

The Smithfield Town Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. 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  
Renee Rountree

**Staff present:**

Lesley King – Town Clerk  
William H. Riddick, III – Town Attorney  
Alonzo Howell – Chief of Police  
John Settle – Community Development & Planning Director  
Ashley Rogers – Human Resource Director  
Amy Novak – Director of Parks and Recreation  
Judy Winslow – Director of Tourism  
Wayne Griffin – Town Engineer  
Jack Reed – Director of Public Works & Utilities  
Eric Phillips – Smithfield Police Department

**Press:** Stephen Faleski of the Smithfield Times

**Citizens:** 7

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

**Manager's Report:** The Town Manager was out of town and not in attendance at the meeting.

**Upcoming Meetings and Activities:**

- April 6 - 6:30 p.m. – Town Council Meeting
- April 13 - 6:30 p.m. – Planning Commission
- April 20 - 6:30 p.m. – Board of Historic and Architectural Review
- April 26 - 3:00 p.m. - Town Council Committee Meetings (Consecutive)
  - Public Safety Committee
  - Water and Sewer Committee
  - Finance Committee
- April 27 - 3:00 p.m. – Town Council Committee Meetings (Consecutive)
  - Parks and Recreation Committee
  - Public Works Committee
  - Public Buildings and Welfare Committee

**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.

Mr. Herb DeGroft spoke to Council about the discussion on computer-enhanced simulator training for the Smithfield Police Department. He stated that in today's society it is difficult for law enforcement to do their jobs unless they are trained to the absolute limit. Training significantly enhances the ability for law enforcement to respond to hazardous situations. He heartedly endorsed the Town Council approving the training simulator. He asked for the Isle of Wight Sheriff's office and the Town of Windsor Police Department to be included in the training. Costs could be shared between all three departments. If all officers are well-trained, everyone can feel safer. Mr. DeGroft asked Town Council for their sincere consideration in approving the computer-enhanced training.

There were no other public comments.

**Council Comments:**

Mayor Williams stated that on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. the Smithfield Volunteer Fire Department invited the Town Council members and others to the new ladder truck demonstration.

Councilwoman Rountree asked if any staff members knew if solar panels have been approved in the county.

The Town Attorney stated that solar panels are approved on a case-by-case basis. A rezoning and conditional use permit application is needed for each farm. There are some that have been approved.

**Consent Agenda:**

Mayor Williams asked if any Council member would like to pull any item for further discussion.

Councilman Hall asked to pull item C3.

**C1. Invoices Over \$10,000 Requiring Council Authorization:**

a. Lewis Construction of Virginia, Inc.	\$272,420.00
b. Kimley Horn	\$ 12,718.56
c. Kimley Horn	\$ 38,553.48
d. Xylem	\$ 18,880.00
e. Blair Brothers	\$ 21,468.00
Additional Invoice:	
f. Blair Brothers	\$ 51,458.67

Councilman Pack explained that the Lewis Construction invoice is a progress payment for the Grace Street Utility Project. There are two invoices for Kimley Horn. The first is for the intersection improvement project. The second invoice is for the South Church Street water tank rehabilitation project. The Xylem invoice is for the conversion of a bypass pump which is a budgeted item. The Blair Brothers invoice is for various street maintenance projects. There was an additional invoice from Blair Brothers, after committee meetings, for stormwater pipe replacement at 384 Pagan Road. Councilman Pack asked the Town Engineer for an explanation of the Kimley Horn invoice for \$12,718.56 for the intersection improvements.

Mr. Griffin, the Town Engineer, explained that the intersection improvement at South Church Street and Benn's Church Blvd. includes lengthening the turn lane by at least 200' when heading south on the bypass leading to South Church Street. It is currently well below the standard for a turn lane. While traveling north on the bypass, there is a right turn lane to South Church Street. There is a left turn lane also which is mainly used for U-turns. If the funding is available, the left turn lane will be lengthened also. It is optional at this point. Additionally, there will be a milling overlay across the entire intersection area. The current invoice is for part of the design work and the paperwork required for VDOT.

Mayor Williams asked when the project would begin.

Mr. Griffin explained that it would take about 60 days to receive bids and obtain VDOT approvals. He hopes to begin around June. He would like to get the work completed during the summer. He anticipates, if the weather is good, that the project would take 3 to 4 months to complete.

Councilwoman Butler asked about coming north into Smithfield and extending the right lane from the bypass to South Church Street. She asked if it would only be extended to accommodate traffic going into the shopping center. A vehicle has to cross two lanes of traffic to go into the shopping center at Hardee's. She asked if anything could be done about that.

Mr. Griffin stated that the area would be outside the scope of where the work would be done. He explained that there is another entrance at the McDonald's which helps in that situation. He will look into it and see if anything can be done.

Councilman Hall explained that he has noticed that during the morning commute traffic is backing up at Anna's Restaurant due to the delayed light at the intersection of South Church Street and Benn's Church Blvd.

Mr. Griffin explained that he is in communication with VDOT about the situation. It appears to be happening on the weekends also.

Mr. Griffin stated that he will confirm the problem times with VDOT.

Vice Mayor Smith asked if there had been other invoices to Kimley Horn for the intersection improvements.

Mr. Griffin stated that there was approximately \$130,000.00 budgeted for the project. The current payment would make the total about \$120,000.00. He explained that the plans are nearly finished. The budgeted amount included the site plans and all paperwork for the project. The project was funded with VDOT Urban funds.

**C2. Motion to Authorize the Town Treasurer to Release CHIP Funds Pending Approval of the 501c3 Status:**

**C3. Pulled from Consent Agenda by Councilman Hall.**

**C4. Motion to Approve Proposals from Blair Brothers, Inc. for Various Street Improvements throughout the Town of Smithfield:**

Councilwoman Haywood explained that there are several proposals for several street improvements throughout the Town. Jersey Park is included as well as others that need improvements.

Vice Mayor Smith made a motion to approve the consent agenda items as presented with the exception of item C3. Councilman Pack seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

On call for the vote, seven members were present. Councilwoman Rountree voted aye, 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 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Smithfield Packers Youth Sports and the Town of Smithfield (Item C3):**

Councilman Hall requested that the MOU go back to the Parks and Recreation Committee for further discussion. He stated that there is more information that needs to be obtained before the MOU proceeds further.

Councilwoman Rountree asked when the current lease expires.

Mayor Williams stated that the lease has already expired. The MOU with Smithfield Packers Youth Sports will go back to the April Parks and Recreation Committee meeting.

**Discussion on VirTra – Virtual Interactive Training Solutions:**

Councilwoman Rountree stated that further discussion was needed for the virtual interactive training for the police department. Mr. DeGroft endorsed the training earlier in the meeting. The videos did not work at the committee meeting so further discussion was requested.

Chief Howell introduced Eric Phillips of the Smithfield Police Department to answer any questions from the Town Council.

Councilwoman Rountree asked if the Council members were supposed to look at the videos on their own or if there would be a demonstration.

Chief Howell stated that the videos were sent to Town Council because the company rep was not available to come on short notice for a demonstration. However, if Council would like a hands-on demonstration then it could be scheduled during committees in May.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that he spoke to the sales rep and there could also be a Zoom presentation if needed.

Councilwoman Rountree stated that Council had asked the police department to consider goals for program and what the benefits would be. Council also asked the police department to go to Isle of Wight County and Windsor to see if the cost could be shared through a partnership.

Chief Howell explained that the police department has not had the opportunity to speak to Isle of Wight Sheriff's office or the Windsor Police Department. They would be welcomed to utilize the program but ownership by the Smithfield Police Department is important. The equipment would be located at the annex building where evidence is stored. The building has to be secured.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips explained that the training would be an advantage for the police department. Other agencies charge other localities for using their equipment and then everyone is paying here and there. The Smithfield Police Department would like to establish a mutually beneficial partnership with some other agencies who do not have the VirTra system. It affords an opportunity for networking with other localities to use the Town's VirTra system and in return it could open up avenues for Smithfield to train at their facilities such as driver training. As an

example, Suffolk could use the Town's VirTra system and Smithfield could use Suffolk for driver training without having to pay for it. It eliminates those types of costs. As Chief Howell stated, the Smithfield Police Department has to maintain integrity of the annex building where the VirTra system would be housed. The evidence storage has to have limited access. If another agency had part ownership of the system, then there would be an expectation to be able to use it and Town personnel would have to be available at the building to run the VirTra system.

Councilwoman Rountree asked if the evidence storage was behind a locked door.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that the evidence is locked. Sometimes evidence is housed in an area that cannot be locked such as a vehicle in the garage bay.

Councilwoman Rountree asked what the goals of the project would be.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that the cost of ammunition has basically tripled on the civilian market. The state contract should be up for renewal within the next two years. If the state bids do the same thing that the civilian market has done, the cost of ammunition would probably triple. Currently, the Smithfield Police Department buys ammunition at a reduced rate through the civilian market. The cost is approximately a dollar per round of ammunition for everything done at the training range. Right now, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services requires the Smithfield Police Department officers to qualify one time per year. Historically, qualifications were twice a year. Over the past few years, it has changed to one qualification and one heavy training day per year. There are drills to be more proficient at handling firearms. It is the biggest liability item that police officers do in their line of work. It is also one of the most expensive items as far as training. Ammunition is expected to increase two to three times of what is currently paid. He explained that the savings from the training system will offset the increase of the ammunition. The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services is increasing the minimum qualifications for firearms. There are officers that could benefit from additional drills and practices. The system can be utilized instead of actual ammunition and will improve skills and proficiency.

Chief Howell explained that the system would increase accuracy and reduce risk to the general public. The VirTra system is not a substitute for anything that the Smithfield Police Department is currently doing. This system would provide training in addition to all other training. He is confident that the VirTra system will enhance the Smithfield Police Department. The simulated atmosphere provides training to officers in stressful situations. It minimizes the risk for the officers and maximizes output for the general public. The Smithfield Police Department wants to be able to produce well-rounded, better trained officer that can function on the street in stressful environments. The shooting range does not offer stressful environments. The training is recorded and the officers can see the areas that need improvement. Instructors can alter training to produce better officers.

Patrol Officer Phillips further explained that community relations for citizens would be improved so that citizens understand the work of police officers. There are many different types of scenarios with the VirTra system. De-escalation training is important. Officers would learn that if de-escalation were done effectively then the scenario is resolved instead of turning down other avenues. The Smithfield Police Department is looking for a way to apply classroom knowledge into a hands-on scenario. New hires receive post academy training specifically geared

to the Smithfield Police Department's practices. The VirTra training is essential for hands-on learning.

Councilwoman Rountree asked if having the VirTra training would influence new hires to work for the Smithfield Police Department.

Patrol Officer Phillips believed that it would be a positive training experience for any new hires. It is one-on-one training with the officer and an instructor to make certain that every detail is being addressed.

Chief Howell stated that an applicant, during the last interview process, stated that he was dissatisfied with the training he received during his program. Chief Howell believes that if an officer feels that he can receive training such as VirTra that it would make a difference during the hiring process for new recruits. The system will benefit all officers. The Smithfield Police Department wants it to be a positive resource for all officers. However, the Smithfield PD needs to have exclusive control due to the location where evidence is stored.

Councilwoman Rountree asked about the inventory software that was purchased and if the Smithfield PD had finished implementing it.

Chief Howell stated that he received the invoice for that yesterday and forwarded it to the Town Treasurer. He explained that the PD has been going through virtual training sessions for the software. Once those are completed, it will be implemented. It will not be an overnight process, but it is moving forward.

Councilwoman Haywood asked if the VirTra training would help our officers also if someone was getting out of line. Is there training where officers check on each other to make sure officers are following best practices and not getting out of line?

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that the Smithfield Police Department does have that type of training. It was in place before the national movement to make it official. Since the George Floyd incident, there was a national push to make everything more standardized. The academy has started to implement different training. The request to the company includes a camera where the Town can film their own scenarios. He explained that the company releases about ten new scenarios quarterly.

Chief Howell explained that the training will identify officers who may need additional training. It is consistent with the national push for more training.

Chairman Pack stated that much has been said about lethal force training. He asked if there was also non-lethal force training with the scenarios.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips explained that it does not have that yet. He explained that the Smithfield PD received the updated taser models last year from Axon. The company does not have a Taser7 training system yet, but it is included in the quote. Once the training is released, it will be provided to the PD. The system is able to do training for lethal force, tasers and pepper spray. The instructor is able to give commands and create different branches for the scenarios. The student will be given correct verbal orders. It does not have the ability to do scenarios with a baton. The cameras and sensors cannot pick up a baton strike; however, the instructor can select the appropriate response from the system if an officer were to use the baton. There are many options with the system.

Chairman Pack stated that the quote is for five year warrantied program. He asked what the anticipated cost would be after year one up to year five.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that there would be no cost until after year five. After the five years, there may be service needed such as replacing projector bulbs or upgrading computer hardware. He stated that it would not be more than normal computer wear and tear. Updated scenarios will continue to be added indefinitely.

Chairman Pack asked if he was certain that future scenarios were included.

Patrol Lieutenant Phillips stated that was correct as they understand it from the sales rep. The company issues the new software updates to the police department as it becomes available.

Councilman Hall made a motion to approve the VirTra system as quoted. Vice Mayor Smith seconded the motion. With no further discussion, Mayor Williams called for the vote.

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

**Ordinance to Amend Town Code Section 22-2 Removal or Repair of Dangerous Buildings, Spot Blight Abatement:**

Councilwoman Butler explained that Town staff provided an update on Town Code Section 22-2 during the committee meeting. She made a motion to approve the amended section of Town Code for removal or repair of dangerous buildings, Spot Blight Abatement.

Councilman Pack seconded the motion. With no further discussion, Mayor Williams called for the vote.

On call for the vote, seven members were present. Vice Mayor Smith voted aye, Councilwoman Rountree voted aye, Councilman Hall voted aye, Councilwoman Haywood voted aye, Councilman Pack voted aye, Councilwoman Butler 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 March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021:**

The Town Attorney recommended that the minutes be approved as presented.

Vice Mayor Smith made a motion to approve the minutes for March. Councilman Hall seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

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

Mayor Williams recognized the Boy Scouts Troop 3 who attended the meeting to observe the meeting as part of a merit badge process. Each scout introduced themselves.

**New Business:**

There was no new business.

**Old Business:**

There was no old business.

**Closed Session:**

The Town Attorney stated that the Council needed a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing the acquisition of real property for public purposes pursuant to 2.2-3711.A-3 of the Code of Virginia.

Vice Mayor Smith made a motion to go into closed session. Councilman Hall seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

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

*The Town Council went into closed session at 7:19 p.m.*

*The Town Council returned to open session at 7:37 p.m.*

The Town Attorney stated that a motion was needed to go back into open session. Vice Mayor Smith made the motion and Councilman Hall seconded. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

Vice Mayor Smith made a motion to go into closed session. Councilman Hall seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

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

The Town Attorney stated that a motion was needed that during the closed session there was only a discussion of acquisition of real property for public purposes and the disposition or real property pursuant to 2.2-3711.A-3 of the Code of Virginia.

Councilman Pack made the motion and Councilwoman Rountree seconded the motion. Mayor Williams called for the vote.

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

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.



T. Carter Williams - Mayor



Lesley King - Town Clerk