



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Authority (EDA), of Stafford County, Virginia, was held at the George L. Gordon Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Rd, Stafford, VA 22554 on Friday, November 21, 2025.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Rowley, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM, emphasizing the necessity for all members and staff to declare any conflicts of interest with the agenda items. No conflicts were stated.

A quorum was present and accounted for.

Members

Jack Rowley, Chair
Price Jett, Treasurer [arrived at 9:21 AM]
Jeff Roosa, Secretary [virtual]
Janette Holland
Frank Porcelli
Daryl Weedeman

ED/EDA Staff Present

Donna Krauss
Liz Barber
Linzy Browne
Savannah Wimbush
Charles Payne, Esq.

Also Present

Ross Berlin (Fourth Economy)
Anne Jensen (Fourth Economy)
Kristin Maxon
Philip Cox
John Barker



2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Rowley asked if anyone had any changes to October 17, 2025, minutes; no changes were presented. Mr. Roosa made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Weedeman seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 5-0**

3. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Mr. Rowley discussed the BACC Holiday Party, Mr. Weedeman made a motion to allocate up to \$2,000 for refreshments for the BACC holiday party. Mr. Porcelli seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 5-0**
- b. Mr. Jett presented the FY27 Budget Request Draft which highlights the EDA's critical role in enabling incentive agreements and driving over \$6 billion in past infrastructure investments from major economic development projects. Mr. Jett noted that administrative costs are projected at approximately \$131,000, consistent with FY25 actuals, estimated revenues for FY27 are around \$160,000, resulting in a FY27 projected deficit of about \$21,000. FY25 actuals showed a positive delta of \$25,800.

Mr. Jett noted that expenditures are limited to financial management, auditing, legal services, and program administration. He emphasized there are no salaries or benefits, as all board members serve on a volunteer basis, contributing over 100 years of combined experience.

Mr. Jett explained that the EDA has relied on reserves, bond issuance, and disposal of county land to sustain operations due to the lack of county funding in recent years. He reiterates that without county support, future expenses will continue to draw from reserves, underscoring the need for sustainable funding. Ms. Holland made a motion to approve the FY27 Budget Request as written. Mr. Weedeman seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 6-0**

- c. Mr. Rowley moved on to his and Mr. Wilson's visit with the Stafford County Public Schools Superintendent during which the EDA was invited to attend a Stafford County Public School Career Pathways Tour on February 5th from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Mr. Rowley asked everyone to respond to the invitation by December 1st. Ms. Barber agreed to send out an invitation to the EDA members.
- d. Ms. Barber introduced Mr. Berlin and Ms. Jensen of Fourth Economy, a national economic strategy firm, hired in May 2025 to update Stafford County's Economic



Development Strategic Plan. Mr. Berlin provided an overview of the process to update the plan including stakeholder engagement with EDA members, regional and state partners, supervisors, and extensive background research and economic analysis.

Mr. Berlin explained the updated strategy which addressed business attraction and retention, support for entrepreneurs and small businesses, workforce development, real estate and land use, infrastructure, and improvements to the business climate. He clarified that the plan emphasizes programs, policies, and activities that enhance economic well-being, create jobs, and grow businesses to strengthen the county's commercial tax base while maintaining quality of life.

Mr. Berlin highlights the plan's six key findings. He said Stafford County was noted to have a strong socioeconomic profile, with high median income, educational attainment, and job prospects contributing to its livability. He identified Stafford County's missed opportunities as being low industry specialization, limited knowledge economy jobs, which force many residents to commute elsewhere, and retail leakage. Mr. Berlin explained that because of Stafford's less efficient permitting and processes, the county faces a competitive disadvantage as neighboring counties achieve stronger economic development outcomes. He also highlights that anticipated budget constraints over the next five years underscore the urgency of increasing commercial revenue.

Mr. Berlin discussed four target industries identified as priorities for Stafford County: defense and cyber security, information technology, high-end retail and restaurants, and warehousing and distribution. He explained that these industries build on existing strengths while introducing new opportunities with an emphasis on knowledge economy jobs, and they align closely with state and regional priorities to position the county competitively for future projects. Mr. Berlin assures that the plan includes a significant revamping of incentives and financial programs to attract these industries, while also ensuring continued support for local entrepreneurs and small businesses. Mr. Berlin highlights workforce development as a critical component, recommending that Liz Barber's team and the EDA convene workforce development discussions more frequently, ideally on a quarterly basis, to strengthen regional and local collaboration.

Mr. Roosa asked Mr. Berlin to clarify about pursuing defense and cyber security business. Mr. Berlin explained that rather than pursuing government agencies, Stafford could do well pursuing federal contracting businesses. Mr. Rowley asked about Defense Production Zones. Mr. Berlin and Ms. Barber explained that a



Defense Production Zone is a mechanism outlined in state code that allows counties to designate geographic districts to better leverage state incentives for defense-related industries. They emphasized that the expectation is not that the EDA itself would create these zones, but rather that it would support their development by educating and advocating with the Board of Supervisors when such items are considered.

Mr. Berlin went on to discuss that most current incentives in Stafford County are smaller and less capital intensive, but he encouraged the EDA to explore the concept of larger bonding power to support major projects requiring large capital investment. He emphasized that such projects could generate hundreds or thousands of high-wage jobs and have been successfully implemented in other counties across Virginia and the nation, though they require strong collaboration and leadership. Mr. Berlin then outlined the potential for an EDA fee structure to generate supplemental revenue, allowing the EDA to capture modest funds from companies benefiting from incentive deals and offsetting costs related to accounting, legal services, and program oversight.

Mr. Rowley asked what role the EDA should have in facilitating incentive programs. Ms. Barber emphasized the need for the EDA to support the creation of a structured incentive program in collaboration with County Administration and the Board, ensuring businesses have clarity on available packages. Mr. Jett questioned whether the EDA should play a more proactive role, moving earlier into the process rather than being informed at the end, with consideration given to developing a process flow that clearly outlines EDA involvement alongside supervisors and businesses. Ms. Barber explained that there is a balance to be aware of, but there is certainly room for improvement in the process. She mentions discussing the topic during closed session.

Mr. Porcelli asked about the potential expansion of HUBZones for small businesses engaged in federal contracting such as the one located in southern Stafford. Mr. Berlin explained HUBZone designations are federally controlled, based on census tract data, and not subject to county or state influence. Mr. Porcelli asked if there is any engagement required with the SBA to look at the county and determine if an area qualifies for HUBZone designation. Mr. Berlin explained that reaching out to the SBA to get a better idea of their designation process would not hurt. Ms. Barber said she would reach out to Marcia Posey at the SBA office to get more information.

Mr. Berlin moved on to discuss Target Development Areas (TDAs) identified in the county's comprehensive plan. He and Ms. Barber explained that currently, TDAs



carry no direct incentives beyond alignment with rezoning reviews. Mr. Berlin recommended considering attaching modest incentives to make development in these areas more competitive. He highlights advancing Destination Stafford as central entertainment and retail hub to strengthen commercial growth. Mr. Berlin also discussed the development of the county's waterways to increase commercial growth as well.

Mr. Berlin noted that Prince William County is currently pursuing a waterfront development plan, underscoring regional momentum in the area. Mr. Rowley raised questions about potential locations for waterfront development, acknowledging challenges given existing protected lands and the need for further evaluation. Mr. Berlin emphasized that while most waterfront property in Stafford County is already developed, environmentally sensitive, or otherwise unsuitable for commercial use, a small portion may hold potential for future commercial opportunities.

In terms of real estate development, Mr. Berlin explained that the EDA's role would be supporting infrastructure connectivity in Target Development Areas, including subsidizing or waiving fees for water and sewer access, and offering small beautification grants to enhance landscaping, facades, and aesthetics of new projects. He also noted additional measures that Stafford could consider adopting, such as tax abatements, fast-track permitting, and hands-on management on the county side.

Mr. Berlin discussed Community Development Authorities, which focus on large-scale redevelopment projects. He noted that Stafford may not need such an authority but lessons from other Virginia Community Development Authorities could inform future EDA activities related to land use, site control, and acquisition.

Mr. Rowley discussed past collaboration between the Board and EDA on rehabilitating abandoned properties. Mr. Berlin suggested a more proactive approach—akin to land banking—to identify and secure key parcels for strategic development over the next five years.

Mr. Jett emphasized the importance of building stronger collaboration between the EDA, Liz Barber's team, and the Board of Supervisors in areas such as land banking and waiving infrastructure fees, noting that there would have to be a shift in mindset. Ms. Barber acknowledged that many of the plan's goals are long-term strategies requiring alignment and commitment of resources.



Mr. Berlin moved on to recommend convening a “Doing Business in Stafford” Task Force composed of 10–15 representatives from Zoning, County Administration, the economic development department, the EDA, and external partners to meet regularly and identify process and mindset improvements. He also recommended the department host Stafford’s first Economic Development Summit in 2026, with the goal of making it an annual event to highlight performance, projects, and opportunities. He noted the EDA’s role will be to participate in both the task force and the summit, ensuring alignment with Ms. Barber’s team and broader county economic development efforts.

Ms. Krauss addressed the challenges businesses face with permitting, development, and construction processes, noting community feedback that Stafford is perceived as difficult to navigate. With her oversight of Development Services, Planning and Zoning, and Economic Development, she emphasized the need for a more holistic and interconnected approach across departments. Ms. Krauss highlighted efforts to remind staff that their ultimate goal is to help businesses reach the finish line quickly, as this generates revenue and strengthens the county’s economic base. She shared that a short-, mid-, and long-term improvement plan has been presented to the Board, focusing on immediate low-hanging fruit while also tackling broader systemic issues. She underscored the importance of the “Doing Business in Stafford” Task Force to align departments, identify process improvements, and address challenges collectively.

Mr. Rowley asked Mr. Berlin and Ms. Barber when the Economic Development Summit should be held. Ms. Barber suggested hosting a Business Appreciation Reception during its normal May date, and then the Economic Development Summit in another six months (potentially in November).

Mr. Berlin concluded his presentation by emphasizing that forward-thinking investments, policy changes, and mindset shifts are essential for Stafford to achieve stronger industry clusters, more jobs, new amenities, and long-term growth of the commercial tax base. Mr. Roosa asked if the plan included common key performance indicators. Mr. Berlin confirmed that the final implementation plan includes both internal and external key performance indicators to measure success. Ms. Barber agreed to send the final plan with the EDA in early December once it has been finalized.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. Ms. Kristen Maxon provided public comment regarding agenda item four and raised concerns about compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. She stated that



the closed session announcement did not sufficiently describe the subject matter and purpose of the meeting to ensure transparency. Ms. Maxon referenced agenda materials noting that Stafford County cannot execute or manage incentive agreements without the EDA, which has enabled \$6 billion investment, and pointed out inconsistencies in the flow chart presentation of Board and EDA roles. She also noted technical difficulties affecting the EDA website, including delays in accessing minutes and agendas, and suggested turning off video streaming to improve performance.

Ms. Maxon further commented that the presentation's characterization of Stafford lacking specialized personnel was inaccurate, emphasizing that the county has a strong base of well-educated retired homeowners and younger, educated families investing locally. She reflected on historical employment concepts and noted that long-term bonds, particularly from 2008, have burdened the county, with new bonds now being issued to support infrastructure such as reuse water systems for data centers.

- b. Mr. Philip Cox commended Ms. Barber for emphasizing the importance of telling the EDA's story and noted that many residents are unaware of the Authority's work. He highlighted that community perception often focuses on the prevalence of used car lots, self-storage facilities, gas stations, and oil change businesses, leading to questions about why Stafford cannot attract more diverse development. Mr. Cox recalled that past projects, such as GEICO's arrival, were widely publicized and celebrated, but more recent efforts have not been as visible to the public.

Mr. Cox encouraged the EDA to expand its outreach beyond online platforms to better inform and educate residents about ongoing economic development activities. He also highlighted concerns about derelict areas along Route 17, Route 1, and other corridors, noting that these visible conditions reinforce negative perceptions of economic progress.

- c. Mr. John Barker provided public comment expressing appreciation for the strategic plan discussion and noting his interest in learning more about the EDA's work. He echoed concerns from local business owners and residents that permitting policies are overly complicated and emphasized the need to expand the county's tax base. He mentioned community interest in attracting larger retailers, such as Costco, and urged that changes be implemented more quickly to support growth.

Mr. Barker shared his personal connection to the area, noting his long-term residency, family ties to the school system, and desire to see Stafford grow



responsibly without excessive sprawl. He stressed the importance of creating opportunities for future generations and building a stronger identity for the county beyond being seen as a pass-through to Washington, D.C. He concluded by thanking the EDA for its efforts and recognizing the significant work involved in economic development.

5. CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Holland made a motion to enter closed session, Mr. Jett seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 5-0**

Ms. Logan, representing EDA legal counsel, read into executive session, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A), subsection 5, as amended. All members who were present at the meeting were present at the executive session. As the Board came out of executive session, each member certified that no votes were taken while in executive session. Ms. Holland made a motion to come out of closed session; Mr. Jett seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 5-0**

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Porcelli made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Holland seconded. Motion passed unanimously. **APPROVED 5-0**

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Roosa".

Jeff Roosa,

EDA Secretary