

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 17, 2025
TO: York County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Mark L. Bellamy, Jr., County Administrator
SUBJECT: Calendar Year 2024 and 2025 Activity



As we approach 2026, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the tremendous progress made over the past two years. These accomplishments are a direct result of the Board's leadership, vision, and support, along with the dedication and professionalism of our County staff. Together, we have advanced strategic priorities, strengthened public services, and invested in the future of York County.

Board Retreats

The Board of Supervisors held its annual strategic planning retreats in both 2024 and 2025 to evaluate achievements, analyze trends, and identify priorities for the coming years. These sessions allowed Board members and staff leadership to discuss long-term service delivery, infrastructure needs, and funding strategies in a collaborative environment. In addition, an Economic Development Retreat was held in 2025 to focus specifically on strengthening the County's competitive position, marketing strategies, and business attraction and retention efforts. The 2026 retreat is scheduled for January 30, 2026.

Budget Development

Staff prepared and delivered balanced budgets for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 that continued to invest in essential services while maintaining the County's strong financial position. These budgets incorporated funding for key capital improvement projects, strategic initiatives, and workforce investments. The process included public work sessions and budget forums that helped align spending decisions with the community's priorities. Several new initiatives were introduced to encourage greater public participation in the budget process. Informational videos were recorded to explain different budget components, and an online form was created to make it easier for citizens to share their comments. The Board also held additional work sessions to examine specific budget areas more thoroughly. To further expand opportunities for engagement, extra public comment sessions were scheduled at the Griffin Yeates Center in the upper County and the Law Enforcement Building in the lower County.

Staff and Organizational Awards

County departments and individual employees received numerous regional and statewide recognitions during this period, including awards for excellence in financial reporting, emergency services, and community programming. These achievements reflect York

County's commitment to innovation, efficiency, and professional excellence across all departments. Some of those awards include:

- **First Place Honor for Digital Innovation:** York County has been awarded first place in the 2025 Digital Counties Survey for counties with populations up to 150,000. The national survey, conducted by the Center for Digital Government and Government Technology magazine in partnership with NACo, recognizes counties that excel in using technology to improve public service and operations. York County was recognized for best-in-class governance and data quality initiatives, integrating dashboards into planning and decision-making, and digitizing more than 1 million records using AI.
- **2025 VIRGO Award:** York County's Economic & Tourism Development team received the 2025 VIRGO Award from the Virginia Association of Destination Marketing Organizations for its Independence Day Celebration digital marketing campaign. The campaign, launched in April and running through July 5, used creative strategies such as live streams, interactive posts, and real-time storytelling to drive community engagement. On July 4 alone, the team published 24 posts, resulting in significant growth in social media metrics and a surge in website traffic, with the July 4 landing page seeing a 333% increase in users compared to the prior week. The award recognizes innovative, cost-effective marketing that makes a measurable community impact
- **APWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter's Project of the Year Awards:** The Department of Public Works Engineering Division was recognized with multiple honors at the APWA Mid-Atlantic Chapter's Project of the Year Awards. The team earned top awards for the Riverwalk Landing Floating Pier Repairs in the Disaster or Emergency Construction/Repair (less than \$5 million) category and the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office project in the Structures (\$5-\$25 million) category, both led by Elizabeth Mertz-Guinn. In addition, the Division received Honorable Mentions for the Bypass Road Sidewalk Project (Transportation, less than \$5 million, Marcela Giraldo) and the Country Lane Stream Restoration (Environment, less than \$5 million, Joe Brogan). These achievements highlight the Division's commitment to excellence in engineering and its ongoing contributions to enhancing York County's infrastructure and environment.

VACo and NACo 2024 Achievement Awards

The York-Poquoson Department of Social Services (YPDSS) has earned Achievement Awards from both the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) for its innovative Friendly Visitors Program, which connects trained community volunteers with senior citizens in the Adult Services program to reduce social isolation and loneliness. Through regular visits, participants share meals, play games, take walks, or simply enjoy conversation, helping to combat risks such as dementia, depression, and heart disease.

NACo 2025 Achievement Awards

York County earned multiple Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo) in 2024 and 2025 for programs that demonstrated measurable community impact. This national recognition underscored the effectiveness of our local government operations and showcased the creativity and dedication of County staff. The Achievement Awards included the County's projects, which are shown below.

- **Back Creek Park Revitalization:** This project expanded the County's recreational amenities by adding 12 pickleball courts, an ADA-accessible kayak launch, and a new dog park. It strategically utilized existing park space to address the community's increasing demand for diverse recreational opportunities.
- **"Take 3 Steps to Save a Life" Initiative:** This initiative launched a public outreach campaign, "Take 3 Steps to Save a Life," which focuses on preventing opioid overdoses. The program provided training, distributed naloxone kits, and raised awareness through schools, civic groups, and social media. This effort has already improved community readiness and saved lives.
- **Construction and Completion of Fire Station 7:** The County was recognized with an award for its innovative approach to expand emergency services while maximizing taxpayer resources. Strategically located to improve response times and extend coverage in one of the County's fastest-growing areas, the project transformed a closed youth facility into a modern fire station. This adaptive reuse saved millions of dollars in construction costs and delivered a facility with updated living quarters, advanced training spaces, and energy-efficient systems. The project demonstrates fiscal responsibility and a strong commitment to enhancing public safety, which made it stand out for recognition.
- **After-School Program—Herren Project Club:** York County implemented the Herren Project Club in its after-school programs to promote youth wellness, mental health awareness, and substance misuse prevention. The initiative empowers students to make positive choices and has fostered strong engagement from local schools and families.

Digital Counties Award

York County was recognized as the number one county in the nation for digital innovation among localities with populations under 150,000, and number two overall across all size categories in the 2024 Digital Counties Survey. This achievement highlights the County's commitment to technology-driven service delivery, cybersecurity, and public transparency.

Strategic Studies

Several comprehensive studies were launched to guide the County's long-term planning efforts. A Space Study is evaluating building capacity, efficiency, and future needs; a Compensation Study is reviewing pay structures to enhance recruitment and retention; and a Parks Master Plan is being developed to chart the future of the County's Park system.

Civic Engagement

Polco National Community Survey

In 2025, York County renewed its efforts to measure resident satisfaction by conducting the National Community Survey through Polco, following the Board of Supervisors' direction at its February 2024 retreat. The County's Department of Information Technology managed the project under the leadership of Director Timothy Wyatt, who transitioned the County from its 2019 citizen survey with the Southeastern Institute of Research to Polco's nationally benchmarked platform. Between April 17 and May 29, a probability-based sample of 3,000 households was surveyed, resulting in 440 responses and an additional 140 from the open-link survey, producing statistically valid results with a $\pm 4.7\%$ margin of error. York County residents rated Safety (86%), Natural Environment (81%), and Economy (80%) as the highest among the ten community livability facets, while Mobility (41%) lagged behind. Residents identified the Economy (95%), Safety (93%), and Utilities (91%) as most essential to quality of life. Overall, the results confirmed high satisfaction with York County as a place to live, raise children, and retire, while highlighting challenges in housing affordability and alternative transportation. By undertaking this survey, York County gained critical benchmarking data to inform strategic planning, budgeting, and service delivery, with staff and the Board discussing the value of repeating the survey every two years to track progress and guide policy decisions.

FlashVote

York County began using FlashVote as a quick, easy, and statistically valid way to hear from residents on important community issues. The tool sends short surveys to a representative sample of York County citizens, giving staff and the Board a clearer picture of how people across the County feel. Results are always anonymous and shared simultaneously with the public, staff, and Supervisors, helping to build transparency and trust. York County has already used FlashVote to gather feedback on the Budget Engagement Process, the Sheriff's Office, Communications, Library Services, Recycling, and Home-based Businesses. These surveys provided valuable insights that are helping guide planning and decision-making, making it easier for residents to have their voices heard without attending meetings or sending emails. With upcoming surveys on the horizon, FlashVote will continue to be an important tool for keeping the community engaged and involved in shaping the County's future.

Gov Series Program

York County launched its first-ever York Gov Series, a free, ten-week program designed to give residents an inside look at the departments, people, and processes that keep our County running. The Gov Series was created to increase transparency and community engagement by giving participants direct exposure to County operations, services, and decision-making. Through a series of sessions, residents will learn about core functions such as Public Safety, budget management, Public Works, and Planning and Development. This inaugural class reached capacity early, but the program will be offered again in the future. By starting this initiative, York County is creating opportunities for citizens to connect more directly with staff and officials while building a stronger understanding of the responsibilities and challenges involved in serving the community.

Ordinance Updates

The Board adopted a series of ordinance amendments to modernize County regulations, close regulatory gaps, and support community priorities. These updates included refinements to zoning and subdivision provisions, public safety measures, and environmental protections.

The Board proactively considered a number of emerging policy issues to ensure York County remains prepared for future opportunities and challenges. Topics included large cruise ship docking regulations, exploration of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs), casino-related legislation, data centers, regulation of sexually oriented businesses (SOBs), and policies related to landscaping and property maintenance standards.

Employee Appreciation Events

To recognize and thank County employees for their service, leadership hosted several appreciation events, including a Countywide picnic and an evening at a local hockey game. These events fostered camaraderie, boosted morale, and reinforced the County's commitment to supporting its workforce.

BOS Rules and Procedures Manual

The Board of Supervisors' Rules and Procedures Manual was updated to include a formal Code of Ethics, reinforcing transparency, integrity, and accountability expectations. Additional budget meetings were added to the annual schedule to enhance oversight and public engagement.

Capital Construction Projects

Several major capital projects advanced during this period. These include the new Law Enforcement Building, Planning and Development Services facility, Yorktown Welcome Center, Social Services and Fire & Life Safety complex, and new office space for

Information Technology and Economic Development. These projects support improved service delivery, public access, and operational efficiency.

Economic Development

I am pleased to share the FY25 summary of the Economic Development Authority's (EDA) business grant activity, which shows a remarkable increase in both grant allocations and economic impact compared to FY24. In FY25, the EDA awarded 45 grants totaling \$763,722.64, leveraging \$13,820,432.34 in private investment by York County businesses—including \$1,500 in veteran and SWaM (Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned) business bonuses. By contrast, FY24 saw just \$68,789.53 in total grant funding and \$464,268.42 in private investment. This year's grants supported a wide range of business needs, from equipment purchases, property improvements, and technology upgrades to marketing initiatives and major construction or renovation projects. A new Marketing Grant program was also launched in FY25, receiving strong participation alongside the EDA's existing Business Growth, Development Incentive, Façade Improvement, E-Commerce, and Google Business View Grant programs.

Strategic Capital Utilities Plan Adoption

The Board adopted the revised Strategic Capital Utilities Plan developed by the Department of Public Works, which establishes a long-term framework for prioritizing infrastructure projects and guiding capital investments across the County.

As we look ahead to 2026, these accomplishments stand as a testament to what can be achieved through collaboration, vision, and commitment to public service. I am grateful for the Board's leadership in driving this progress, and I look forward to continuing our work together to build upon this strong foundation for York County's future.

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