

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 18, 2026

The Stafford County Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission held its regular monthly meeting Monday, May 18, 2026, at The Rowser Annex. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Jay Rucker.

Silent Roll Call					
Members			Present	Absent Reported	Absent Not Reported
Jay Rucker	Rock Hill	Voter	X		
Christopher (CW) Reed	Hartwood	Voter	X		
Stephanie DeMarco	Garrisonville	Voter	X		
Jennifer Stone	Widewater	Voter			X
Katherine Schneider	G. Washington	Voter	X		
Charnell Cassett	Falmouth	Voter	X		
Susan Randall	School Board	Non-Voter	X		
Patrick Workman	Director, Parks and Rec	Non-Voter	X		
Diane Taylor	Secretary	Non-Voter		X	
Guest					
Gregory Gavan Joe Brito Austin Hochstetler					

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- The minutes from Monday, April 20, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Gregory Gavan – Curtis Park Pool House Exterior

Issue: Mr. Gavan (242 Stony Hill Road) raised concerns regarding the deconstruction of the original 1976 vintage earth-tone wood siding at the Curtis Park Pool House, marking its 50th anniversary.

Details: The dark wood panels were replaced by painted cinder blocks by the maintenance crew due to reported rotting. Mr. Gavan argued the new look is visually incoherent and resembles "base housing," requesting that the original architectural vision be restored.

Commission Response: Commission members reviewed photos. Stephanie DeMarco noted that the painted exterior looked fine but acknowledged the lack of historical context without "before" pictures.

- Joe Brito – "America's Most Historic Trail" & Celebrate Virginia Parkway

Issue: Mr. Brito presented an unfinished proposal regarding a 100-site historic trail on the 1,170-acre former Recreational Business Campus (RBC) rezoned by the Silver Company in 1999.

Details: The property contains 23 documented historic sites (Native American fish traps/weirs, Civil War winter encampments, and Chancellorsville balloon launch spots. The proposed trail would span from Cannon Ridge Golf Course to Belmont and Ferry Farm. Mr. Brito requested public trail access, preservation of the 192-acre golf course as open space and utilizing the land for the Stafford County Fairgrounds.

Petition Status: Mr. Brito noted he has roughly 1,500 physical signatures and 5,500 to 6,000 online petition signatures backing the park initiative.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- The commission reviewed proposed changes to the bylaws;
 - Quorum Modification: The proposal to lower the quorum requirement from four (4) members to three (3) members was accepted. This was prompted by past difficulties securing a 4-person quorum.
 - Language Harmonization: Approved shifting terminology from "Chairman" to gender-neutral "Chair".
 - Article 3 (Section 3.1) - Planning Commission Seat; County administration requested the removal of the non-voting Planning Commission seat to free up schedule space. Motion: C.W. Reed moved to approve all updated bylaw changes except for Article 3.1, keeping the Planning Commission seat intact as written. The motion was seconded. Motion passed with 4 votes and 1 abstention.

NEW BUSINESS

- Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey;
 - Austin Hochstetler presented the statistically valid needs assessment findings managed by the ETC Institute. The 125-page report compiled local feedback regarding household usage and priorities.
 - Usage Data: Government Island, Curtis Memorial Park, and Smith Lake are the tier-one facilities most used by residents. Overall, 82% of respondents rated park quality as good or excellent.
 - Program Feedback: 40% of households participated in public recreation programs, yielding an 88% satisfaction rating driven by affordability and convenient timing.
 - Priority Investment Ratings (PIR): Tier 1 Demands: Walking/biking trails, restrooms, splash pads, indoor swimming pools, and community parks surfaced as the highest community-wide needs.
 - Niche/Tier 3 Interests: Equestrian activities, disc golf, baseball, and softball scored as niche priorities requiring targeted user coordination rather than broad investment.
 - Funding & CIP: When given a theoretical \$100 budget, residents prioritized repairing existing park infrastructure (approx. 25%) over purchasing new open lands or expanding indoor sports plexes.
 - Next Steps: Patrick Workman noted that the survey data will act as a foundational guide for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process starting in August/September. Focus groups and public outreach events (e.g., at Smith Lake or Embrey Mill) will be scheduled for June to capture additional target data.

LIAISON REPORTS

- School Board Liaison - Susan Randall – 2 schools will be ready to occupy in June; the 3rd is ongoing. Huge redistricting for Hartwood High happening.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Patrick Workman;

1. Facility and Turf Field Updates

Sod and Turf Conversions: Work at Chichester started two weeks ago for the World Series sod conversion and is progressing well. The turf conversions at Embrey Mill fields 5 and 6 are a few weeks behind schedule, with the final two grass fields in the main complex set to open in early September. The remaining non-turf fields at Embrey Mill are smaller front fields used for younger age groups.

Pool Infrastructure: Public pools are operating smoothly, with motors and pumps running without issue so far.

2. Park Shelter Damage & Gauntlet Expansion

Curtis Park Shelters: Recent high winds caused tree damage to shelter 1 through 5. Staff are evaluating whether to rebuild all five shelters or replace them with two or three larger, distinct pavilions. Reconstruction will be timed carefully to avoid conflicts with upcoming master planning.

3. Curtis Park Pool House Exterior & Proposed Mural Project

Siding Replacement: In response to public comment from Mr. Gavan, Patrick Workman confirmed that the original wood siding was rotting and falling apart. Tearing it down and painting the underlying cinder block was the most cost-effective solution to open the pool within the current fiscal year budget.

Mural Proposal: Rather than reinstalling 1970s-style wood paneling, the Commission supported a proposal to paint a community mural on the building. The project would celebrate the pool's 50th anniversary and the American Semi quinentennial (America's 250).

School & Foundation Collaboration: Because the school year ends in two weeks, the project will target a Fall timeline. Patrick Workman plans to pitch the concept to the Superintendent of Schools (Dr. Smith) during an upcoming Wednesday meeting to involve local art students. Commission members also suggested partnering with the Stafford Education Foundation for a potential innovative teaching grant, noting that similar successful student and teacher-led mural projects have been executed locally.

COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

- CW Reed;

1. Site Visit and Program Highlights

Curtis Park Siding Follow-up: Commissioner C.W. Reed planned to meet with citizen Gregory Gavan at Curtis Park later in the week to review the pool house exterior and discuss the board's conversation.

Gymnastics Center Success: The Stafford Gymnastics Center remains highly active. Mr. Reed congratulated his daughter's team, noting that 100% of the Excel Gold competition gymnasts qualified for regional finals. The team was scheduled to compete in New Jersey from Thursday through Sunday.

2. Facility Naming Rights and Sponsorship Legality

Sponsorship Proposal: Mr. Reed introduced a suggestion to explore public/private partnerships or naming rights to fund local amenities. He cited an estimated cost of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 to reopen the closed tennis courts at Curtis Park, suggesting corporate naming (e.g., "Amazon Prime Tennis Courts") or family dedications as a funding mechanism.

Legal Limitations in Virginia: Chairman Jay Rucker clarified that under Virginia state law (including Dillon Rule interpretations), Stafford Parks and Recreation cannot sell facility naming rights or post corporate signage because it operates as a county department rather than an independent Parks and Recreation Authority.

Donations vs. Naming Rights: The county maintains a foundation account that can legally accept financial or physical donations (e.g., corporate-built tennis courts), but the county cannot display commercial brand signage on the asset.

Staff member Patrick Workman noted that the newly completed Parks Needs Assessment Survey will help the department legally justify and secure development proffers for future infrastructure.

Action Item: Patrick Workman committed to double-checking the exact legal guidelines regarding naming rights with county administration. Katherine Schneider suggested that if the ban remains absolute, the county could potentially lobby state legislators in Richmond to update the law.

- Charnell Cassett; Revenue Generation & Carbon Credits

Proposal: Commissioner Charnell Cassett suggested exploring alternative revenue streams for the county by utilizing its abundant undeveloped parkland.

Carbon Credits: Specifically, she proposed investigating whether Stafford County could accumulate and sell carbon credits by preserving and managing its unutilized forested land.

- Jay Rucker; Historical Grants & Federal Funding Proposal

Proposal: Considering the upcoming American semi quincentennial (America's 250), Commissioner Charnell Cassett suggested pursuing federal funding and historical grants. Given the heavy concentration of Revolutionary and Civil War history on local sites, she recommended exploring partnerships with organizations like the Smithsonian Institution.

Property Ownership Challenges: Chairman Jay Rucker clarified that Stafford County does not actually own the historic land referenced earlier by citizen Joe Brito. The acreage is split between the City of Fredericksburg and the Silver Company.

Next Steps: Chairman Rucker noted that despite the ownership hurdle, pursuing federal grant possibilities or engaging the Smithsonian for these historical sites remains an idea worth exploring.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:48pm.