

**MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEETING
CITY OF STAUNTON, VIRGINIA**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026 8:30 a.m.
City Manager's Conference Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall**

Members Present: Billy Vaughn, Chair
Terry Holmes, Vice-Chair
Don Bosserman
Billy Sowers
Isaac Grant
Suzie Dull
Kristina Arbogast

Members Absent: All present

Others Present: Amanda DiMeo, Director of Economic Development
Jessica Blythe, Assistant Director of Economic Development
John Blair, City Attorney
Jeff Overholtzer, City Council Liaison
Jessie Moyers, CFO City of Staunton
Rodney Rhodes, Community Development Director
Samantha Johnson, Director of Tourism
Anna Leavitt, Economic Mobility Specialist
Scotty Tiernan, SDDA Marketing and Events Coordinator
Tim Davey, Timmons Group
Jeremy Fox, Timmons Group

Mr. Vaughn called the meeting to order. The board members welcomed Ms. Kristina Arbogast as the newest EDA member appointed by City Council. Ms. Arbogast will not participate in voting until she has filled out the necessary forms and has taken her oath.

1) Consideration of Meeting Minutes from December 4, 2025.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Grant, and seconded by Mr. Holmes to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously by the members present. Ms. Dull arrived after the vote.

2) Treasurer's Financial Report

The Treasurer presented the year-end financial report. No significant questions arose. No action was required on this item.

3) Tim Davey – Staunton Crossing

Ms. DiMeo introduced Tim Davey and Jeremy Fox of the Timmons Group, who authored the original master plan for Staunton Crossing.

Key Discussion Points: Mr. Davey reviewed the history of public land development at Staunton Crossing, the original community engagement process (including a full-day work session using a Lego-based planning exercise with community members, council members, developers, and press), and the resulting business plan with metrics focused on real estate tax value, personal property tax value, and jobs.

He noted the city has completed all ten recommendations from both the original business plan and the marketing plan, and commended staff for their consistent outreach efforts. He characterized the

question now as: how to refine the strategy and get more targeted in outreach to produce meaningful prospect activity.

Market Trends Discussed:

- Pharmaceutical/life sciences cluster: Staunton's proximity to Virginia Tech, UVA, and VCU pharmaceutical programs positions the site well. Workforce availability is a growing driver for this industry.
- Data centers: A growing statewide trend, with significant discussion about whether and how to pursue smaller-scale data center development (30–50 megawatt range) at the eastern/lower portion of the site, near the pump station. The group expressed support for targeting this tier while reserving the prime site for larger job-creating projects.
- Site readiness and speed to market: Many state-certified sites are being claimed. Timmons noted the new administration is expected to maintain site readiness funding and that transportation and economic development funding are increasingly being blended.
- Workforce and housing: Site selectors increasingly ask about workforce availability and housing affordability. Staunton should have answers ready for these questions as part of its 'game day manual.'
- Supply chain economy: Supporting companies in the pharmaceutical and data center ecosystems were identified as strong secondary targets for outreach.

Data Center Discussion:

The board discussed at length whether to pursue data center development at Staunton Crossing, including:

- The state's requirement to repay site readiness funds if the site is sold to a data center. Mr. Davey noted that data center developers generally accept this condition.
- Utility/power supply: Dominion territory covers the site. A substation on-site would likely be required, with power brought approximately two miles. The EDA should initiate a feasibility study to enter Dominion's queue before committing. The co-op on the northern portion of the property does not participate in data center development.
- Zoning: Data centers are not currently a listed permitted use in the city's zoning ordinance. A technology overlay district (modeled on Goochland County's approach) was identified as a potential proactive strategy to attract prospects without requiring a project-specific public hearing.
- Vetting prospects: Mr. Davey cautioned against engaging with unproven developers, noting that Dominion is now requiring large engineering deposits to screen out less credible actors.

Consensus: Board members expressed support for exploring smaller-scale data center development in a targeted and community-conscious way, citing manageable noise and water impacts and significant tax revenue potential. No formal action was taken at this time beyond the broader motion to refresh the business plan.

Business Plan Refresh — Community Engagement:

The board discussed whether to involve the community in refreshing the business plan. Discussion points included:

- A community-engaged process similar to the original was suggested as a way to relieve pressure on staff and manage public expectations.
- Several members cautioned that a fully open community process could slow momentum and risk the community directing development toward residential or other non-economic development uses.

- A preferred approach emerged: tweak the metrics and marketing strategy to reflect current market conditions, conduct professional outreach, and ‘carefully educate’ the community rather than reopening the full business plan for public debate.
- Mr. Davey recommended targeting specific site selection consultants who specialize in markets aligned with Staunton’s assets, and potentially establishing a travel budget to capitalize on leads identified through the city’s digital marketing tools.

Motion: Mr. Bosserman moved to authorize staff to move forward with refreshing the Staunton Crossing business plan and marketing strategy, with funding to be determined by staff and appropriate funding mechanisms pursued. Mr. Grant seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by the members present.

4) **Staunton Crossing Electric Easement**

Mr. Blair presented a proposed electric easement at Staunton Crossing to provide power to the water tower. He noted the easement is routine and non-controversial. Council is aware of it. Per the 2010 contribution agreement, EDA approval is required before the item proceeds to City Council for final approval. The easement will run along the road. The installation will be underground.

Motion: Mr. Sowers moved that subject to consent and approval by the City Council of the City of Staunton, Virginia, Dominion Energy Virginia shall be granted a utility easement on the Staunton Crossing property as detailed in the attached deed of easement, and after approval by City Council, the EDA Chair is AUTHORIZED and DIRECTED to execute the deeds of easement with such changes, modifications or alterations as approved in final form by EDA legal counsel. Mr. Bosserman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by the members present.

5) **Executive Director Report**

Ms. DiMeo and Ms. Blythe updated the group, and called on others to give an update on their department activities:

Economic Mobility & Opportunity Special Assistant: Ms. Leavitt was introduced in her new role, funded by an ICMA grant. She is currently reviewing existing city plans (West End Plan, DEI Recommendations, Union Town Plan) to identify connections between residents and resources (housing, jobs, transportation) and to track progress on existing commitments. She will deliver a plan within 30 months.

Staunton Downtown Development Association: Mr. Tiernan, SDDA Marketing and Events Coordinator, presented an update on the first annual MADCON (Music, Art and Design Convention), scheduled for April 10–11, 2026. The event is inspired by South by Southwest and aims to serve professional artists, musicians, and designers. Valley Subaru is in closing discussions as a corporate sponsor. The event is intended to serve as a spring counterpart to Queen City Mischief and Magic and will coincide with the Staunton Music Festival Baroque Fest weekend.

Tourism Update: Ms. Johnson - A new Sales and Marketing Manager, Sheena Logan, has joined the team. Tourism numbers rebounded strongly in 2025, with nearly every month up year-over-year. Staunton and Harrisonburg led the entire Shenandoah Valley in visitation. April is shaping up as an arts-focused month. New itineraries are being developed to drive group business.

Active Prospects:

- A major prospect meeting with the state and regional partners was held the previous day; a decision on advancing to the next level is expected by end of the following week.
- A call was received regarding a very large project at Staunton Crossing; a meeting was scheduled for that afternoon.
- A potential project at Green Hills is under discussion.

- A manufacturing opportunity at Staunton Crossing from the prior month remains pending.
- Several small business meetings have been held (including a bagel shop and wine shop).

Wharf Project (Byers Street): Construction mobilization is scheduled to begin on February 17. Construction fencing will go up at that time. Staff are working on banners and visual improvements, including wrapping the toll booth at The Wharf with photos of businesses to signal that the area remains open during construction.

Wharf Marketing Grants: Council approved the marketing grant at its last meeting. The \$100,000 grant program will provide \$1,000–\$5,000 grants to businesses in the targeted impact zone. Businesses outside the zone that can demonstrate impact (e.g., reliance on foot traffic) may also apply. Funds will pass through the EDA. Staff are partnering with JMU's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to offer a five-workshop series covering business planning, resiliency, marketing, and tax implications. Local partners, including Prism Consulting, will also participate.

New Website: The Economic Development Department's [new website](#) is live. Members were encouraged to review it.

Secretary of Commerce and Trade: Carrie Chenery, a Staunton native and former Executive Director of the Shenandoah Valley Partnership, has been named the new Secretary of Commerce and Trade. Staff has already reached out to her.

Women In Business Event: Ms. Blythe was a panelist for this Chamber event and did a great job.

Enterprise Zone: All boundary and incentive amendments received final approval in late December/early January. Approximately 800 letters were mailed to businesses in the zone (new and existing) explaining the enterprise zone and available incentives. A workshop for West End businesses (SWEBA) is planned for the end of February.

Community Development Department: Mr. Rhodes presented housing development updates:

- Middlebrook Park Apartments (Seth Drive): A site plan for 53 new dwelling units was recently submitted. Building plans are expected shortly.
- McIntosh Development (Green Spring Valley/Middlebrook Ave. area): A proposed 298-unit single-family development went to Planning Commission. It was tabled pending a required second means of ingress/egress off Middlebrook Ave. The developer is working on options.

6) Other Business

House Bill 0493: Mr. Blair provided an overview of House Bill 1493, currently in the Virginia General Assembly. The bill would require a 28-day public notice period and a public hearing before any governing body could grant economic development incentives, including contribution agreements between local governments and EDAs.

He noted the Virginia Economic Developers Association has come out in opposition to the bill. Key concerns discussed include:

- Economic development deals require confidentiality during negotiation; public hearings would expose sensitive details and give opposing parties time to organize.
- A 28-day waiting period would be incompatible with governor-led announcement processes, which are common for projects involving state incentives.
- Opponents of projects tend to show up at public hearings; supporters typically do not, creating a skewed public record.
- Other states without similar requirements would have a competitive advantage in attracting businesses.
- The bill would also require public hearings for contribution agreements between local government and the EDA, limiting the EDA's operational flexibility.

The bill originated in response to public opposition to several projects in Chesterfield County.

Motion: Mr. Sowers moved for the EDA to submit a formal letter of opposition, to be drafted by staff and the city attorney and signed by the EDA Chair. Ms. Dull Seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by the members present.

7) Closed Meeting

Motion: Mr. Holmes moved to enter a closed meeting for discussion or consideration of a prospective business located at Frontier Center, Phase II where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community, pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(5). Mr. Sowers seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by the members present.

Motion: Following the closed meeting discussion, Mr. Sowers moved that the EDA reconvene in an open meeting and certify to the best of each member's knowledge that only lawfully exempted public business matters were discussed, and that only public business matters as identified in the closed meeting motion were heard, discussed, or considered in the meeting. Ms. Dull seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by the members present.

8) Meeting Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 am.

APPROVED:



Chairperson

DATE: April 16, 2026



Secretary

DATE: April 16, 2026