

Staff Briefing, Monday, October 20, 2025, 1:30 PM Government Center Main Board
Room

ROLE CALL:

Gerald Garber
Butch Wells
Pam Carter
Michael Shull
Carolyn Bragg
Scott Seaton
Timothy K. Fitzgerald County Administrator
Jennifer M. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator
Doug Wolfe, Director of Community Development
Julia Hensley, Planner II
Misty Cook, Director of Finance
Nicole Price, County Attorney

Jeffrey Slaven

ABSENT:

VIRGINIA: At an adjourned meeting of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors held on Monday, October 20, 2025, at 1:30 PM at the Government Center Main Board Room, and in the 250th year of the Commonwealth...

1. VDOT

* * * * *

Don Komara, Residency Administrator, discussed the VDOT status report of October 20, 2025.

The Board accepted the report as information.

* * * * *

2. Fire-Rescue

Greg Schacht, Fire Chief, discussed the Fire and Rescue year-end report.

The Board accepted the monthly report as information.

* * * * *

3. Legislative Services

Jennifer Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator, discussed awarding the Legislative Services contract to Eldon James & Associates.

The Board authorized placing on the Wednesday, October 22, 2025 regular meeting agenda.

* * * * *

4. Legislative Package

Ms. Whetzel discussed the draft Legislative Package. She pointed out two items to possibly be added to the draft package. The first one is that prior to the proposed closure of any state facility that the state would notify the locality and then discuss the removal, demolition rehab, or adaptive reuse of the buildings. The state would provide technical and financial resources to assist localities in these impacts if there was a closure. The second one is related to car tax. Personal property taxes on motor vehicles currently serve as an important source of revenue for county governments.

There have been conversations regarding what those revenues are used for. Any proposals that change this revenue source must provide for replacement revenue based on accurate comprehensive data and must be developed in consultation with local governments. This is a sizable amount of money for Augusta County. If the Board agrees, language would be included in the package to protect the revenue source. The final package will be brought to the Board for consideration in November before it is sent to the General Assembly.

Dr. Seaton asked about increasing the qualifying vehicle value from \$1,000.00 to \$1,500.00.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that several years ago the County received the provision that would allow a fire tax. During that time Augusta County was the only county in Virginia that was not allowed to have a fire tax. Through legislature, permission was given and the State code was changed. We now have the ability to do a fire tax, but we do not have the ability to do an EMS related tax. If the County moved forward with the fire tax, all of the funding would have to go directly to fire related services, not EMS services because EMS is in a separate code section. Mr. Fitzgerald questioned if the Board would want to entertain a bill that would remove the provision stating that Augusta County cannot use an EMS tax and add the language that would allow an EMS tax along with the fire tax. This does not guarantee that a tax would be enacted. It is simply giving the option to do so in the future.

The Board agreed to pass on changing the language at this time.

* * * * *

5. **Tax Refunds**

Nicole Price, County Attorney, discussed the following tax refund requests:

a. Bridge Christian Church in the amount of \$71,483.74.

b. Lawrence Equipment in the amount of \$19,296.84.

The Board authorized placing on the Wednesday, October 22, 2025 regular meeting agenda.

* * * * *

6. **Planning Commission/Public Hearing**

Julia Hensley, Planner II, and Kaitlyn Savage, Planner I, discussed the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

The Board authorized placing on the Wednesday, October 22, 2025 regular meeting agenda.

7. **Matters to Be Presented by Staff**

* * * * *

1. Ms. Price introduced Brad Young as the newly hired Assistant County Attorney.

2. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he received a phone call regarding the use of the County seal or a county logo in their campaign material. The question was then raised on whether there should be a policy in place on how the County seal is used. As a general rule, we do not necessarily want businesses or citizens utilizing the County seal and representing the County if they are not Board members or part of the County. According to Ms. Price, there are legal issues in regards to the seal that we cannot do. If the Board wishes to have a policy in place regarding the use of the County seal, he and Ms. Price will look into it.

The Board agreed that this was not something they wanted to pursue.

3. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that at the last Board meeting Mr. Slaven brought up the subject of moving Lady Justice to the new courthouse facility. In reviewing the City of Staunton's ordinances, it appears the County may be required to go through the historic committee. It will also be required to do a change order with Moseley Architects in order to get them to put together a plan on how the statue would be removed and what can be put in to replace it. The Historic Committee will have to approve what goes back in its place.

The Board directed Staff to move forward with the process and bring the information back at a future meeting.

4. Mr. Fitzgerald discussed the upcoming meeting that VDOT will hold at Blue Ridge Community College on October 29th and reviewed the proposed projects for Augusta County.

* * * * *

8. **Matters to Be Presented by the Board**

Ms. Bragg questioned the name change for the new animal shelter and what the cost was associated with that change.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that it revolves around the fact that it was named the Shenandoah Valley Animal Services Center and citizens took that to mean it was for anyone in the Shenandoah Valley. One of the inspectors for the animal shelter pointed out that from an inspector stand point, an Animal Services Center is a more robust operation where there are veterinarians on staff and Animal Control works out of the center. With the animal shelter being moved, a new Memorandum of Understanding will be required between the County and the two Cities. This is a good time to move forward with changing the name and to clarify who the shelter is for. The sign at the school had to be changed and when the new sign was ordered, it was ordered with the new name. There were no costs associated with the change.

Ms. Carter questioned what will happen with the old Animal Shelter.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the owners have decided to sell the shelter. The proceeds from the sale will go into a capital account for the shelter to help with future capital expenses.

Dr. Seaton asked for an update on Celebrity Lane and Jefferson Highway.

Ms. Price stated that the Circuit Court Judge ordered that the owner was in contempt of the court's order and ordered that the County could enter onto the property after 5:00 p.m. on October 26, 2025.

* * * * *

9. **Closed Session**

On motion of Ms. Bragg, seconded by Mr. Shull, the Board went into closed session pursuant to:

(1) the economic development exemption under Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(5)

[discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of its interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the county]:

- a. Proposed Office space, flex space, storage facilities, manufacturing facilities, utility and mixed use development.

(2) the real property exemption under Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(3)

[discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body]:

- a) Zapton Building in downtown Staunton – 111 S. Augusta Street

- 2. Potential acquisition of a parcel of real estate in Augusta County for a public purpose.

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Garber, Wells, Shull, Bragg, Seaton and Carter
 Nays: None
 Absent: Slaven

Motion carried.

* * * * *

On motion of Mr. Shull, seconded by Ms. Bragg, the Board came out of Closed Session.

-

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Garber, Wells, Shull, Bragg, Seaton and Carter
 Nays: None
 Absent: Slaven

Motion carried.

* * * * *

The Chairman advised that each member is required to certify that to the best of their knowledge during the closed session only the following was discussed:

1. Public business matters lawfully exempted from statutory open meeting requirements, and
2. Only such public business matters identified in the motion to convene the executive session.

The Chairman asked if there is any Board member who cannot so certify. Hearing none, the Chairman called upon the County Administrator/ Clerk of the Board to call the roll noting members of the Board who approve the certification shall answer AYE and those who cannot shall answer NAY.

-
Roll Call Vote was as follows:

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Garber, Wells, Bragg, Shull, Seaton and Carter
 Nays: None
 Absent: Slaven

Motion carried.

-

-
The Chairman authorized the County Administrator/Clerk of the Board to record this certification in the minutes.

-

* * * * *

Minutes approved by the Board on Monday, November 24, 2025. The signed minutes can be reviewed in the County Administrator's Office.

Chairman

County Administrator