 miles per hour in a 40.

Ms. Barnes thanked everyone who attended for being respectful and sharing their points. She stated that there is now an opportunity for the applicant to get up and address concerns.

Mr. Capparuccini stated that they did use counts in September 2023, when school was in session, not in 2021, and VDOT will require them to recount for the OSAR to use more recent counts. He said there are multiple intersections at level service F, and some of those intersections are already at level service F in the no-build conditions without Buc-ee's—and they improved them to be better than they are in the no-build scenario. He stated that they looked into the VDOT comment about hundreds and thousands of seconds mentioned earlier, and many of those figures are, again, not compared to the no-build. He stated that careful comparison between build and no-build is necessary. Mr. Capparuccini said practically all of their traffic is not generated from other sources but is already passing by, coming down the interstate, and coming off the interstate to Buc-ee's and back. He stated that significant build issues were mentioned, but he disagrees. Mr. Capparuccini said they identified only a 25-second increase at one intersection on the weekends. He stated that they are being careful not to restrict trucks from accessing Austin Ridge Drive. Mr. Capparuccini said their geometry separates traffic exiting the Southbound I-95 off-ramp and allows them to access Buc-ee's efficiently and safely.

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Mr. Beard stated that the iterations of the traffic studies had been extensive. He said the issue that people had with them was that they had not finished their work yet. Mr. Beard said they had gone through four, five, or six iterations of the traffic study to keep up with the revisions, requests, and changes that VDOT and the county wanted them to address. He said the more iterations, the better. Mr. Beard stated that others could find out on their own, but the team could not go through the FHWA, OSAR, and CTV processes without having an entitled site. He stated that those organizations would not look at it and would not spend their time and money going through a two-year study and back and forth without knowing that, at the end of the day, if they approved it, they were approving it for the use that had been addressed for two years. Mr. Beard said that was not on the table. He said others could be asked and they would agree. Mr. Beard stated that as far as crime was concerned, they were in good standing. He said he knew that one of the sheriff's deputies had called Rockingham County. Mr. Beard stated that the quote from Rockingham County was that the call volume they experienced in one month at their location was fewer than what had been experienced at businesses within the county. He said they did not increase calls. Mr. Beard stated that their store was open 24 hours a day and was fully staffed. He stated that there were 100 people in the store at all times. Mr. Beard said the store was bright. He stated that bad actors did not go there and they did not.

Ms. Barnes asked for questions from Commissioners.

Ms. Siegmund stated that there was some concern from the public about summer travel volumes and something regarding VDOT requirements and the parameters by which the study needs to happen, and she asked for clarification as to what those were.

Mr. Lehane responded that there was a question last time about the peak hour in the summer versus the fall or spring, and they look at the peak hours in the spring or the fall. He said when looking at unidentified volumes between the summer—such as July versus October—they're within a margin of error of each other. He said there isn't any significant difference based on the data that VDOT has, which they take day by day at certain count locations, and he did have VDOT pull that data and provide it.

Ms. Siegmund said she was reminded that school starts in August. She said the parameter was that school needs to be in session, so August might serve as a compromise in the data considered. She stated that someone mentioned they are going to prevent right-hand turns on Austin Ridge Road, and the mechanism used may involve either a sign prohibiting right turns or an actual construction to physically prevent right turns.

Mr. Capparuccini responded that they can't just put in a sign, as VDOT won't allow it, so they will configure the road as a "backwards pork chop" to disallow right turns.

Ms. Siegmund asked where the land came from for dedicated right-of-way.

Mr. Capparuccini said they are pulling it onto the Buc-ee's site, so they are shifting the road and doing the widening, adding the lanes onto their site.

Ms. Siegmund asked if there was any risk for future mitigation efforts if OSAR would require land beyond what they already own.

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Mr. Capparuccini responded that this is part of the reason OSAR goes out for 20 years, to 2048, to preclude that from happening. He said if additional mitigation is required, they might ask Buc-ee's to dedicate a bit more right away, to go back for that future widening.

Ms. Siegmund asked if that meant backing up more onto their property or having to acquire property.

Mr. Capparuccini said Buc-ee's would dedicate right of way and dedicate some of the property.

Ms. Barnes recalled that at the October 29th meeting, the Commission indicated they would like to see more public outreach, and she suggested that they continue to pursue that in some way, shape, or form coordinating with either the Commission or the Board of Supervisors, prior to the Board's public hearing on this.

Mr. Beard said he would not repeat what happened at the high school meeting and "put our guys in front of a crowd like that again," so he would be looking to public leaders to set that up, and his team would be in attendance.

Ms. Barnes said he had mentioned providing information about their stores near residential properties, and she stopped at all the Buc-ee's on a recent trip to Florida but wanted to know whether the homes around the store were built before or after.

Mr. Beard responded that they were built before and after.

Ms. Barnes said that going forward, regardless of what happens with the Commission or the Board of Supervisors, that information would be helpful to include in their impact statement regarding how close they are to houses and which came first. Ms. Barnes also said the "cannibalization analysis" is typically done with a Sheetz versus a Sheetz, for example, but it might also be helpful to have data points or analysis in the Buc-ee's model.

Mr. Beard responded that there was a news story done in Rockingham County about a month after Buc-ee's opened where they interviewed a bunch of businesses around that location—and they were all doing better than they were before they opened, as they are a tourist destination. He said they often put in touch screen kiosks in stores that ask for it, that the chamber of commerce runs, so travelers can see what's around to visit. He added that retailers follow Buc-ee's around because they create their own specific traffic count, and he agreed to put more of a packet together in this regard.

Ms. Barnes said she would like to see more of a detailed market analysis that reflects those points, in addition to anecdotes, because there is concern about the impact of Buc-ee's on local businesses.

Mr. Beard mentioned that he has not heard from any businesses in the meetings here that their businesses are in jeopardy because Buc-ee's is coming.

Ms. Barnes stated that she is also seeking clarification from staff on comment #25 regarding the timing of delays in hundreds of seconds, which someone described as having a typo in it—because it does indicate through the TIA that there are significant delays, and she would like some certainty on that. She added that

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she also got conflicting information on the CTB and FHWA studies as to whether they are done before or after approval.

Mr. Capparuccini said that it's important to compare the no-build to the build, which surprisingly VDOT did not do, and he noted that there are a lot of issues without Buc-ee's and the no build. He explained that there's a lot of delay, and they need to compare the no-build versus the build, the differential between the two. He said they are happy to do that and provide more information, but he thinks that was missing.

Mr. Beard commented that this is a modeling issue, and when VDOT says thousands of seconds of delay, they are not looking at additional traffic—they are looking at what's already there, or the no-build. He said the build might take that 500 seconds to 750 seconds, so when they start SIM traffic models, there is variance. He emphasized that they are “arm in arm” with VDOT, and the worst thing they could do is build a store with a traffic problem.

Ms. Siegmund asked if they should be paying more attention to Line 26, which starts with, “The 2026 build condition level of service is acceptable, compared to no build condition with no significant degradation.” She also mentioned the detail regarding movements that experienced increased delays, which outlines the delays and the stacking on Austin Ridge Road.

Mr. Capparuccini stated that they did run a few scenarios, and the OSAR expounds on that somewhat, so the stacking is a good example. He said that's the worst possible maximum queue with inflated numbers, and VDOT early on made them increase their trips by 34%. He said VDOT has already taken Buc-ee's six highest sites that they have actual data for and said they think they will be 34% higher. Mr. Capparuccini stated that his team feels it is inflated and has indicated their disagreement with those numbers. He said the queue, the stacking they are looking at is the maximum that could possibly happen; that's much different than the average, which is probably going to be half of that.

Mr. Lehane noted that VDOT has 27 comments, a significant portion of which are advisory at this stage and are not requirements, and they are deferred to the site plan stage. He pointed out that many of them are closed comments, and the ones to focus on are 25 and 26—which cover the Austin Ridge Drive and Courthouse Road intersection, and the queuing delays on Austin Ridge Drive.

Ms. Barnes acknowledged that she sees many of the comments are closed, but there are still some that seem unresolved.

Mr. Shelton asked what their fire experience is nationally.

Mr. Beard responded that they have never had a fuel fire at a store nationwide since 1982.

Mr. Shelton said the public mentioned criminal activity a few times, and he asked if they could provide more information on “potential criminal activity” and whether they monitor what takes place.

Mr. Beard responded that they have over 100 cameras either outside or inside, and nothing happens that's not on camera.

Ms. Barnes commented that if their crime statistics are that good, they should include them.

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Mr. Lehane said regarding the CTB question, work would be required to be done before the site plan stage, and they could not move forward with constructing entrances without VDOT approvals. He emphasized that VDOT would not provide those approvals until the required work and the required additional studies were complete. He said he has not been a part of past OSARs, but he can speak for the conversations with VDOT to date.

Mr. Zuraf clarified that with CTB approval for the break in the limited access, he had one situation from several years earlier but did not know if that process has changed at all.

Ms. Caudill said if they voted for deferral, this would not go to the Board of Supervisors and would come back to the Commission; but if they approved it or denied it, the Board still has a say-so no matter which way they go.

Mr. Zuraf confirmed this.

There being no further comments, Ms. Barnes closed the public hearing and placed the matter before the Commission, noting that it is in Mr. Goldstein's district.

Mr. Goldstein said they heard a lot tonight on both sides, for and against. He stated that the district he represents and the neighbors he has are directly impacted and they are very close to within 500 feet of the proposed site. Mr. Goldstein said they have heard a lot about property values, health, safety, and traffic. He stated that when he came in this evening, after reviewing the application and the staff recommendations, he was not where he is now. Mr. Goldstein said he hates saying this because it is ongoing, but he would like to propose deferring RC25156318 based on the unanswered questions that they continuously have. He stated that he was not there upon reading the application, but he thinks there are just enough unanswered questions, and it is prudent to get those questions answered before making a final determination.

Mr. Goldstein moved to defer RC25156318. Ms. Siegmund seconded the motion.

Ms. Barnes asked Mr. Goldstein if he would like to expand on his rationale.

Mr. Goldstein said his reasons were the unanswered questions associated with VDOT, the typos or the process, and the questions asked about impacts on businesses. He said he is interested in understanding the property value impacts of those that are adjacent to properties, and while he knows this would not be the only Buc-ee's that is built, what's different is that this is a longstanding neighborhood that has been here for a very long time. He said the one thing they really didn't discuss much was the proffers that were made in 2012 to an adjacent property—and everything the community went for then would be negated; the types of businesses, the hours of operation, etc. are not what was discussed in this committee about 13 years ago.

Ms. Caudill made a substitute motion to approve RC25156318 to send this to the Board of Supervisors and let them have the final say on it. Mr. Oats seconded the motion.

Ms. Caudill commented that she has the same concerns as everyone in the public, but this has been an ongoing process, and it could take months to work out things with VDOT. She emphasized that she felt they needed to get this to the Board, and they can work out the proffers and have the ultimate say.

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Mr. Oats agreed, stating that Buc-ee's can sharpen its pencils and get all relevant items corrected before the item goes to the Board, as they have the ultimate say.

Ms. Siegmund stated that she wouldn't be supporting the substitute motion, as VDOT and staff have both said there is not enough information to say yes, and that seems like a really big leap even if it's just to get it to the Board of Supervisors. She said that sending conflicting information apart from what VDOT and staff have said and what they have heard here tonight, it just doesn't make sense.

Mr. Shelton said kicking the can down the road is not the answer—they either need to vote yay or nay.

Mr. Bratton said he agrees with the recommendation for approval, as Buc-ee's has already said they're going to do everything, including the necessary traffic mitigation. He said that any other business that will go in that location will have that queue on Courthouse and Austin Ridge Road, regardless, and the queue time on Courthouse Road to Austin Ridge Road is going to lengthen. He added that whoever goes in there is not going to do the road improvements like Buc-ee's will.

Ms. Barnes asked Mr. Goldstein if he had any comments on the substitute motion.

Mr. Goldstein said he has been to many of these meetings and has heard the overwhelming public comments that this isn't ready—so kicking it to the Board with it not being ready is not the way he believes this body should be doing business. He said he would not support that and would instead support the deferral, and they need to have a full package before they send it.

Ms. Barnes said while she would really like to vote this one way or another and just move on, she feels they need to think about the details and need 100% understanding of every aspect of this application before they send it on to the Board of Supervisors. She said that most of it is done, and the applicant has done a great job getting a lot of it done, but she is not comfortable quite yet pressing the yes or no button for approval or denial. She stated that she would very reluctantly support the deferral, and if that goes through, they will need to set a date, which is typically a month away.

Ms. Barnes clarified that this is a vote for the substitute motion for approval to send this to the Board of Supervisors and let them have the final say on it.

By the following recorded vote, the Planning Commission voted to approve RC24155568 as presented and send it forward to the Board of Supervisors:

AYES: Mr. Bratton, Ms. Caudill, Mr. Oats, and Mr. Shelton.

NAYS: Mr. Goldstein, Ms. Barnes, and Ms. Siegmund.

Mr. Goldstein moved to defer CUP24155565 for the same reasons as stated for the previous RC. Ms. Siegmund seconded the motion.

Mr. Oats offered a substitute motion to approve CUP24155565 as presented and send it forward to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Caudill seconded the motion.

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By the following recorded vote, the Planning Commission approved CUP24155565 as presented and send it forward to the Board of Supervisors:

AYES: Mr. Bratton, Ms. Caudill, Mr. Oats, and Mr. Shelton.

NAYS: Mr. Goldstein, Ms. Barnes, and Ms. Siegmund.

[The Commission took a brief recess.]

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

NONE

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

6. Project Pipeline Report – Mr. Zuraf stated that his only item is the latest project pipeline report, which is provided to the Commission and identifies the upcoming Planning Commission meetings. He added that there would be more work for them with additional public hearing matters.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Ms. Lucian reminded them that on April 22nd, they will have outside counsel coming to do a work session with the Planning Commission regarding the comprehensive plan and amendments related to transmission lines. She confirmed that they would meet earlier than normal that day, at 5 PM.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

7. Comprehensive Plan 5-Year Update Subcommittee
Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 15, 2026 @ 5:30 PM, ABC Conference Room

Ms. Caudill reported that the committee met last week, and she thanked Commissioner Shelton to step in and letting her join virtually. She said they had reviewed Chapter 3 and had Liz Barber from Economic Development attend; they would skip Chapter 4 and move on to Chapter 5. She said their next meeting would be April 15, 2026 at 5:30 PM in the ABC Conference Room.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Barnes thanked everyone tonight for their professionalism, which was a great example of them voting differently and discussing issues in a professional manner. She also thanked staff, particularly Mr. Zuraf, adding that she is glad to see this project going forward, regardless of how she voted.

OTHER BUSINESS

***Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
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8. New TRC Submissions

- 26157031 – PARK FARM
 - A preliminary subdivision plan for 124 residential lots located west of Hartwood Road, between Hartwood Road and Padock Lane, on TM #s 26-4 and 26-5, zoned A-1, consisting of 747.08 acres, within the Hartwood Election District.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

9. December 10, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes_DRAFT

Mr. Shelton moved to approve the minutes of December 10, 2025. Ms. Caudill seconded the motion, which passed 4-0-3 (three abstentions, those not in attendance at the December 10, 2025 meeting).

10. January 14, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes_DRAFT

Mr. Shelton moved to approve the minutes of December 10, 2025. Ms. Siegmund seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (7-0).

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:12 AM, Chairman Barnes adjourned the March 25, 2026, Stafford County Planning Commission meeting.