MINUTES OF
FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2025

PRESENT: Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, Chairman, At-Large
Evelyn S. Spain, Vice Chairman, Sully District
Jeremy Hancock, Secretary, Providence District
Candice Bennett, Parliamentarian, Commissioner At-Large
Alyssa Batchelor-Causey, Dranesville District
Mary D. Cortina, Braddock District
Chris Landgraf, Franconia District
John A. Carter, Hunter Mill District
Alis Wang, Mason District
Walter C. Clarke, Mount Vernon District
James Thomas, Springfield District
Timothy J. Sargeant, Commissioner At-Large

ABSENT: None

OTHERS: Graham Owen, Planning Division (PD),
Department of Planning and Development (DPD),
Sahar Hamdard, PD, DPD
William Mayland, Zoning Administration Division (ZAD), DPD
Carmen Bishop, ZAD, DPD
Thomas Burke, Transportation Planning Division (TPD),
Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)
Ashley Denner, TPD, FCDOT
Sharad Regmi, Wastewater Planning and Monitoring Division,
Wastewater Management,
Department of Public Works and Environment Services
Jill G. Cooper, Executive Director, Planning Commission,
Department of Clerk Services (DCS)
Satabdi Samaddar, Administration, DCS
Samantha Lawrence, Senior Deputy Clerk, Planning Commission, DCS

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m., by Chairman Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, in the Board Auditorium of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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COMMISSION MATTERS

Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner announced that the Planning Commission's agenda included commission business which consisted of one deferral plan amendment, followed by two public hearings.

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PLAN AMENDMENT SSPA 2023-III-2FC – FAIR OAKS BUSINESS PARK

Commissioner Thomas stated that there was a change in the proposed intensity of the Fair Oaks Business Park amendment that needed to be corrected in the public hearing ads and legal notification for this amendment. Specifically, an increase from 1.03 floor area ratio (FAR) to 1.2 FAR. He added this was in the level authorized by the Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Thomas added that this update reflected the clarification of the affordable dwelling units and workforce dwelling units bonus calculations for the associated rezoning, as well as a slight increase in the number of one of the proposed multifamily buildings. He also added that this did not change the total number of units or the non-residential gross floor area analyzed.

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Commissioner Thomas MOVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION DEFER THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE FAIR OAKS BUSINESS PARK – SSPA 2023-III-2FC TO A DATE CERTAIN OF NOVEMBER 12, 2025.

Commissioner Batchelor-Causey seconded the motion which was carried by a vote of 12-0.

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ORDER OF THE AGENDA

Secretary Hancock established the following order of the agenda:

1. PLAN AMENDMENT SSPA 2023-III-3FC – FAIRFAX RIDGE ROAD
2. ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – ELECTRICAL SUBSTATIONS

This order was accepted without objection.

Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner recited the rules for public testimony.

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PLAN AMENDMENT SSPA 2023-III-3FC – FAIRFAX RIDGE ROAD – Concerns approx. 6.2 ac of land generally located at 3877 Fairfax Ridge Road, 11225 Waples Mill Road; Tax Map # [46-4 ((1)) 15B; 56-2 ((1)) 15C and 15D] in the Springfield Supervisor District. The area is planned for office use at 0.25 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) at the baseline and 0.5 FAR at the overlay level. The plan amendment will consider an option for residential mixed use redevelopment up to 400 dwelling units of multifamily residential use and 5,500 SF of community retail use with an intensity of up to 1.52 FAR. Recommendations relating to the transportation network may also be modified. PA (SSPA 2023-III-2FC) is concurrently under review with Rezoning application (RZ 2025-SP-00003).
SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT. PUBLIC HEARING.

Sahar Hamdard, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Development presented the staff report, a copy is in the electronic date file. She stated that staff recommended adoption of Plan Amendment SSPA 2023-III-3FC.

Lynne J. Strobel, Nominator's Agent, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C., gave a presentation on the subject plan amendment.

There was a discussion between Ms. Hamdard; Graham Owen, Planning Division, Department of Planning and Development (DPD); Thomas Burke, Transportation Planning Division, Fairfax County Department of Transportation; Kevin Fellin, Galloway and Company, Inc.; Aaron Vinson, Walter L. Phillips, Inc.; and multiple Commissioners regarding the following:

- The nominator's agent disclosed there was one existing small business at the proposed site working on improvements to I-66, and there were no additional small businesses at the site that served the community;

- Staff stated that the intersection of Waples Mill Road and Pender Drive was identified as being over designed, discussed narrowing the approaches so that the crossing were shorter for pedestrians, and there were ongoing discussions with the applicant on possible improvements;

- Confirmation that there would be a shared use path along Waples Mill Road. Reference made to Page 28 of the Pedestrian Level of Comfort (PLOC) assessment map that portrayed the level of comfort ratings;

- The nominator's agent disclosed collaboration efforts with a traffic consultant to implement pedestrian safety measures to provide a more comfortable PLOC;

- Clarification that the peak AM and PM hours would decrease because of the change from office to residential development, there would be an increase in day trips, and decrease in hours during peak traffic times;

- There was an overall improvement to the level of service due to the aggregate reduction in traffic;

- Staff stated that the focus of the proposed amendment, due to its small size and the topography centered on the Urban Parks Framework, aimed to ensure the inclusion of onsite urban parks;

- Clarification that in terms of the linear park area, staff reviewed several design calculations to determine potential configurations and arrangements that would meet areawide objectives for the Fairfax Center Area, specifically activity nodes that were connected by open space and pedestrian trails;

- Staff noted there was an open space area located west of the site, behind the Fairfax Ridge Road Condominiums, adjacent to the Route 50 and I-66 interchange, the open

space included a paved trail, providing an opportunity to extend improvements onto the site across Fairfax Ridge Road, and establish key retail nodes;

- Staff stated that due to the site's topography, constructing a ball field or other geometric recreational facilities would be challenging, the current design offered an alternative solution that incorporated options for parks, setbacks from adjacent residential, and mixed active and passive recreation spaces;

- The nominator's agent clarified that further details regarding stormwater management would be provided with the rezoning application and addressed at that time;

- The nominator's agent confirmed that significant work had already been completed at the site and that the project would comply with the County's requirements and regulations;

- Clarification that one of the site improvements included the reduction of impervious surfaces and new stormwater management measures;

- The surrounding park space measured approximately 60 to 70 feet and presented opportunities to integrate stormwater management measures;

- Underground detention facilities were proposed to manage stormwater quality, bioretention areas would be incorporated into the park system, permeable pavers would be used in hardscape areas, and more detailed information on stormwater management measures would be presented during the rezoning application process;

- Pedestrian safety measures were being considered. Reference made for a crosswalk in the Waples Mill Road shopping area which was further from the proposed site, and might be addressed through the proposed Plan Amendment SSPA 2023-III-2FC - Fair Oaks Business Park;

- The nominator's agent noted that pedestrian crosswalks across Waples Mill Road to get pedestrians back and forth, were under review;

- The nominator's agent stated that weekly demonstrations near the National Rifle Association headquarters had not been raised as an issue, however the concern would be reviewed during the rezoning process to determine whether future residents should be notified;

- A recommendation was made that bus shelters' structural design provide protection from rain, sun, and snow, ensuring comfort and usability. This recommendation was acknowledged and would be considered during the rezoning process;

- A concern that language that addressed crosswalks and pedestrian safety along Route 50 and Waples Mill Road was omitted, and a recommendation that this language be highlighted in both proposed plan amendments;

- Clarification that a Google Street View image from May 2025, showed high visibility crosswalks across Route 50 on both the east and west sides of the Waples Mill Road intersections, as well as crosswalks across Waples Mill Road itself;

- The project's design demonstrated the advantage of establishing block grading early, which facilitated future development;

- Staff noted that the proposed development was located within an activity center and the Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) policy applied;

- Clarification that an 8% WDU commitment was the standard for development located within an activity center, that number would be included within the proposed 400 units, and was accounted for in the bonus density calculation;

- The rationale for the 8% WDU commitment was because the Fairfax Center area did not have an elevated WDU requirement;

- Clarification that some areas like Tysons, Reston, Huntington, and West Falls Church had areawide WDU percentages, with Reston using a sliding scale. Fairfax Center and most other suburban centers adhered to the standard WDU percentage;

- Support for enhancing the pedestrian experience was noted;

- Support for the proposed bus stop concept, particularly in encouraging public transit use was noted;

- A concern was raised regarding the design of the linear park;

- The nominator's agent confirmed that the project would fulfill pump station requirements as needed for the site, and it provided an added benefit to Land Unit K;

- Confirmation that the nominator would be reimbursed for any excess capacity provided for the pump station requirements;

- Clarification that the High Ridge sanitary sewer pump station exclusively served the proposed site and the Fairfax Ridge Condominium, this was the only development that warranted upgrades to this pump station, and would be responsible for 50% to 75% of the associated costs;

- Clarification that Plan Amendment SSPA 2023-III-2FC, scheduled for Planning Commission review, carried the responsibility for additional development impacts, and the costs would depend on project sequencing, required work, and integration within the overall development;

- The County agreed to a draft proffer specifying that the nominator would assume responsibility for the sewer system, and seek reimbursement for capacity improvements exceeding project needs; and

- Clarification that the proposed building, as outlined in the plan amendment and corresponding floor area ratio recommendation, consisted of 400 units, the inclusion of the WDU percentage and bonus density was calculated within that total, and no additional units would be added beyond the 400 units proposed.

There being no listed speakers Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner called for speakers from the audience.

Isabel Ramos-Toral, 11350 Aristotle Drive, Fairfax, representing Fairfax Ridge Condominiums, addressed the following concerns:

- Fairfax Ridge Condominiums was in close proximity to the proposed development and the community consisted mostly of senior residents;

- Concerns regarding demolition noise, construction debris, and the future impact on the residents health;

- Concerns regarding existing street parking, congestion issues, and further impact from construction which would be harder on residents;

- Received correspondence from the nominator's agent that construction trucks had a designated parking area, and would not utilize street parking;

- Many of the residents currently use part of the facilities that were planned for demolition and parking concerns for those existing residents;

- The hours for construction was from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and a recommendation to include a proffer that limited construction hours from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and

- A recommendation to include a proffer that address construction measures during the demolition process, and other mitigating factors that would least impact senior residents.

Tolkienbek Abdygulov, representing Fairfax Ridge Condominiums, concurred with Ms. Ramos-Toral's statements and restated some of those concerns. He added that the community comprised of more than 420 condominiums with 11 buildings, and eight of those buildings would be directly impacted by the construction.

There was a discussion between Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner and Mr. Abdygulov on the following:

- Should the Board of Supervisors adopt the proposed amendment, a separate rezoning would follow, and the community would have an opportunity to further address their concerns and provide feedback; and

- In terms of concept, clarification on the Board of Supervisors directives to the Planning Commission on the proposed amendment.

Further discussion between Mr. Owen and Commissioner Batchelor-Causey on whether the proposed site was overparked. Mr. Owens clarified that parking details were typically not evaluated during a plan amendment process, however, parking was under review for the rezoning application, and the review process was expected to reduce reliance on street parking.

There being no further comments or questions from the Commission, and staff had no closing remarks; therefore, Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner closed the public hearing and recognized Commissioner Thomas for action on this amendment.

Commissioner Thomas thanked the constituents for being a part of the process. He added that a Springfield Land Use Committee meeting was held on October 7, 2025, discussed the proposed amendment, and ongoing discussions would continue throughout the process. Commissioner Thomas thanked staff for their dedication and responsiveness, appreciated the dialogue and revisions made to the proposal. He also stated the following:

- The Fairfax Ridge site that was discussed would add residential mixed-use options for the site that consisted of a multifamily building with ground floor community that served retail;

- The plan included recommendations related to compatible transitions, pedestrian facilities, transportation improvements, and a provision for park space;

- The site-specific amendment was one of two amendments in this area, the second would be heard on November 12, 2025, and together these amendments constituted an initial phase of study for Land Unit K in the Fairfax Center Area;

- The second phase of the study was to review the balance of a land unit and was expected to be scheduled for hearings in the first half of 2026;

- The draft plan text included site-specific guidance for the Fairfax Ridge Road site, along with areawide considerations for sewer pump station enhancements to accommodate the future build out of this area, and transportation improvements;

- A review of Waples Mill Road between I-66 and Fairfax Ridge Road and Pender Drive for an evaluation from four lanes to two lanes, intersection improvements, and active transportation modes;

- The motion did not include language for the Fair Oaks Business Park site, since the plan was deferred to November 12, 2025;

- The Springfield Land Use Committee reported favorably on their support for the proposed plan, but acknowledged concerns from community members on the parking issues after build out of the site during construction, as well as the noise and dust issues, and encouraged the nominator to mitigate those concerns;

- The intended motion for the Fair Oaks Business Park site, would modify the staff report and would focus only on proposed areawide changes for Land Unit K, and site-specific guidance for the Fairfax Ridge Road site; and

- The staff report's recommendations for Fair Oaks Business Park could be considered following the hearing on November 12, 2025.

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Commissioner Thomas MOVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS THE ADOPTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION ALTERNATIVE, FOUND IN ATTACHMENT 1, WHICH INCLUDES THE AREAWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SITE-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR THE FAIRFAX RIDGE ROAD.

Commissioner Batchelor-Causey seconded the motion which was carried by a vote of 12-0.

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Commissioner Sargeant disclosed he was a former employee of Dominion Energy, having retired approximately three years ago, and therefore recused himself from participating in the public hearing and vote.

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Commissioner Cortina disclosed that she owned stock in Dominion Energy, however, the amount was not substantial enough to raise concerns or affect market influence and noted that a financial disclosure statement was filed annually.

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ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – ELECTRICAL SUBSTATIONS – To consider proposed changes to the permissions, standards, and definitions for electrical substations and other light utility facilities, which are advertised by reference. The changes as specifically set forth in the staff report may include, without limitation: (1) revising the permissions for light utility facilities and adding a table reflecting those permissions; (2) deleting the provisions relating to new utility poles with attached facilities; (3) revising the standard for exemptions of light utility facilities from Zoning Ordinance regulations; (4) adding use-specific setbacks and screening standards for electrical substations and removing electrical substations from requirements for transitional screening and barriers; (5) removing the prohibition of the repair or servicing of equipment; (6) adding noise

study requirements; (7) revising the standard for review of alternative locations; (8) revising the definition for light utility facility; and (9) providing clarifications, and making other organizational and editorial revisions.
COUNTYWIDE. PUBLIC HEARING.

Carmen Bishop, Zoning Administration Division (ZAD), DPD, presented the staff report, a copy is in the electronic date file. She stated that staff recommended adoption of the proposed amendment.

There was a discussion between Ms. Bishop and multiple Commissioners regarding the following:

- Staff noted there were over 80 substations throughout the County, and all played a role in supporting essential operations;
- Staff noted that in the past decade, the trend for recent applications consisted of special exception and/or 2232 applications for 17 different substation facilities, eight of those were new substations, and seven of the eight were related to data centers;
- Staff noted that the proposal to change the permissions in the I-3 and I-4 districts were in alignment with the data center permissions;
- Data centers in the I-3 and I-4 districts were limited to 80,000 square feet;
- A special exception would be required for larger data centers that needed a substation in an I-3 or I-4 district;
- If a substation also required a special exception and was proposed in conjunction with an application, an overall review would be conducted to determine whether the layout would be suitable for that location;
- Special exceptions were required in most of the zoning districts for substations;
- Clarification that the requirement for a special exception for a substation unrelated to data centers in the I-3 and I-4 districts were based on the zoning district, and not the uses they served;
- Clarification that the I-5 and I-6 districts were heavier industrial, and I-3 and I-4 were medium and light industrial;
- Clarification that when both a special exception and 2232 application was processed concurrently, reviewed by the Planning Commission, additionally the special exception required a separate public hearing before the Board of Supervisors;

- Dominion Energy standards for setback and screening and how they related to staff's recommendation;

- Staff noted that Dominion Energy had certain review standards, they required a 15-feet clear zone around substation fences, and that substations varied in both size and height;

- Staff noted that the Zoning Ordinance standards did not adversely dictate how Dominion Energy designed their substations, and was completely within the scope of their authority;

- Clarification that setbacks were typically measured from the lot line, as was the case with this proposal;

- Setbacks for a principal use within a main building were measured from the principal structure itself;

- Staff clarified that setbacks would be measured to the nearest piece of equipment for a substation with collocated equipment;

- Staff confirmed there were properties within the County that were zoned R-1 and could be considered industrial. Dulles International Airport zoned residential was referenced;

- Staff agreed to provide the Planning Commission with data that showed how frequently properties zoned for residential use have been developed for industrial purposes;

- Staff noted that it was at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors to decide whether to approve language in Appendix 1 of the Zoning Ordinance, and indicate whether the proposed amendment applied to prior approvals;

- Zoning Ordinance amendments created more restrictive standards, pending applications were allowed to continue under the standards, before the amendment there was usually due diligence conducted to include timelines, and the staff report included language for the Board of Supervisors' consideration;

- Staff clarified that the proposed setback measured to the nearest piece of equipment was consistent with how setbacks were determined for other uses;

- Staff reiterated that setbacks were measured from the equipment rather than the fence line, and the staff report included a range for Planning Commission consideration;

- A recommendation that additional noise mitigation measures be considered was noted;

- A discussion regarding the reason for the change in the I-3 and I-4 districts for substations that met Zoning Ordinance requirements, but were not attached to a specific site. Staff provided an example of a pending application on a standalone lot that was not

collocated and served two separate data centers, noting that it was being developed specifically to meet the need of those data centers;

- Staff reiterated that their recommendations were aligned with permissions for the use of electrical substations and the trend has been for the new substations to be in support of data center development, the special exception and 2232 applications could be processed concurrently, and a public hearing was required;

- Special exception applications required development conditions, whereas 2232 applications were not subject to the general special exception standards in the Zoning Ordinance, which mandated a review of how the use affected surrounding properties;

- Staff noted that when they consulted a noise expert, they inquired about the setback distance needed to ensure noise levels did not exceed 55 decibels. A specific distance could not be determined due to the many variables that influenced noise transmissions;

- Staff recommended that for developments near residential areas, a noise study be conducted at the outset so that any necessary mitigation could be planned in advance; otherwise, the noise ordinance would be enforced only in response to complaints;

- The available noise mitigation options and their respective effectiveness;

- Staff noted that walls and other enclosures could serve as noise mitigation measures for substations, but to date, no noise studies have been conducted for substations;

- Staff noted that a data center could be louder than a substation depending on its size;

- Staff noted that it was not legally required for the Board of Supervisors to include a provision that pending applications fall under the new rules for substations;

- An inquiry on the types of substations built to power data centers and how they differed from substations built for other purposes, whether they were different in design, size, or power capacity. Staff stated they could not address the inquiry but noted that an application under review involved the expansion of an existing substation, which originally served a community, and was being expanded to also serve a data center;

- From a land use prospective, substations served different functions, varied in size, and all contained tall equipment with an industrial appearance;

- Staff stated that they were not aware of any height restrictions for substations, and this would depend on the voltage and equipment use, clearance concerns, and could not address in the Zoning Ordinance;

- Staff clarified that the collocation and alternative standard was particular to Fairfax County and dated to the 1959 Zoning Ordinance, was a special exception standard, and

would not apply where substations were by-right, was part of the light utility facilities, and the evaluation was part of the special exception process;

- Further discussion on the noise levels from substations and reasons why utility companies did not conduct noise studies;

- Clarification that when special exceptions are processed concurrently with 2232 applications, a site review would be conducted in relation to the surrounding uses;

- The proposed amendment sort to establish setbacks for substations or other light utility facilities where none existed;

- Clarification that in the I-5 district, no side or rear setback was required, a front setback 40-feet or equal to the height was required;

- A recommendation was made to increase the proposed setback from 100-feet to 130-feet to address concerns and align with existing conditions; and

- Support for the installation of a structural wall and a landscape buffer to help mitigate noise level concerns.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner relinquished the gavel to Vice Chairman Spain.

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Vice Chairman Spain called the first listed speaker.

Ronald Wilcox, 13295 C. Blueberry Lane, Fairfax, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Wilcox's statement is in the date file.

William Walsh, 6916 Westlawn Drive, Falls Church, addressed the following concerns:

- Fairfax County had a long and detailed process when considering infrastructure and development;

- The application and community engagement process was adequate;

- There were technologies, technologists, and rules of discipline in place that accomplished satisfactory commercial development, specifically with current regulations;

- An opinion that separating out electrical distribution substations for additional special exception considerations was unnecessary and may lead to delays, complications, and additional expenses to the electric grid in a rapidly growing County;

- Adding up to 14 to 18 months to an already long approval process could lead to a lessor robust power grid; and

- The expectation was for others to provide the Board of Supervisors detailed comprehensive commentary on the proposed amendment.

George Landrith, 13488 Melville Lane, Chantilly, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Landrith's statement is in the date file.

Alicia Campos, 5563 First Statesman Lane, Alexandria, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Campos' statement is in the date file.

Perry Young, 6507 Skylemar Trail, Centreville, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Young's statement is in the date file.

Renee Grebe, representing Nature Forward, supported further strengthening the proposed amendment for electrical substations. A copy of Ms. Grebe's statement is in the date file.

Whitney Redding, 7419 Add Drive, Falls Church, representing Friends of Holmes Run, provided additional recommendations to strengthen the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Redding's statement is in the date file.

Frank Tibbs, 1734 Abbey Oak Drive, Vienna, representing Clarks Crossing Homeowners Association, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Tibbs' statement is in the date file.

Terry Clower, Mason Square, Mason Square, Van Metre Hall, Arlington, representing George Mason University, addressed the following concerns:

- Provided context on the state of the economy for the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia areas, which included job growth and loss data, and the economic challenges within those areas;

- Professional and business services in Fairfax County, which has the highest value added private sector employment, had fewer jobs than in 2021;

- At the end of the first quarter of 2025, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that Fairfax County had 4,418 fewer business establishments than in 2023;

- The number of unemployed residents in the County averaged 9,600 for 2025, which was before the furloughs and the recent turning point events;

- The labor force participation rate averaged about half a percent reduction in the actual number of unemployed individuals;

- The office vacancy rate was about 19.3% pre-pandemic, a 15% below asking rents;

- The median time on the market for office space in the area was now 28 months;
- Rent growth and multifamily demand softened slightly, which was positive news for residents, but the overall signal was not strong;
- There was a slight decline on residential property values;
- Tax revenue was under pressure at a time when demand was increasing due to inflation;
- The need for salary increase to offset the rising cost of living;
- The increased demand for County services, particularly support services for individuals who had lost their jobs and were now relying on food banks;
- The cost of doing business was rising due to inflation and tariffs, along with the resulting impact on the County's infrastructure;
- Property values, especially those of commercial properties were declining;
- The County's economic projections, along with emerging opportunities in areas such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing was hopeful;
- An opinion that the economic downturn caused by the current administration would take some time to recover and repair; and
- Data indicated that the economic development strategy should prioritize retaining existing businesses, as 80% of all job growth resulted from the expansion of current businesses, rather than the creation of new ones.

There was a discussion between Mr. Clower and Commissioner Cortina about balancing the County's economic pressures to expand the tax base through data center development, with the need to maintain a higher quality of life, and attract skilled professionals in higher earning sectors, to keep the area vibrant and livable.

Holden Foxworth, addressed the following concerns:

- Substations were critical infrastructure that served every part of the community from homes and business to Metrorail;
- Substations have long been integrated into the community they served with over 50% of the County's electricity powering homes, and approximately 5% to data centers;
- Establishing and delivering a substation project have become increasingly complex, and every layer, environmental, regulatory, and community added time and cost;

- The demand for reliable and resilient power has never been higher;
- Across the country, utilities worked to modernize the data grid, while meeting aggressive carbon neutrality targets;
- In Virginia, the Clean Economy Act mandated a transition to 100% carbon free electricity by 2050;
- Fairfax County's Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan called for reductions in greenhouse gas admissions and full grid decarbonization;
- Significant grid resilience upgrades would be needed, and not fewer substations, to achieve the County's goals;
- Dominion Energy projected over 220,000 electric vehicles statewide by 2027, contributing to a forecast of 1,600 megawatt increase, keeping with demand by 2038;
- The Virginia Clean Economy Act's target of 16,000 megawatts of new renewable generation, and initiatives like electric vehicle charging networks, would all require new transmission and substation capacity;
- The available land in the County's I-5 and I-6 district parcel sizes were filtered by greater than or equal to 5-acres, and assessed improvement value or green field conditions;
- Out of all the parcels countywide, 78 I-5 and I-6, and 124 from the I-3 through I-6 properties initially qualified for substations;
- Height limitations proposed in this amendment and the existing shape of properties, the number of truly viable substation sites, decreased to seven in I-5 and I-6 districts, and fewer than seven parcels in the entire county remained developable by-right;
- The available land supply for substations represented under 10% of the industrial parcels in the County, a limited inventory to support the regions electrical and reliability goals;
- If the proposed constraints were imposed, the only way to deliver substations in Fairfax County would be through gas insulated substations, custom designed facilities that cost two to four times more than traditional stations, and those cost would be passed directly into the rate base;
- Dominion Energy's recent Securities and Exchange Commission filing anticipated 15% increase in residential rates over the next two years due to grid modernization costs, and initial zoning related mandates would compound those costs;
- The proposal would weaken the County's economic competitiveness relative to neighboring jurisdictions;

- Reliable and resilient power was the foundation of Fairfax County's clean energy and economic future;

- A recommendation that the proposed amendment's final form preserve flexibility for substations within industrial zones, and aligned with the County's climate and economic goals; and

- Restricting substation facilities would make their development more difficult and costly.

There was a discussion between Ms. Bishop, Mr. Foxworth, and Commissioner Niedzielski-Eichner regarding the following:

- Clarification on the basis for Mr. Foxworth's calculations on the number of parcels in the I-5, I-6, and I-3 through I-6 districts for electrical substations;

- A request that Mr. Foxworth provide the Commission with the total number of parcels that would be available for substations in the absence of any County regulation;

- Clarification on the various criteria applied to identify and filter parcels suitable for substation projects and development;

- Staff clarified that the setback and screening standards proposed would apply in all districts where substations were allowed;

- The reason for Mr. Foxworth's recommended constraints for electrical substation projects;

- A discussion on Dominion Energy's setbacks requirements for electrical substations;

- Mechanisms within the current 2232 process, the substation site planning process, and Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity filing to energize substation facilities, had opportunities for public comment, collaboration with utility companies to implement additional requirements to deliver substations; and

- A suggestion that the special exception application process be completed prior to the 2232 application process, assuring the cost for design and deploying a substation require a special exception prior to the 2232 submission.

David Shephard, 7309 Idylwood Court, Falls Church, addressed the following concerns:

- The community needed the power and energy from the substations;

- Concerned about the negative business climate in Fairfax County; and

- Concerned that it would become more difficult to build or expand, yielding higher energy costs.

Douglas Bell, opposed the proposed amendment and addressed the following concerns:

- The proposed amendment included various design restrictions targeting potential noise impacts associated with substations, specifically restrictions that included setbacks and required fencing around substations;
- An opinion that the proposed limitations would impose a burden on utilities without achieving any of the intended goals;
- Noise from a substation would be controlled by the Fairfax County Noise Ordinance;
- The limits were determined by receiving property use that ensured residential districts were protected;
- The proposed amendment recommended increase setbacks and provided mandatory solid fencing and screening around substations;
- Since the regulatory limits already dictated acoustic design, the proposed requirements provided no added benefit to the community;
- Several effective tools were utilized to assess noise impacts, and recommendations were offered to mitigate those impacts when warranted;
- Other options beyond setbacks and screening could also be used to control substation noise;
- Reviewed a report entitled Electrical Substations and Battery Energy Storage Systems, Noise Findings and Recommendations prepared for ZAD and dated April 30, 2025. This report did appear to recommend additional acoustic restrictions;
- Industrial projects were successful in balancing objectives for utilities with the need for an acceptable sound environment and community;
- The community defined objective standards to service goals for utilities to achieve, and they commissioned a sound study to determine feasibility with regard to achieving these goals;
- Post construction sound measurements were conducted to verify performance and to identify problems to be corrected;
- Fairfax County's community was best served by addressing noise through the framework of the existing noise regulations, which required utilities to perform a comprehensive evaluation of existing conditions and acoustic pacts in order to ensure compliance; and

- Additional regulatory requirements with minimum setbacks and required screening did not provide additional benefits to the community.

Ryan David opposed the proposed amendment and addressed the following concerns:

- Concerns regarding the added regulation for developments that already had processes in place;
- The County's existing regulatory review process for 2232 applications was adequate;
- Public feedback and commentary was part of the County's 2232 application process, concessions were allowed, and was similar to the special exception process;
- A review of location, character, and extent was part of the 2232 application process;
- Adding the proposed special exception regulation to the I-3 and I-4 districts would discourage business from doing business in those districts;
- The existing 2232 application process allowed the Planning Commission to reject an application if it did not meet the location, character, and extent of the surrounding area;
- Met with the nominator on changes to the proposed amendment, offered feedback, provided setback recommendations, buffers, transitional screening, and expressed concerns about adding additional setbacks for private streets in industrial districts; and
- A recommendation that landscape requirements be further reviewed.

Anne Schaffner, 1815 Abbey Oak Drive, Vienna, representing Clarks Crossing Holmes Association, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Schaffner's statement is in the date file.

Angelina Long, 6301 Edsall Road, Alexandria, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Long's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Jeffrey Parnes, 3153 Ramesses Court, Herndon, representing Sully District Council of Citizens Associations, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Parnes' statement is in the date file.

Delia Carmen, 5272 Morning Mist Lane, Alexandria, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Carmen's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Ben Cooper, 6511 Crosswoods Drive, Falls Church, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Cooper's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Candice Osborne, 6009 Independence Way, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Osborne's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Cynthia Shang, 15121 Elk Run Road, Chantilly, representing Save Pleasant Valley, addressed concerns regarding the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Shang's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Susan Swiatek, 10621 John Ayres Drive, Fairfax, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Swiatek's statement is in the date file.

Lori Graham, 5424 Edsall Ridge Place, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Graham's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Monika Ruppert, 5265 Winter View Drive, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Ruppert's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Mark Adams, 6258 Split Creek Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Adams's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Michelle Shwimer, 6254 Masefield Court, Alexandria, representing Landmark Mews Community Association, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Shwimer's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Lily Wang, 5524 Valmarana Way, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Wang's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Alfredo Acin, 5273 Morning Mist Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Acin's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Michael Shiferaw, 6335 Summermoon Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Shiferaw's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Treffaney Lowe, 6310 Eagle Ridge Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Lowe's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Lori Baumel, 6253 Edsall Road, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Braumel's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.
Vice Chairman Spain announced a change in the order for speaker testimony.

Elizabeth Ende, 1425 Laburnum Street, McLean, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Ende's statement is in the date file.

Ethan Heintzelman addressed the following concerns:

- Concurred that historically Dominion Energy had not proven to be a good neighbor;
- Additional consideration should be given for data centers developed within close proximity to existing residential homes;
- Attended one of Dominion Energy's open houses where they attempted to explain their process for adding high voltage substations within resource protection areas and voiced concerns with the design and location;
- The special exception process was not an automatic denial but a conversation to educate the community; and
- Concerns regarding Dominion Energy's intent for future substations.

Lynne Strobel, representing Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C., supported the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Strobel's statement is in the date file.

Brian Sterling, 6186 Veneto Terrace, Alexandria, representing Save Bren Mar Coalition, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Sterling's statement is in the date file.

Tyler Ray, 6186 Veneto Terrace, Alexandria, representing Bren Point Homeowners Association, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Ray's statement is in the date file.

Vice Chairman Spain called for speakers from the audience. There being no additional speakers from the audience, she requested that the remaining YouTube testimony be resumed.

Eric Baumel, 6253 Edsall Road, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Braumel's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Austin Nguyen, 26061 Iverson Drive, Chantilly, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Nguyen's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Christopher Oliver, 6325 Burgandy Leaf Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Oliver's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Pamela Barry, 5585 First Statesman Lane, Alexandria, opposed the proposed amendment. A copy of Ms. Barry's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Timothy Pendergrass, 5448 Edsall Ridge Place, representing Ridges at Edsall Community, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Pendergrass' YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Damir Horvat, 6222 Split Creek Lane, Alexandria, required that all new substations comply with the proposed amendment. A copy of Mr. Horvat's YouTube testimony can be viewed by contacting the Fairfax County Cable and Consumer Services, Channel 16.

Further discussion between Ms. Bishop and Commissioner Niedzielski-Eichner regarding the following:

- Staff noted that the proposed substation, located at Edsall Road, was included on the site plan that was approved with the data center buildings, it was visible, and there was an added note that stated that the site plan approval did not include the substation use;

- The Department of Land Development Services indicated that after the 2232 application review process was completed, if approved, a site plan revision would be required to establish the substation use;

- The 2232 application for a substation located at Edsall Road was accepted and was in the review process;

- The draft language in the staff report included different timeframes to meet requirements for substations;

- Staff confirmed that in the data standards, substations with equipment for data centers that were adjacent to residential properties, if that equipment was on the other side of the building, then it needed to be 300 feet away, and that was partly why there was a proposed range and setbacks included in the staff report;

- Staff recommended a range for setbacks and that range was included in the staff report, and while staff recommended a 100 foot setback, a range of up to 300 feet was included to match the data center standard;

- Staff clarified that a substation was a separate use, was considered a light utility, and was considered under the Zoning Ordinance;

- Clarification that substations on a leased portion of a data center property or served a data center, they were also connected to an energy grid, and served other users;

- Staff stated there were recommendations on the outcome of the Zoning Ordinance amendment as mentioned, and they recommended adoption of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment; and

- Staff further clarified that the proposed substation located at Edsall Road was subject to a 2232 review which would be heard by the Planning Commission at a date to be determined.

There being no further comments or questions from the Commission, and staff had no closing remarks; therefore, Vice Chairman Spain closed the public hearing and recognized Commissioner Niedzielski-Eichner for action on this proposed amendment.

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Commissioner Niedzielski-Eichner made closing remarks and voiced his intent to defer consideration on the proposed amendment for one week to work with Commissioners and staff on possible revisions, and to finalize a recommendation for Board of Supervisors consideration.

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Commissioner Niedzielski-Eichner MOVED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION DEFER THE DECISION ONLY FOR THE PROPOSED ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT FOR ELECTRICAL SUBSTATIONS TO A DATE CERTAIN OF OCTOBER 22, 2025, WITH THE RECORD REMAINING OPEN FOR WRITTEN TESTIMONY.

Commissioners Landgraf and Batchelor-Causey seconded the motion which was carried by a vote of 11-0. Commissioner Sargeant recused himself from the public hearing and the vote.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner resumed duties of the Chair.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner announced his plan to submit a draft of the main motion for the proposed amendment to the Commission for review. He welcomed any suggested amendments to the main motion.

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The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 a.m.
Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, Chairman
Jeremy Hancock, Secretary

Audio and video recordings of this meeting are available at the Planning Commission Office, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552, Fairfax, VA 22035.

Minutes by: Samantha Lawrence
Approved on: January 14, 2026

Nicole Blackwell, Clerk to the
Fairfax County Planning Commission

County of Fairfax
Commonwealth of Virginia

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 2nd day of 02 20 26 by Nicole Blackwell

Signature of Notary

Notary Seal

Notary registration number: 8050379

Commission expiration: 03/31/2027

JESSICA NATALIE FUENTES-MARTINEZ
NOTARY PUBLIC
REG. #8050379
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES MARCH 31, 2027