



## Board of Supervisors

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Michael T. Smith  
Interim County Administrator

July 1, 2022

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors of Stafford County:

I am pleased to present to you and the citizens of Stafford County, the Adopted Fiscal Year 2023 County Budget totaling \$818,245,420, including all services. This Budget focuses on making sustainable decisions by implementing a strategy that prioritizes community needs and honoring budget commitments.

Strength comes in all shapes and forms, and the Stafford County community stands united, whether impacts come from an ongoing pandemic or new economic challenges. Staff continues to develop new and innovative ways to provide services to withstand unprecedented issues and ever-changing tasks. More importantly, the FY2023 Budget addresses these impacts while leaning forward with a strategic focus.

**Dedication to Financial and Strategic Planning:** The Board reviewed several aspects of the current market and economic impacts and decided to move the real estate property tax rate to \$0.85 from \$0.97 per \$100 assessed value. In an unprecedented move, the Board also moved the personal property tax rate to \$5.49 with a 50% assessment to accommodate the dramatic rise in used vehicle values. The Board continues to implement sound financial practices to ensure the continuance of the County's Triple-AAA bond rating.

### Budget Drivers

With a housing market that grew 16% in one year amidst inflationary pressures toppling over 8% on the consumer price index, the economic environment is moving from COVID impacts into the ongoing supply chain and employment market challenges. Stafford also continues to see significant growth pressures with a large student population makeup, one of the fastest-growing populations in Virginia and several transportation hotspots. Advancing strategic priorities has never been more critical to ensure the County remains robust and high-quality service remains intact.

The Stafford County community has never been more resilient, stands together no matter the challenge, and never misses the opportunity to move the community forward.

**Meeting community commitments:** Whether it is supporting the community, meeting new mandates or honoring fiscal policy practices, the FY2023 Budget supports improved or maintained services to uphold ongoing obligations. COVID-19 required several hard decisions from the Board of Supervisors, including changes to our policy requirements. This Budget recalibrates those financial policies for capital, contingency and preservation. Furthermore, new Minimum Wage and Overtime laws go into implementation in this Budget, along with increased retirement and insurance costs.

- **Regional and partner responsibilities:** Serving the community includes those functions not entirely served by the local government. The Rappahannock Regional Jail and the Juvenile Detention Center had a total increase of \$800K to provide direct services to our residents. A thriving community also requires programs with community partners like the Public Library and community nonprofits. The FY2023 Budget continues this vital commitment with over \$700K of new and ongoing funding.

**Enduring ever-changing market and economic impacts:** A balanced budget approach requires a sustainable position to address market and economic implications alongside growth pressures. Stafford County has become synonymous with growth throughout the years. The FY2023 Budget incorporates steadfast pledges in public safety



increases for Fire and Rescue and the Sheriff's Office staff increases alongside social service case support.

- **Workforce Investment:** Stafford County and the rest of the nation are experiencing unprecedented job openings resulting in extremely low unemployment rates. From April 2020 to December 2021, Stafford's unemployment rate fell 75%, putting retention and recruitment in jeopardy. The FY2023 Budget provides a 1.5% pay increase for the general government and public safety to withstand current market conditions and competition. Again, inflation alongside gas prices has climbed sharply, putting unforeseen pressures on the workforce. To mitigate this market condition, the Budget includes a 3.5% increase for the general government salary scales and a 2.75% for the public safety step plan.

**Propelling the County forward through strategic prioritization:** The Board of Supervisors implemented the County's first-ever strategic plan three years ago. In that plan, the Board set three-year priorities. Those three-year priorities are due in FY2023 making this Budget the final culmination of strategic investment to reach the community's 2040 Vision. These investments include advancing health growth and recreation efforts with cultural and resource funding. New positions in Information Technology and other internal departments support service excellence to ensure that a secure and risk-mitigating environment has the proper resources and people to execute the plan forward. This guiding framework builds upon emergent and capital needs while building a bridge to the next fiscal year.

- **Roads:** The FY2023 Budget continues to dedicate transportation funding for Road Bond projects from Personal Property and capital construction resource support. These efforts include approximately \$7M in improving our roads for our community to support bond and safety projects. Measures do not stop there, as nearly \$3M in funding will go to new and continuing road projects like the Staffordboro sidewalk and Steganiga Road intersection improvement.
- **Education:** Board support for K-12 education continues by providing record-level transfer increases to the tune of \$8M. This education support demonstrates the commitment to teacher and bus-driver salary increases alongside per pupil and school resource funding. This funding meets the Superintendent's budget request and includes significant increases in Private and Public Day School funding to care for our most vulnerable.
- **Safe Neighborhoods:** Outside of the continued public safety commitments, this Budget provides and commits to keeping the community safe and secure through strategic prioritization. A major initiative is the implementation of body cameras for Deputies using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the FY2023 Budget. Additionally, the County's 911 Center is provided with four new public communication officers positions strengthening the first touchpoint of our community's safety. Fire and Rescue see Budget increases for information technology, training and certification, and equipment replacement.

The previous years, from 2019 to 2021, tested the fabric of Stafford County Government's service, ingenuity and commitment. Years before COVID-19, Stafford was already meeting the impacts of growth, which have only continued its ongoing pressures. In 2022, our community faces unprecedented market and economic challenges not seen in 20 years or more. Yet, our resiliency has never ceased. Our services continue to be answered, our parks and recreation opportunities are open, building and inspections continue, offices are open and welcoming and clean water proceeds to pour from our faucets. Our Board, community and staff are committed to building a community where



heart, home and a healthy business environment thrive through strategic prioritization and sustainable positioning.

I want to thank all County staff and constitutional officers for their outstanding work in the development of this Budget. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Budget and Management Department for their efforts and the Board of Supervisors for all their time and effort. And most especially, thank you to the citizens of Stafford County for allowing us to make a difference in your lives and the community we serve every day. I present you with Stafford County's Adopted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget for further detail on these budget initiatives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael T. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and "S".

Michael T. Smith  
Interim County Administrator