

The Smithfield Town Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Members present:**

T. Carter Williams – Mayor  
Michael Smith – Vice Mayor  
Randy Pack  
Beth Haywood  
Valerie Butler  
Wayne Hall

**Members absent:**

Renee Rountree

**Staff present:**

Michael Stallings - Town Manager  
Lesley King – Town Clerk  
Ellen Minga – Town Treasurer  
Alonzo Howell – Chief of Police  
Tammie Clary – Community Development & Planning Director  
Ashley Rogers – Human Resource Director  
Amy Novak – Director of Parks and Recreation  
Nadya Jaudzimas – Administrative Assistant  
Chris Meier – Deputy Chief for the Smithfield Police Department  
Judy Winslow – Director of Tourism  
Eric Phillips – Lieutenant for the Smithfield Police Department  
Jack Reed – Director of Public Works and Utility

**Press:** Stephen Faleski – The Smithfield Times

**Citizens:** 25

Mayor Williams welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Manager's Report:**

The Town Manager stated that included in the packet were activities from the previous month. He stated that if there are any questions, he would be glad to answer them.

**Public Comments:**

Mayor Williams explained that the public was invited to speak to Council on any matter, except scheduled public hearings. There will be a separate signup sheet for public hearings. For public comments, please use the appropriate sign-up sheet and include your preferred method of contact. Comments are limited to five (5) minutes per person. Any required response from the Town will be provided in writing following the meeting.

Bob Hines of 216 Washington Street in Smithfield stated that St. Luke's was ready for the wrecking ball but look at it now. He continued that visionaries saved our Town Courthouse, and

it's a real gem. He stated that not all historic buildings are all original, and Williamsburg was a good example of this. Mr. Hines stated that he wanted to speak about a town called New London near Lynchburg, Virginia that had an article written about it in the Daily Press, that can be found at the following link: <https://www.pilotonline.com/virginia/vp-nw-virginia-tavern-national-register-20220220-sjibj6422jemdpnbmvsnbiojoa-story.html>. He read directly from the article "the only colonial structure left in New London recently celebrated a special milestone. Community members, friends of New London, and staff at Liberty University celebrated the unveiling of a plaque on February 10<sup>th</sup> on Mead's Tavern, which was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places. The two-story tavern built in 1763, provided meals and a night's stay to travelers. The building was later turned into a school and doctor's office before becoming a single-family home in the 1820's. Randy Lichtenberger, lead archaeologist on the tavern and founding member of Friends of New London, helped to lead tours through the building and said it actually looks a little bit worse now than it did in 2012 when the Friends of New London purchased the property. 'This is obviously a structure that you have to see with your mind, in your heart, not with your eyes at the moment, but that's a natural part of the restoration process,' he said. 'Things have to look worse before they look better typically. We're at that point right now. So please excuse our mess. Wonderful things do sometimes lie hidden under modern features, and Mead's Tavern is one of them.' It was a real struggle for Friends of New London to put the money together to acquire the Campbell County property, he said, but by the time it came on the market their research indicated it was a diamond in the rough — the last surviving Colonial-era structure in New London as well as one of the earliest in the entire region. In 2015, Liberty University purchased the tavern, and since then students have participated in ongoing excavation and restoration projects in association with the Friends of New London and local archaeologists. The first restoration phase will include stabilization of the tavern's basement which launched this winter. Lichtenberger said the addition of Mead's Tavern to the National Register of Historic Places validates the group's efforts to save a piece of early history for future generations. Sam Smith, chair of the history department at LU, always has been fascinated by the fact the tavern was built even before the establishment of the United States.' Mr. Hines explained the timeline for the New London restorations stating that in 2005 members of the local community formed the Friends of New London for the purpose of recovering and preserving the history of the town. In 2015 sale of the property to Liberty University created an opportunity for students to contribute to and learn from the restoration and preservation process. In 2017 Friends of New London acquired 3 additional properties: the African American Methodist Church which had been planned to be demolished, the New London Methodist Church which houses their office and library, and the Holt-Ashwell House which was badly damaged in a fire. He continued that modern development had engulfed part of the original town landing and archeological sites are in imminent danger of being lost. He reported that the people in the group comprised of professional and amateur historians, genealogists, archeologists, many of their members have descended from earlier residents of the New London and the mission is clear: to preserve what they can of the old town and present its history to the public. He stated that Smithfield's citizens and leaders have not come to terms with a similar result for at least the Thomas Pierce residence. Mr. Hines reported that he previously worked at waterfront lumber in the East End of Newport News for years, and Ridley Circle was right behind

that area. He continued that there was an extensive redevelopment there from 35<sup>th</sup> Street down to 12<sup>th</sup> Street that included 1 three-story building with 41 apartments, 14 two and three-story townhomes, and 24 single family homes. He repeated that this would be in Newport News, adding it would be down the street from industrial areas, and they are putting up three-story apartments. He stated Smithfield is talking about putting up five stories. He stated that in regard to the Pierceville property development much talk has been put into the 240 apartments and the 60 ft height. He added that the questions that he would like answered are: 1. Have any other members of the Town Council, other than Mr. Pack who is also on the Planning Commission, spoken with members of the Planning Commission in regard to the Pierceville project. 2. If you had to vote today, Planned Mixed-Use Development (PMUD) or not, how would the Council members vote on the 60 ft height and the proposed density.

Mark Gay of 110 Goosehill Way stated that he would like to make 3 points for consideration during the closed session this evening. He started with reminding the Council that 15 years ago Joe Luter III paid \$3.8 million dollars, or thereabouts, to prevent the Windsor Castle properties from being intensively developed with more than 200 new homes and other nonresidential structures. He compared this to the proposed PMUD today. He questioned why as his last project would Mr. Luter want to destroy an even more historical property with development that will harm downtown businesses, tarnish the Historic District, and place a severe burden on the town's infrastructure. He stated that he understands that the Luter's profit from similar developments in Denver and Virginia Beach, but this is Smithfield. He continued that they need to see a business plan. He continued that secondly they need to see who is putting pressure on the Planning Commission to act upon a proposed zoning ordinance change. He stated that per his reading the existing ordinance, the Planning Commission has decision authority unless the developer appeals formally to Town Council. He stated that in this case there is no developer in the picture. He continued that the town's expert on zoning matters, Mrs. Clary, is in the midst of the Planning Commission's discussions. He questioned who is appealing and asked if it was the Mayor or Town Attorney. He reported that the resident's are thankful for the thoughtful deliberation of the Planning Commission members thus far, adding that they think they are going to do it right. Mr. Gay stated thirdly he wanted to remind them that the Hobb's Act of 1946 is federal law, extortion under color of official right governs conduct of elected officials in public or private sessions. He continued that it was their understanding that only 4 members of council remain free of conflict of interest for the planned Luter projects at Pierceville and the Clay and James Street duplexes. He encouraged those 4 members to conduct their deliberations without discussion or written input from conflicted members as they try to influence their vote.

Herb DeGroft stated that he had been reading much about the plans for Pierceville and he drives by the site a couple times daily. He stated that he had watched it be farmed and Mrs. Crocker deteriorate and now she is gone. He added thank goodness Pierceville's house is gone because it was an eyesore. He reported that he watched the weeds and vines take over buildings and equipment for years. He continued that at least someone would finally be doing something that would be of benefit for the whole community, and he would drive by it for the next 19 years when he turns 100. Mr. DeGroft stated that he thought Joe Luter by his history had been an extremely good benefactor to the town, and he knows Joe would not do something to hurt the town. He stated

that he knows that there will be an effect on the downtown businesses but then we can think outside the box and gave the example of using the “pig-mobiles” that the tourism department drives around to shuttle people downtown and back to where they are parked. He stated that the green islands that were placed in the downtown used to look pretty, and the crepe myrtle trees still do, but they take up what could be additional parking spaces. He stated that they had a big decision as to what they would move forth with and he encouraged the Council to do what is best for the town of Smithfield and its residents. He thanked the Council for doing their job.

Elizabeth Hopkins of 320 Grace Street in Smithfield reported that recently the Smithfield Times had published a poll asking its readers “Should the Town of Smithfield create a new zoning designation to allow for PMUD?” She continued that 63% of respondents stated it was not needed, 9% stated it should only be used if it was outside the Historic District. She shared some statements captured from social media, starting with Phyllis “I think the success of the Farmer’s Market has caused Main Street to flourish. That will be a real shame if they move the Farmer’s Market.” She read from a post from a person named Maria “That’s what happens when you start over-developing. It ruins small businesses and that good small-town vibes.” She continued with a post from Robert “Smithfield will not be Smithfield much longer. So much proposed, approved, and current construction. \$\$\$ Greed and tax and money \$\$\$ and a crippled infrastructure.” She read a post from Heather “Why more houses? People moved to this side of the water for the country living.” She read a post from Susan “Are concerns really going to change the minds when it seems that plans are already in place? I don’t mean to be cynical but do any major building developments stop because residents don’t want it. Just asking.” She continued, reading a post from Candace “There are four seats open to Town Council.” and one from Howard “Someone got paid to unleash the massive growth.” She read on with a post from Sandy “I visited the Frontier Culture Museum near Staunton. It’s an amazing place to visit. What a great idea that could be used for Smithfield instead of new developments and houses.” She read a reply to the previous reading from Carol “We in Preserve Smithfield fought for over 6 years for Pierceville to be saved. And how many experts who asked for no compensation spoke on our behalf on how readily Pierceville could have been saved.” She read the reply to this from Sandy “Yes I agree. Smithfield is unique in the fact that we have so many historic spots within walking distance. A real demonstration homestead farm would have made the destination unique to anywhere else. Instead we have the typical development like anywhere else. Smithfield is not Virginia Beach. We should learn from their mistakes, not repeat them.” She read from Heather’s post “This is just sad. So much for a little town country atmosphere.” Mrs. Hopkins continued reading with a post from Lizzy “All the reasons we moved from Virginia Beach, then Harborview built up so much with crazy traffic so we moved from Suffolk to Smithfield once again to be in a small hometown, now that’s all changing.” She continued with a reading from Karen’s post “Overcrowding in Smithfield, losing its charm. How tragic. Votes speak.” She read a post from Herbie that stated “What about schools/education? Is there plans for that? All they care about is \$\$\$\$.” She continued with a post from Charise “Have you noticed the increased traffic in Smithfield?” and then a post from Catherine “We moved from Hampton to Smithfield and have loved our small town for almost 20 years. I have even changed my place of employment 5 years ago because crossing the JRB (James River Bridge) is too problematic.” Mrs. Hopkins stated that she had more pages with posts from

social media. She added that she lives in Historic Downtown and did not know any of the people who had posted, and she speculated that the posters were mostly people outside the Historic District that care about what is going on.

Tommy Gehring of 215 Cary Street in Smithfield reported that he had lived there about 35 years. He stated that over the last few years, and especially since Pierceville has been gone, the run-off from the field seems to have increased going through his yard and down to the culvert that leads to Grace Street out to Cypress Creek. He added that this pushes items into his yard, including two railroad ties that went through the pipe which he was unsure if they had been recovered. He stated that this had cost him money as a result, giving the example of his truck parked in the front yard getting flooded and his having to replace the starter. He stated that something needed to be done about the drainage as now the property was open field with the impervious soil gone and there was no telling what was going to happen.

Mayor Williams asked if there was anyone else who would like to speak. Hearing none, he closed the public comment section.

**Resolution Honoring Former Mayor Chapman for his 96<sup>th</sup> Birthday:**

Mayor Williams reported that Mr. Chapman was not able to attend the meeting, but that he, Councilwoman Butler, and Councilman Hall would be presenting the resolution to him personally. He read the resolution to all present:

WHEREAS, Mr. James B. Chapman is a lifelong resident of Smithfield, and a respected long-time local business proprietor, and Veteran; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chapman celebrated his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday on Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chapman owned and operated Pretlow and Chapman Funeral Home for 65+ years where he provided professional services to generations of families. He is a lifetime member of the NAACP, served as the President of the Virginia Elks Association for 18 years and served 30 years as an elected official for the Town of Smithfield; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chapman was elected to serve on the Smithfield Town Council on May 2, 1978. After serving his community as an elected official for 12 years on Town Council he was appointed by his fellow Councilmembers to become the first African American Mayor where he continued to serve on the Town Council as Smithfield's Mayor for another 18 years; and

WHEREAS, he dedicated himself to the community he loved in word, thought and deed throughout his tenure in public service, and has been widely recognized for his countless accomplishments for the betterment of our historic town;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, T. Carter Williams, Mayor of the Town of Smithfield, on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February 2022 do extend to James Chapman my heartfelt wishes that he can take pleasure in family ties, good health, and wellbeing for many years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, I, T. Carter Williams, Mayor of the Town of Smithfield desire to record in the permanent records of the Town of Smithfield honorable mention of James B. Chapman for all of his hard work and dedication to serving his community; and that a suitable copy thereof has been delivered to Mr. James B. Chapman.

Mayor Williams spoke of his history with Mr. Chapman, recalling when he was first on the Council in 1992 and Mr. Chapman mentored him. He stated that they were good friends, that Mr. Chapman was a good man, and a very important member of the community.

**Presentation by Judy Winslow on the 2021 Annual Report:**

Mrs. Winslow started her presentation by giving accolades to the members of the Tourism Department for the time, effort, and heart put into their jobs. She handed out hard copies of her annual report to the Council members for their review. She gave a list of the highlights from the last year that included the #IsleShopSmall Gift Certificate program, receiving nearly \$36,000 in various grants, and receiving a new van that they wrapped in marketing for the tourism department. She continued by discussing events held by the Tourism Department and how they had changed to smaller events due to Covid protocols. She reported that their implementation of “Second Saturdays,” which was a combination of the Farmer’s Market, Gazebo Art Market, Picker’s Market, and the Ivy Hill Cemetery Tours, was a great success. She continued that the Vintage Market held in May and September had both been highly successful events, and outlined the events held in December on Main Street for the Holidays.

Mrs. Winslow spoke about the creation of a “Business Wish List,” that would allow them to receive feedback from people on what types of businesses they would like to see come to the town. She stated that there is a yearly Hospitality Hero Award that is given out, but due to the difficulty faced due to the pandemic, they decided that everyone should receive the reward as they were all Hospitality Heroes. She reported that the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) approved “VA is for Pork Lovers” and “VA is for Peanut Lovers” slogans to be used by the town and county.

Mrs. Winslow lauded her marketing department for their tireless work done with print publications, digital/website presence, social media, and designing for collateral material. She discussed their using videos uploaded to their social media to increase the views to the website. She reported increases in their digital presence on several fronts, including a 57% increase in usership for the genuinesmithfieldva.com website, their Facebook had a 12% increase in followers, twitter had a 2% increase in followers, a 200% increase on Instagram, and an increase of 37% to their Pinterest page. She added that they continue to send out their Thursday “Where the Locals Go” email blast.

She continued that they had provided many different design services, public relations work, and sales work in the form of partnership with 15 area timeshares in Williamsburg. She added that there is additional sales work done at the Norfolk International Airport and the Newport News International Airport. She reported that 35 total group tours had been completed with 307 attendees. She reported a decrease in the number of visitors that they have attributed to the pandemic with a normal visitor count near 15,000 and the last reported year’s total a little over

11,000. She reported that of those 3,515 were first time visitors, with the large majority coming from out of state.

Mrs. Winslow covered the economic impact in the last year and reported that a decline in all areas of measurement was expected due to the pandemic. She added that the numbers that had been included in the report were compiled with data received in 2020 as they do not get the complete 2021 numbers until later this year. She reminded the attendees that there were nearly 6 months in 2020 where shops, restaurants, and hotels were either completely or nearly shut down. She reported that while Isle of Wight/Smithfield saw an over decline of an average of 14.2%, the state of Virginia saw a decline in all areas of 32% and Coastal Virginia saw a decline of 24.5%. She added that these number were provided by the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC).

Councilwoman Haywood inquired if the Tourism Department was going to get on TikTok as they were increasing their social media presence.

Mrs. Winslow stated that they were considering joining TikTok, however their target market at this time were not TikTok users. She stated at this time they did not want to dedicate a lot of time trying to capture a market that was not there.

Councilwoman Haywood stated that she enjoyed their “Behind These Walls” programs and that it would be an easy crossover to TikTok.

**Briefing by Dick Grice, Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors, Smithfield District:**

Supervisor Grice started by stating that the Smithfield District had a working title of District 5 but would likely have that changed to District 1 at the Supervisors meeting on Thursday March 3<sup>rd</sup>. He reported that the Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors (IWCBS) had attended the February 2022 State Legislative Session, which was the first session under the newly elected Governor. He reported that last year a State Senator Norman submitted a bill giving the Board authority to hold a referendum on a 1% sales tax for school capitol projects. He added that the bill had first been tabled by the House and then ultimately killed, never making it to the floor for a vote. He added that they had attempted to have it passed again at this session, but it was again tabled by the House Financial Subcommittee. He reported that they would try again next year and added that a 1% sales tax increase would give the citizens a choice between a real estate tax increase or the sales tax increase which the increased visitors to Isle of Wight could help pay for.

Supervisor Grice reported that on February 17<sup>th</sup> the Board held their regular meeting with a consent agenda that included many grants received being allocated out to the community. The presentations at the meeting included a Special Needs Task Force update, an update on the county’s Covid 19 status which allowed them to pass a resolution to make masking optional in all county facilities, and the NAACP chapter recognizing William Brewers, Emergency Management Coordinator, for outstanding performance and assistance. He reported that after a public hearing that heard no opposition, \$2.1 million in federal money was approved for the School Food Service Program. He continued that the County continued the bond issue and due to the Hardy Elementary build going over budget, they changed the bond to cover capital gains for the next five years. He added that the bond sold for a premium due to the county’s AA+ credit rating with an interest rate of 2.4%. He reported that the bond issue should not increase tax rates. Supervisor Grice reported that the assessment of new and used cars has risen substantially according to the National Auto Dealer Association (NADA) listings which the county uses for those evaluations. He stated that

there has been an increase in the last year in value for cars that would have normally seen a depreciation. He reported that the Board had elected to reduce the tax rate on all personal property by 20 cents. There will be a public hearing on the rate reduction at Thursday's work session. Supervisor Grice discussed ongoing issues with recruiting and hiring for employment of specific public safety employees. Supervisor Grice reported that the state recommended a numbering change and a small boundary line adjustment to the new county voting districts, adding that they asked the Board to specifically identify polling locations. He reported that these changes will have little effect on the Smithfield District, or recently District 5. He added that the district would likely be renamed District 1 and that the two polling places would remain the same.

Mr. Pack asked Supervisor Grice if the concept of the Board's proposed reduction of the personal property tax was to keep the county revenue neutral for that budget line item.

Supervisor Grice stated that the concept was that instead of decreasing the reduction of 20 cents was their attempt at not necessarily making it neutral but making it fair due to the increase in car values and not all personal property being cars.

**Council Comments:**

Councilwoman Haywood stated that she wanted to notify other members of the Council and the public that she would not be seeking re-election this November. She stated that serving on the Council had been a great experience to learn, to serve the community, and working with all the staff. She made a call to action to members of the public to serve the town, reminding them that all they needed was 125 signatures with a deadline in June. She wanted to encourage people to run for office so that they may see how the Council works and serve their Community.

Mayor Williams thanked Councilwoman Haywood and expressed his appreciation.

**Consent Agenda:**

**C1. Resolution to Approve Street Closure Request for St. Patrick's Day Parade on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**C2. Invoices Over \$10,000 Requiring Council Authorization:**

- a. Draper Aden Associates (progress billing Battery Park Road Drainage Improvements) \$ 14,220.00
- b. Kimley Horn (South Church Street Shared Use Path Design) \$ 12,858.91
- c. Blair Brothers, Inc. (Parks & Rec projects pre-approved w/ ARPA Funds 8/21) \$ 49,969.50
- d. Lewis Construction of Virginia (RO Plant BMP repairs) \$291,825.00

**C3. Motion to Approve the Use of ARPA Funds to Update Software to New Server for the Town's Online Payment System.**

**C4. Motion to Approve Proposals from Blair Brothers, Inc. for Improvements to the Intersection at Smithfield Boulevard and Colonial Avenue, Muirfield from Royal Dornoch to Cypress Creek Parkway, Cary Street (between the bridges) and Moonefield – Phase 2 from Pagan Road to Watson Drive**

- C5. **Motion to Accept Proposal from Draper Aden Associates for Drainage Improvements at Cedar Street @ Little Creek**
- C6. **Motion to Authorize Purchase of Budgeted Tractor for use by the Public Works and Utilities Department**
- C7. **Motion to Accept Updated Subdivision Agreement**

Vice Mayor Smith made a motion to approve the consent agenda items as presented. Councilman Hall seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

On call for the vote, six members were present. Councilman Hall voted aye, Councilman Pack voted aye, Councilwoman Butler voted aye, Councilwoman Haywood voted aye, Vice Mayor Smith voted aye, and Mayor Williams voted aye. There were no votes against the motion. The motion passed.

**Motion to Approve the Town Council Summary Minutes of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022:**

Mayor Williams reported that the Town Attorney was not present at the meeting and he would like to table the agenda item until the next Town Council meeting.

**New Business:**

There was no New Business discussed.

**Old Business:**

Councilman Hall reported that the demolition of the property at 1400 South Church Street known as the old Tastee Freeze, had been successfully completed.

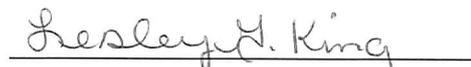
**Closed Session:**

The Town Manager stated that no closed session was necessary at this time.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.



T. Carter Williams - Mayor



Lesley King – Town Clerk