



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Staunton Seeks Final Resolution of Future Location of Augusta County Court Facilities

Nov. 30, 2021 – In an effort to ensure the viability of one of the city's most prominent and historically significant buildings and other properties at a major downtown intersection, the City of Staunton is cooperating with Augusta County on a legislative effort that would permit the county to move its court facilities to Verona.

Earlier this month, [county officials informed the city, unequivocally](#), that the county has no interest in maintaining its court facilities in Staunton even if the city were to make a financial contribution to a county project in the city. The communication from the county compelled city officials to shift their objective to the control of five county-owned properties at the intersection of Augusta and Johnson streets, and the preservation and adaptive reuse of the historic 1901 courthouse.

Under a proposed arrangement between the city and the county, at no cost, the city would acquire properties owned by the county and used presently for the county's circuit court, general district court and juvenile and domestic relations district court, as well as the county's former jail and a residential property on South Augusta Street. In exchange, the city would support the General Assembly's enactment of legislation sought by the county to authorize the relocation of the county's courts to the government center in Verona, consistent with the county's comprehensive plan.

Without legislation, under current state law the county is precluded from moving its courts from Staunton without a referendum, which can next be conducted in 2026. The county has included legislation permitting an earlier move in its legislative priorities for the 2022 General Assembly session and has requested that Senator Emmett Hanger and Delegate John Avoli support the initiative.

With the property acquisition, the city would own and control the five properties and their future uses, including possible preservation, adaptive reuse and redevelopment. The city's acquisition would also eliminate the risk that the buildings, located at the core of the city's central business district, might sit vacant and unused for an extended period of time, a possibility if the county secures approval of a relocation to Verona by referendum in 2026.

Progress on widely recognized, needed improvements to the county's court facilities in Staunton has proved elusive, despite engagement between the city and the county for more than a decade. With the county's decision to pivot to Verona, the city—by its participation in the proposed arrangement—would achieve the best possible outcome for the city, its businesses and its residents.

The city is hopeful that this action would also resolve the [pending court proceeding](#) initiated in September by the Circuit Court for the Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit regarding the condition of the city's Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.

Staunton City Council will formally consider the proposed arrangement with the county at its meeting on Thursday, December 9, at 7:30 p.m., in the Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers in City Hall.

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