

AT A MEETING OF THE GLOUCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS HELD ON THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE THOMAS CALHOUN WALKER EDUCATION CENTER AUDITORIUM, 6099 T. C. WALKER ROAD, GLOUCESTER, VIRGINIA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order, and Ms. Steele took roll call.

THERE WERE PRESENT: Kevin M. Smith, Chair
Ashley C. Chriscoe, Vice Chair
Phillip N. Bazzani
Kenneth W. Gibson
Christopher A. Hutson
Michael A. Nicosia
Robert J. Orth

THERE WERE ABSENT: None

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Edwin "Ted" Wilmot, County Attorney
Carol Steele, County Administrator

The following members of the Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad Board and Building Committee were also present: Chief J. D. Clements, Bruce Soles, Joe Lenderman, and Sean McNulty.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance – Ashley C. Chriscoe – Vice Chair, Board of Supervisors

Mr. Chriscoe gave an invocation and then all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

3. Public Comment Period

The following comment was submitted through the alternate submission methods and was read by the Deputy Clerk:

KENNY HOGGE, SR. - GLOUCESTER POINT DISTRICT

Mr. Hogge noted that the Board would be discussing ownership, cost, and funding of a very important element of the County's infrastructure. He noted he did not agree with building a large firehouse on Main Street. He recommended a smaller house that was EMS (Emergency Medical Service) heavy and fire light, with heavier assets at a central location. He stated that it was time to tone down the social fun and games party funded by the taxpayers and prioritize legitimate government functions. Once the money was borrowed for the fire station, he asked how the Board would fund the hole that the utilities department was in. He recommended an ordinance dedicating all meals tax revenue to utilities.

Those in attendance made the following remarks:

W. L. JOHNSON – ASST. CHIEF 6 - GLOUCESTER VOLUNTEER FIRE & RESCUE

Mr. Johnson stated that he wanted to clarify the comments made by Mr. Hogge. He noted that he had spoken with Mr. Hogge today. Mr. Hogge's understanding was that there was only one ladder truck in the County. Once it was explained that Abingdon had its own ladder truck, Mr. Hogge apologized for his lack

of education. A problem with the Page site was the call time. He stated that there would be a longer response time from that site as the time for volunteers to get to Page and then to the Courthouse for calls would be excessive. He advised that Mr. Hogge apologized on 411 for his lack of knowledge.

SUSAN AUSTIN - NAXERA

Ms. Austin stated that she attended the Daffodil Festival this weekend. The fire department in the parade was exciting and well received. No one could object to having fire trucks on Main Street.

4. Discussion with Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue

Mr. Lenderman stated that he would start with a small presentation. He showed a mockup of the proposed station. He reviewed the history of the fire department from its founding in 1937. He advised that they had 165 active members and that they were running increasingly higher call volumes each year. He asked Keith Driscoll of Little Diversified Architectural Consulting to present the next few slides.

Mr. Driscoll stated that he had been working with Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue for several years. He started with an evaluation of the existing location on Main Street. He noted that the station was built in the 1930s and had been renovated many times since then. He advised that the current station was 12,000 square feet, and the new station needed to be 25,000 square feet. He reviewed the need for the increased size. He advised that the apparatus bays needed to be larger. He stated that the industry had changed over the years and there was a need for contamination separation between the living quarters and the station. He noted that the mechanical systems in the current station were nearing the end of their life, and that additional accommodation space was needed for 24/7 staff. He stated that they first considered renovating the current station but that was not feasible. Next, they considered building a new two story station on the existing site. As they would not be able to run calls from the site while the new station was under construction, that would have required a temporary station at a cost of \$1.5 million. This was one of the main reasons for deciding to build a new station on the new site. The proposed new station would be a combined development on the site with the fire station, administration, and residence quarters in the front and a dedicated training facility in the back. As of 2023 the estimated hard cost was approximately \$15.5 million. He discussed the design elements to match the aesthetic on Main Street. He noted that on the site plan they would be putting parking on the side of the station with access in the back. He showed some of the floor plan designs. He advised that as of the last estimate in October 2024 the hard cost was \$16.2 million. He stated that did not include LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) compliance.

Mr. Lenderman stated that the department had routinely said that they would like to keep ownership of the building and have the Board fund them as they do currently. He highlighted some of the costs that would be saved using this method.

He noted that if the County owned the building and LEED compliance was required, then there would be an additional cost of approximately \$1 million - \$1.2 million for construction and certification. He then reviewed what Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue had already contributed to the project to include the purchase of the property, demolition of the structure, property taxes, Phase 1 resource reports, property appraisal, and the A&E (architectural and engineering) expense for a total of approximately \$2.2 million. He reviewed other projected costs that Gloucester Fire and Rescue would be maintaining throughout the project to include soft costs, additional A&E, the construction manager, and an owner's contingency. He stated that they wanted to provide certain assurances to the citizens and the Board to address. He reviewed the assurances stating that they would draw up a contract noting that at the time that they could no longer fulfill obligations to provide emergency services, they would turn over all Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue buildings and equipment to the County. They will contribute \$1 million to start the process of construction. Once the construction was completed and operations began at the new station, they will turn over the current properties to the County. Finally, he showed a slide with the call volume by location over the last five years. He noted that the courthouse area had the highest volume and included three of the senior facilities.

Mr. Bazzani asked about the costs for the training facility and questioned if that much space was needed.

Mr. Lenderman reviewed that they have had classes with as many as 50-60 attendees. During the monthly membership meetings, they could have 100 or more members in attendance.

Mr. Nicosia stated that he had been in the current building when the training room and both classrooms had been full to capacity.

Mr. Bazzani recommended going through some of the questions Mr. Wilnot provided after the last meeting and that were handed out this evening.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that some of the fire department members may be seeing the questions for the first time. He noted that the Board had taken an action last year to state the fire department would be built on Main Street. He stated that some of the questions needed work. He noted that the fire department had stated before and tonight that when they were unable to fulfill their duties, they would turn the station over to the County. He stated that as for ownership, he did not think the County needed to own this station as it did not own any of the others. He thought that County staff needed to be made available to assist, but the fire department should be able to get a good builder to build the station.

Mr. Hutson asked when and if the fire department became paid, would there be space to move the EOC (Emergency Operations Center).

After brief discussion, Mr. McNulty stated that if the department got to the point that they could not fulfill its duties and the station would need to be paid, then

the department would turn the keys over to the County. It would be up to the County and the Board to decide what to do with it at that time.

Mr. Lenderman stated that they had also started looking at some of the property surrounding the new site that they may want to purchase for future expansions. They have started talking about how they can plan for expansion and to avoid becoming land locked again.

Dr. Orth thanked the fire department for taking the time to meet with the Board and to provide the presentation on the building. He thought that it would be a neat and beautiful facility for Main Street. This will be a significant undertaking between the two groups. The fire department has already addressed some of the questions Mr. Wilmot had drafted regarding ownership. He noted that the Board wanted to make sure things go smoothly and that there were no hiccups. He stated that the Board wanted to get past this to get the job done and to get fire and rescue into its new place as soon as possible.

Mr. Lenderman stated that they had already started looking at some of the questions. He advised that they were planning, with the help of the Board and Administration, to navigate the pitfalls and land mines so they were not breaking any rules. He noted that they wanted to do this as cost efficiently as possible. He stated that as a private entity, some of the procurement rules did not apply to them but some were good practice.

Board members asked questions about the construction manager and fund drives.

Mr. Lenderman advised that they had hired Mr. Jay Hobbs as the construction manager for the project. He noted that they have had a capital campaign going on for several years trying to raise a large donation amount.

There was additional discussion on the future needs of the fire department and budget forecasting.

Mr. Nicosia stated that one of the questions he heard from citizens was when was the fire station going to be built. If the Board were to approve the funds, and the shovels were in the ground, he asked how long it would take for the station to be built.

Mr. Driscoll stated that it was a 14 month construction timeline.

There was additional discussion on LEED certification and costs.

Mr. Lenderman noted that they had designed the building to be very close to LEED certified.

Mr. Smith noted that one of Mr. Wilmot's questions was related to procurement and whether the station would go through the County's process. He asked whether the County's funding mechanism would allow the station to be procured by the fire department.

Mr. Lenderman noted that this may require additional discussion; however, the fire department had built facilities with funding from the Board without going through the County's procurement process.

Ms. Calloway stated that the question was asked of the County's financial advisor and bond counsel, and it did seem to depend on the funding mechanism and how the funds were disbursed. She stated that if the funds were provided as a lump sum in the form of a grant to the fire department, then there should not be any requirements. If the County would be disbursing bond funds directly to vendors, then there may be a requirement to go through the County's procurement process.

There was additional discussion on the funding mechanism and timing.

After additional discussion, Dr. Orth asked Mr. Wilmot how best to move forward in working with the fire department.

Mr. Wilmot suggested a small committee with two Board members and two fire department members to work out a tentative arrangement that would be acceptable to the committee. The arrangement could then be presented to both bodies. He suggested Mr. Chriscoe and another Board member.

Mr. Lenderman noted that they had already started speaking to an attorney to draft an agreement with the County. He stated that they were willing to move forward with a committee and their attorney working together with the County's attorney.

There was some additional discussion on the questions that the agreement should answer.

In response to a question from Mr. Nicosia on whether the contract would be binding for the future or whether it could be changed by future Boards, Mr. Wilmot stated that it could be structured to be iron clad. He noted that the Board members could not obligate themselves to future debts, but it could come up with an agreement that could be tied to the period of financing, after the financing, or no restrictions at all.

Dr. Orth stated that the budget process was in full swing. He asked if the Board needed this information before it adopted the budget or whether it could be worked out afterwards.

Ms. Steele stated that there would not be an expense in the FY26 budget but in FY27. She advised that a narrative could be in the budget resolution so that it was clear. She stated that the good news was that with either of the funding sources, the process could start any time.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to form the committee. Mr. Smith stated he and Mr. Chriscoe would serve from the Board.

Mr. Lenderman advised that they would continue to move forward in getting the construction documents.

Mr. Bruce Soles, Gloucester Volunteer Fire and Rescue, stated that he, Mr. McNulty, and Mr. Van Atta would serve on the committee.

Mr. Chriscoe recommended that the Board members provide their input on what should be in the agreement to him and Mr. Smith as soon as possible.

Mr. Hutson asked the fire department members how they would feel if for some reason the County had to own the building for financing purposes.

Mr. McNulty stated that the answer would probably be different for each member. He stated that he would not support that.

Chief Clements stated that it was important for the fire department to own the building, control it, and run it.

Mr. Lenderman stated that he felt some of the concerns had been addressed this evening. He noted that the contract would state that when they can no longer serve the public then the department will turn over all the equipment and all land to the County.

After additional brief comments, Mr. Smith noted that the committee would set a time to meet to move forward.

5. Adjournment

Dr. Orth moved, seconded by Mr. Nicosia, to adjourn. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

Kevin M. Smith, Chair

Carol E. Steele, County Administrator