



City of Staunton Comprehensive Plan

Citizen Steering Committee

Staunton City Hall
Caucus Room – 1st Floor

Agenda

Wednesday, June 24, 2026
5:30 - 7:30 pm

Meeting Objectives

- Review of Draft Plan & Public Comments
- What's next?

Agenda Items

1. **Review of Minutes:** The committee will review minutes from the March 18th, 2026 meeting.
2. **Updates:** The group will discuss updates since the last meeting, including the work session with City Council from June 3rd.
3. **Draft Plan & Public Comment Review:** The group will go over public comments received on the draft plan and how to best incorporate them.
4. **Next Steps:** The group will discuss the next steps in the process, including scheduling public hearings with Planning Commission and City Council.

Comprehensive Plan Process Goals

- Develop a **concise, user-friendly**, comprehensive plan with detailed steps to achieve the City's and community's vision.
 - Ensure a **community-driven** process that includes a variety of outreach and engagement opportunities, helping to build overall support for the final vision and actions.
 - Create a **practical, actionable, and aspirational vision** inclusive to all residents and stakeholders.
 - Keep **detailed records and analysis** throughout the process supporting the proposed steps.
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MINUTES

STAUNTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CITIZEN STEERING COMMITTEEMarch 18th, 2026

5:30 p.m.

Staunton City Hall, Caucus Room

PRESENT: Daniel Hansen
Scott Kesecker
Adam Campbell
Kim Woodwell
Steve Tomaso
Ryan Brosmer
Jessica Robinson
Judith Wiegand
Anna Levitt

ABSENT: Sharon Angle

ALSO PRESENT: Rodney Rhodes, Director of Community Development; Meggie Taylor, Long Range & Comprehensive Planner; Will Cockrell, consultant with EPR PC; Jeff Overholtzer, City Council

REVIEW OF MINUTES

The group reviewed minutes of the January 14th, 2026 meeting.

UPDATES

The group discussed main takeaways from the Deaf Community Stakeholders Meeting that was held on March 4th at the Staunton Library. There were approximately 25 attendees representing the deaf community, several with connections to the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind. The meeting was very informative, and the committee agreed that it warranted its own insert in the Comprehensive Plan.

DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

A first draft of the plan was shared with the committee prior to the meeting. Mr. Cockrell went over comments received and the committee discussed additional revisions, including the addition of a SWOT chart to each chapter, and adding more captions to the land use profile images.

NEXT STEPS

Ms. Taylor informed the committee that staff would work with the consultant to incorporate additional revisions, and then send back to the committee for review. The draft would then be open for public comment online in May, and a work session with City Council would be scheduled for the end of May or early June. Staff will also be sending to VDOT for review once the committee's revisions have been incorporated.

Page Number	Number of Individuals	Related Comments	How we could address:
General / document-wide		5 Commenter said the draft was user-unfriendly because the electronic version was split across multiple files, search was limited, the printed binder lacked a single friendly table of contents, acronym list, readable maps, and clear page/section labels, and FLUM/ELUM were not cross-referenced. Commenter said the comment period was short given the length of the draft and online review/printing complexity, and that ending on a major holiday weekend hurt participation. Commenter said the plan leans too heavily on visuals and minimized text, weakening analysis. Online commenters criticized AI-style posts, overuse of 'thriving' and other buzzwords, and credibility loss from generic language.	Make the draft easier to review: provide one consolidated searchable PDF, add a user-friendly table of contents, add acronym/abbreviation lists, label each page by section, improve map size/clarity, cross-reference FLUM and ELUM, and avoid relying on multiple hard-to-search files.
General / document-wide		3 Commenter said the draft is more aspirational than the 2019 plan but still falls short of being comprehensive or a plan. They said detail is uneven, ranging from specific cost items to broad statements that give little guidance, and specifically said the housing section acknowledges housing as foundational but has too few and weak tactics. Online commenters also flagged overuse of 'thriving' and generic buzzwords.	Strengthen the plan's prescriptive content. Add more concrete implementation detail, clearer priorities, and stronger analysis where current text is aspirational, generic, or uneven.
27		2 Commenter said streetlighting should be addressed in transportation and public lighting in infrastructure, and suggested a goal such as minimizing light pollution from streetlights and public lighting using responsible outdoor lighting principles and IES standards. Online commenter asked p. 27 to add a public infrastructure goal for dark-sky-compliant municipal lighting and aging streetlight replacement.	Add a transportation/infrastructure goal or strategy for minimizing light pollution from streetlights and public lighting, using responsible outdoor lighting principles and Illuminating Engineering Society standards.
32		1 Commenter said p. 32 contains nothing about public restrooms or signage for them, which he found inconsistent with improving Staunton as a walkable and welcoming city.	Add public restroom availability and wayfinding/signage for restrooms to the walkable and welcoming city discussion.
32, 149		1 Commenter asked whether the Greenways Plan and Bike/Ped Plan could be cited on p. 32 and suggested adding 'and planned trails or greenways' to the first land-use bullet.	Cross-reference the Greenways Plan and Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan when discussing connectivity, and add planned trails or greenways to the land-use connectivity bullet.
33, 135		8 Commenter suggested adding an infrastructure bullet on p. 33 for the City to adopt the Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting for its public property and projects. Commenter asked that the p. 134 dark-sky tactic state that standards should be consistent with Dark Sky International's five principles. Online comments asked for light-pollution reduction on pp. 27, 30, 33, 36, 41, 47, 49, 51, 53, 65-66, 129, and 134; Dominion streetlight replacement standards; useful, targeted, low-level, warm-temperature lighting; and earlier implementation than 2030-2035.	Add an infrastructure/environment bullet saying the City should adopt the Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting for public property, public projects, and streetlighting.
34, 43, 69, 99		3 Commenter noted nothing on p. 34 about expanding or seeking shared-service contracts for funding issues. Commenter said chapter 9 infrastructure should be explicitly linked with chapters 5 and 6 because capital funding threatens water and critical infrastructure, and he cited \$300 million in unfunded needs. The critique says the plan says little about water-main age, water loss, and the \$40 million to \$50 million needed for repairs.	Create explicit cross-links between land use, economic development, and public infrastructure funding. Connect LU.C-3, Staunton Crossing, business attraction, tax-base growth, and infrastructure capital needs.
36, 43		1 Commenter notes that p. 36 has a strong vision statement and references open space such as Bells Lane, then ask on p. 43 whether the plan should include a specific strategy for land conservation of open space and protection of natural resources.	Add a specific land-use strategy for conserving open space and protecting natural resources, not just general references to preservation.

36-43	1	The critique says the land-use section buries zoning in the tactics table, uses generic borrowed-looking drawings, does not explain concepts like building-to-street ratios, and would be more useful if it mapped actual Staunton blocks and showed how current land use could change.	Replace or supplement generic land-use graphics with Staunton-specific block examples, labeled streets/buildings, and a clearer explanation of the zoning ordinance, its limits, and whether broader zoning reform is needed.
43, 69, 72, 94	2	Commenter said LU.C-3 on p. 43 should explicitly mention Staunton Crossing as the city's biggest opportunity to grow and diversify the tax base; add a p. 69 business opportunity for target industries; add tax revenue from new businesses as a metric; and add a p. 72 tactic to execute the updated Staunton Crossing Master Plan. The critique says Staunton Crossing is the plan's biggest economic oversight and should evaluate possible alternatives, not only data-center-oriented development.	Add Staunton Crossing explicitly as a commercial/job center and business-park opportunity. Add target sectors, tax-revenue metrics, and tactics to execute the updated Staunton Crossing Master Plan.
44, 63-64	1	Commenter says the Heritage Farmland category is good, ask whether Cobble Hill Farm near Merrifield is included and note it is already protected by an approximately 200-acre historic easement. They also say p. 63 and p. 64 reference Heritage Farmland but need stronger goals and strategies, and recommend adding 'conservation' before easement to distinguish it from other easement types.	Verify that Cobble Hill Farm is shown as Heritage Farmland and note its existing historic easement. Use 'conservation easement' where that is the intended tool.
44, 63-64	3	Commenter questions reserving nearly a quarter of city land for Heritage Farmland/ag-forestal use and says the plan should consider alternative uses. Says the statement that 86 percent of Staunton land is already developed is misleading unless it says developed under current zoning constraints. The Appendix B online commenter asked how the plan can say the city is 86 percent developed while recommending 28 percent conservation, parks, and farmland. The Part 2 online commenter questioned whether future Heritage Farmland goals will be honored given the utility-scale solar permit near historic farmland and the current Agricultural-Forest district commitment through 2030.	Explain and test the Heritage Farmland/ag-forestal land-use assumption. Clarify whether the 86 percent developed statement means developed under current zoning constraints, and discuss alternative land-use scenarios.
67, 136	1	Commenter says p. 67 states 'Preserve natural areas to maintain rural feel' but the phrase is open-ended. They ask that natural areas be defined and that the plan be more specific about preserving land for natural resources.	Define 'natural areas' and 'natural habitats' in connected-plan tactics. Specify whether terms include farmland, open space, viewsheds, watersheds, riparian areas, and other resource categories.
69, 71-72	4	Commenter says the plan reads as though Staunton's economic vitality is mainly downtown tourism and arts, and does not say whether the city wants manufacturing or what business development it wants along Greenville Avenue or Route 250. Commenter proposed target industries for Staunton Crossing, including logistics, light manufacturing, professional services, data centers, and IT. The Part 1 online commenter asked the city to bring about more minority-owned businesses, especially Black-owned brick-and-mortar businesses. The Part 2 online commenter said pp. 69-70 should account for the gap between what people say they want and what their actual spending behavior shows.	Broaden economic development beyond downtown tourism and arts. Identify desired business development for manufacturing, Greenville Avenue, Route 250, Staunton Crossing, and other non-tourism sectors.
71	1	Commenter said the tourism draw depends on the integrity of historic buildings, streetscapes, and natural beauty. They suggested adding 'Protect and' before 'promote historic resources' and supporting district guidelines, incentives, and education programs for quality rehabs and maintenance.	Change ED.B-1 from promoting historic resources to protecting and promoting historic resources, with support for local historic district guidelines, incentives, education, and public example.

75-76, 80, 122	2	Commenter asked whether unhoused people were given adequate attention and said the issue is regional and requires collaboration among local governments and stakeholders. The critique says the plan acknowledges homelessness and housing instability but presents no concrete suggestions for people who lose housing, despite prior public comments asking for more services for the unhoused. It also points to vacant buildings near City Hall and on South Augusta Street as possible day-shelter resources.	Add concrete homelessness/unhoused-services tactics, including regional coordination, day-shelter/site planning, use of vacant buildings, and services for vulnerable populations.
78, 80	2	Commenter asked why ADUs appear only as a low-priority study on p. 80 and whether the plan addresses tensions between historic district requirements, ADUs, and sustainable energy improvements. Commenter said the simplest free housing-supply recommendation is to make ADUs legal on all residential lots, with building-code compliance and separate Airbnb regulation/enforcement.	Move Accessory Dwelling Units from study-level/low-priority treatment to a stronger housing implementation action. Evaluate allowing ADUs on all residential lots with limited regulations, and address short-term-rental, historic-district, and sustainable-energy interactions. New state legislation makes ADU's a required by-right in single family zoning districts use effective July 1, 2027. Staff will be introducing an ADU ordinance in June to Planning Commission.
80, 99	1	Commenter said raw-land development is expensive because infrastructure costs are huge, cited Staunton Crossing road costs, and recommended reducing private-road requirements and removing concrete curb, gutter, and sidewalk requirements where a property owners association maintains roads and snow removal.	Evaluate whether private-road standards, curb-and-gutter requirements, and sidewalk requirements are raising housing development costs, especially on raw land or steep terrain.
80, 140-141	1	The critique says the plan should address aging churches and other underused assets that could support housing, day shelter, mixed use, or community needs. It names Bibleway Community Church, Marquis Memorial, Christ United Methodist, Ingleside Resort, DeJarnette, Mary Baldwin, vacant storefronts near City Hall, South Augusta Street buildings, and the former Coca-Cola bottling plant.	Add a stronger vacant-building and institutional-property reuse program. Include an inventory and outreach for aging churches, vacant/underused buildings, Ingleside Resort, DeJarnette campus, former Coca-Cola bottling plant, and similar assets.
101, 104	2	Commenter said infrastructure funding is urgent and should be connected with land use/economic development. The critique says the plan has much to say about stormwater but is almost silent about drinking water, century-old pipes, a water-delivery system losing more than one in four gallons, and a \$40 million to \$50 million repair need.	Expand public infrastructure text beyond stormwater to drinking water: old water mains, water loss, repair costs, funding strategy, and capital planning.
108-114	1	The critique says the draft acknowledges schools are at or beyond functional capacity but does not project how much student population may grow or where. It says the city has planning, zoning, and financing roles and should be more proactive than simply deferring to Staunton City Schools.	Make education facility planning more proactive. Add student-growth projections by geography, city/school coordination, financing implications, and triggers for modular units, expansions, or new school capacity.
109, 113	1	The critique says the plan references Mary Baldwin as an asset and mentions planning for worst-case scenarios, but does not describe those scenarios or city responses. It notes the university has 58 acres and buildings, including dorms that could potentially be reused as low-income housing.	Expand Mary Baldwin contingency planning. Describe worst-case scenarios, city response options, land/building reuse possibilities, and housing implications if major institutional change occurs.
119	1	Commenter asked why mini-grants for wellness initiatives were second-tier priority when juvenile diabetes is rising and Staunton has a large aging population.	Reconsider priority level for wellness mini-grants or similar wellness initiatives, given juvenile diabetes, aging population needs, and preventive health benefits.

127-128		1 Commenter said p. 127 lists CSPDC's speaker bureau/community emergency education as secondary priority, but it should be higher because climate change and flooding make early public communication and contingency planning urgent. They also asked the plan to recognize risk to downtown and the barren urban-renewal zone north of downtown bounded by Central, Churchville, and Augusta.	Move community emergency education and preparedness outreach earlier. Strengthen flood-risk planning, public communications, evacuation/recovery education, and scenario planning for a Camille-scale storm.
133-136		5 Commenter was sorry to see native plants, trees, and sustainable energy measures relegated to second-act priority on p. 135. Commenter supports conservation easements on p. 133, asks on p. 134 whether the strategic land-use approach for ag districts would include an ag zoning district and land-use taxation, and emphasizes conservation planning with sustainable development. Online comments asked for energy-use reduction and independence for families and businesses, tax breaks for rain gardens or rain barrels, and financial incentives to reduce material going to the landfill.	Strengthen environmental implementation for agricultural/forestal areas, conservation easements, ag zoning, land-use taxation, native plantings, trees, and sustainable energy. Consider moving some actions earlier than second-act priority.
135		9 Commenter said the dark-sky tactic on p. 134 is good but should identify leads including Community Development, Planning, Engineering, Public Works, and City Hall; should be coordinated through zoning/development standards; and should address City properties and Dominion streetlighting. Commenter asked that the tactic be consistent with Dark Sky International's five responsible-lighting principles. Online comments add that downtown skies are not relatively dark, residents need a path to report overly bright streetlights, Dominion replacement fixtures should meet responsible-lighting standards, and the p. 134 tactic should not wait until 2030-2035.	Revise dark-sky lighting tactic details: include IES and DarkSky International Five Principles, public facilities, streetscapes, parks, new development, Dominion streetlighting, and coordination through zoning/development standards.
140-142		1 Commenter said pp. 140-141 seemed silent on small grants for public art and pushed diversifying festivals/events to 2040-2045, which seemed inconsistent with earlier emphasis on promoting Staunton to artists and creators.	Add or elevate small public-art grants and move diverse festivals/events earlier than 2040-2045 if the plan wants to attract artists and creators.
145, 147-148		1 Commenter said p. 147 could or should prioritize pocket parks and benches around downtown.	Prioritize pocket parks, benches, seating, and small downtown green spaces earlier in the recreation implementation schedule.
Library / public-review process; 108, 114		3 Commenter supported the library as a key asset and proposed that future City documents offered for public review should have several copies at the library reference desk for on-site viewing, with broad publicity. Two online comments said the library has unused space, specifically the Talking Books Center, and that the staff does much with limited space while a large room sits unused.	For future public review documents, place multiple reference copies at the Staunton Public Library and publicize availability, using the library's longer hours to improve access.
21; Appendix B p. 6, p. 49		2 The Part 1 online commenter said p. 21 claims Staunton is an aging community without evidence showing change in average age over time or whether the share of older residents will expand. The Appendix B online commenter said p. 6 emphasizes a long-term 0.6 percent growth trend without acknowledging recent flat-to-down population years, and said p. 49 percent increases can mislead when starting from a small population.	Strengthen demographic evidence. Support claims that Staunton is aging with change-over-time data, acknowledge recent flat-to-down population years if relevant, and avoid misleading percent-change graphics for small base populations.
Old Staunton Mall / redevelopment issue		1 The online commenter criticized the handling of the old Staunton Mall, alleged EPA/asbestos-regulation violations, said permits should have been withdrawn, and said the property has remained an embarrassing eyesore for years.	While the Staunton Mall is un Augusta County - the plan could explain how the plan or implementation program will respond to long-vacant eyesore properties with environmental concerns in general.

27, public safety / transportation	1	The online commenter said safe transportation and public safety should include good signage and traffic lights, specifically that certain Beverley Street lights are unsafe because pedestrians on all corners cannot see them. The same commenter asked for clear information on how residents can bring concerns to city staff.	Add or strengthen actions for pedestrian-visible traffic signals, signage, and resident reporting of public-realm problems such as clogged storm drains, overflowing trash cans, overly bright streetlights, and deteriorating paths.
36, 41, 51, 65-66	1	The online commenter asked p. 36 to add that land-use assets are in need of protection, p. 41 to add LU.A-3 on carefully designed responsible outdoor lighting in all land-use categories, p. 51 to mention community-friendly lighting and streetlight replacements in Traditional Neighborhoods, and pp. 65-66 to add a first-act Public Works/Community Development initiative for Dominion Energy replacements and responsible-lighting zoning ordinances.	Add responsible outdoor lighting to land-use policy, traditional-neighborhood text, and first-act land-use tactics. Include Public Works and Community Development coordination for Dominion Energy streetlight replacement and zoning updates.
36, 42-44, 67	2	Commenter asked for more specific land-conservation strategies and clearer protection of natural resources. The Part 2 online commenter said Heritage Farmland language will mean little unless the city honors the Agricultural-Forest district commitment through 2030, citing a utility-scale solar permit near historic farmland despite existing protections and neighbor objections.	Strengthen protection language for open space and agricultural-forestal commitments. Explain how new Heritage Farmland goals relate to existing Agricultural-Forest district protections and recent permitting decisions.
36, mixed-use definition	1	The online commenter said the plan's definition of mixed use refers only to buildings along primary entry roads, while public input also treated mixed use as small businesses such as a market or coffee shop within or near residential areas. The commenter said the city could encourage this through SUP consideration for developments such as McIntosh.	Clarify the definition of mixed use so it includes small neighborhood-serving businesses near or within residential areas, not only buildings along primary entry roads. Note how SUP review could support this in developments such as McIntosh.
36, Wharf area; 98, 100; Appendix A p. 17	3	The Part 2 online commenter asked whether pp. 98 and 100 should refer to Gypsy Hill Park stream restoration rather than daylighting. The Appendix A online commenter made the same point for Appendix A p. 17. The Part 4 online commenter said daylighting creeks at The Wharf should be an aspiration. Part 2 ObjectID 3 also said p. 36 should refer to transforming the Wharf parking lot into a vibrant multi-use downtown green space, not merely utilizing an underused space.	Correct creek-daylighting terminology and clarify Wharf-area aspirations. Verify whether Gypsy Hill Park work was stream restoration rather than daylighting, and add daylighting creeks at The Wharf as an aspiration if desired.
47, 49, 53, 57, 59	1	The online commenter said arrows on pp. 49, 57, and 59 do not appear to point to images matching the text, after also referencing pp. 47, 49, and 53 for dark-sky-compliant lighting in new construction.	Run a visual quality-control pass on Part 2 graphics and callouts. Fix arrows that appear to point to images that do not match the text.
75-80	1	The online commenter appreciated goals for resources, financing education, and legal counseling, but said with 12.6 percent of residents below the poverty line, affordable rental options need to be a development priority.	Make affordable rental housing a development priority, not only a support-services issue, given the share of residents below the poverty line.
129, 134, waste / environment	2	The Part 1 online commenter said Staunton has a long way to go on landfill waste, should facilitate or require business recycling and food-service composting, and has a litter problem. The Part 4 online commenter said the plan has little emphasis on reducing waste and that financial incentives may be essential to reduce material going to the landfill.	Add waste-reduction implementation beyond education. Consider business recycling, food-service composting, litter reduction, and financial incentives to reduce landfill disposal.
129, 134-135	1	The online commenter said p. 129 should reference reducing light and noise pollution, not only pristine air, water, and land. The commenter said dark-sky practices should be emphasized at the opening overview of the Environment section and that the p. 134 responsible-lighting tactic should specify useful, targeted, low-level, controlled, warm-temperature lighting.	Add noise pollution to the environment overview and make light-pollution reduction a visible section-opening theme, not only a tactic.

119, 123		1 The online commenter said p. 119 has a gray heading that reads 'insert' and appears inconsistent with the rest of the document. The commenter also said p. 123 should not say 'service the vulnerable' because vulnerable people are not cars.	Fix text placeholders and awkward wording in Part 3. Replace the p. 119 gray heading 'insert' if it is a placeholder, and change 'service the vulnerable' to 'serve the vulnerable,' 'provide service for the vulnerable,' or 'support the vulnerable.'
Appendix A p. 9, p. 19, p. 36		1 The online commenter said Appendix A p. 9 recreation positive/neutral/negative percentages total roughly 106 percent; p. 19 should refer to PCBs rather than PCPs; and p. 36 should say 'Staunton leads the Commonwealth' rather than 'Staunton leaves the Commonwealth.'	Correct Appendix A factual, percentage, and typo issues: recreation sentiment percentages should not total about 106 percent; Lewis Creek cleanup should refer to PCBs, not PCPs; and 'Staunton leaves the Commonwealth' should read 'Staunton leads the Commonwealth.'
Appendix B p. 11, p. 21, p. 33-34, p. 63-64		1 The online commenter said p. 11 appears to show too much population on Moore family agricultural land; p. 21 conflicts with the 86 percent developed statement; pp. 33-34 existing/future LOS images appear almost identical despite text indicating Richmond Road and Greenville Avenue may be E/F; p. 63 says RedWing Roots is in the City but it is not; and p. 64 should note the final Fall Foliage Bike Festival was in 2024.	Correct or verify Appendix B map/data/event details: Moore family agricultural-land population dots, land-use percentage consistency, LOS graphics for Richmond Road and Greenville Avenue, RedWing Roots location, and Fall Foliage Bike Festival status.
Historic districts / housing affordability		2 The Appendix A online commenter said historic homes and repairs are expensive and Historic Preservation Commission requirements make upgrades such as windows and siding daunting or unaffordable. Commenter separately asked the plan to protect historic resources through local historic district guidelines, incentives, and education programs that support quality rehabs and maintenance.	Balance historic-preservation requirements with affordability and home repair needs. Review Historic Preservation Commission processes for windows, siding, weatherization, and other repairs so historic-district ownership is not limited to higher-income households.
Connectivity / Central Avenue and Churchville Avenue		1 The online commenter asked when the Central Avenue Streetscape will connect to the Churchville Avenue Streetscape, saying the money ran out at Pump Street and left an orphan block with overhead wires and tilting utility poles between improved walkways. The commenter asked whether the city can commit to finishing previous plans before making more plans.	Add a near-term action to finish prior streetscape commitments by connecting the Central Avenue Streetscape to the Churchville Avenue Streetscape at the remaining Pump Street block.
Recreation / food access shuttle		1 The online commenter asked the city to provide and promote a shuttle to the farmers market from downtown and to food pantries because many people who use food pantries do not drive.	Consider a shuttle from downtown to the farmers market and food pantries for residents who do not drive.
Appendix A		1 Commenter requested that Appendix A change the department's fire alarm program to smoke detector program.	Change the Fire Department's 'fire alarm program' reference to 'smoke detector program.'
Appendix B		1 Commenter asked whether Appendix B should add numbers incorporating all fire department responses because the current numbers show only medical responses. He attached an incident-count report showing 289 total incidents across fire, hazardous situation, medical, public service, rescue, no emergency, and law-enforcement support categories. He also asked to revise wording around Staunton's 'Fire Department' is staffed.	Add Fire Department response numbers that include all Fire Department responses, not only medical responses, and correct the wording around Staunton's Fire Department staffing.