

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, June 16, 2020, at 5:00 in the Town Hall Conference Room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Peggy Scott – Chairperson
Connie Barbour
Julia Narron
Jeremy Pearce
MaryFoy Ragsdale

Members Absent

Councilman David Steven
Robin Cook – Vice Chairperson

Also Present

Stuart Lee – Appearance Commission applicant

Staff Present

Lawrence Davis – Public Works Superintendent
Gary Johnson – Parks and Recreation Director
Shannan Parrish – Town Clerk

Staff Absent

Call to Order

Chairperson Peggy Scott called the meeting to order at 5:07 pm

Invocation

Lawrence Davis offered the invocation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 18, 2020

MaryFoy Ragsdale a motion, seconded by Connie Barbour, to approve the February minutes as submitted. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Appearance Commission General Fund Balance – \$ 18,166.25 This balance does not reflect funds needed to pay for the boat ramp project's fencing, shade sales and garbage receptacle.

Donate-A-Tree Account Balance – \$1,236.75

J. B. George Fund Balance – \$1,421.34

J.P. George Fund Balance – \$1,117.35

Project Updates

Boat Ramp approved by Council

Details & Estimated cost

\$30,000 / \$20,000 from App Comm and \$15,000 Grant from Travel and Tourism

3 Picnic tables; 1 garbage receptacle

Sail Shade: Blue and Green / white Poles

Flag pole height 25': With 1 4'x6' American Flag on the top; 2 side flags 2' x 3' Town Flag & North Carolina Flag
landscaping and some fencing

Matching fencing behind the African American Monument

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission they would not have to purchase three picnic tables because Parks and Recreation had three extra tables donated from the Rotary Club. The Commission would still be responsible for purchasing the garbage receptacle. Julia Narron informed the Commission she believed the fencing had been installed. Mrs. Scott questioned if the fencing

behind the African American Monument had been replaced. Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson responded it had been replaced. Mrs. Scott stated the overall cost of the project was estimated at \$28,000 with \$14,000 provided by the Johnston County Visitors Bureau grant program. After the completion of the boat ramp project, Mrs. Scott stated she believed there was approximately \$10,000 remaining in the Appearance Commission's general fund. With those funds, the Commission could replace a set of steps leading to the greenway and complete the landscaping for the boat ramp project.

Mrs. Narron questioned the barren rectangular area next to the concrete pad. Mr. Johnson responded the area was a planting island.

Mrs. Scott reminded the Commission they discussed replacing the wooden steps with concrete steps and decorative railings. Upon obtaining estimates, it was determined concrete and decorative railings would be too expensive. She suggested increasing the size of the steps to 6 feet because the current wooden steps are not wide enough for two people. Mrs. Scott would also like to be able to install another set of steps closer to the boat ramp, but in order to do that, the Town would have to receive approval from the Army Corps of Engineers.

MaryFoy Ragsdale questioned the type of material used to replace the existing wooden steps. Mr. Johnson responded composite decking would cost approximately \$19,000 while treated lumber would cost approximately \$8,000- \$9,000. She further questioned if concrete could be used for the steps. Mr. Johnson responded concrete would be more expensive than the composite decking.

Stuart Lee suggested the Commission consider submitting an application with AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). He explained a group would be assigned to a project and they would perform all the labor at no expense to the Town. The Town would have to provide housing for the group for the duration of the project, but this could be accomplished at the SRAC. Mr. Lee further explained the group would need the materials, a plan and an engineer on site. Mrs. Scott stated this sounded like a great opportunity the Commission could use in the future.

Connie Barbour made a motion, seconded by Jeremy Pearce, to replace the wooden steps on Front Street leading to the greenway (near the African American Monument). The steps would be six feet and would be constructed out of treated, stained and sealed wood. New wooden railings would also be installed. Unanimously approved.

Mrs. Scott reminded the Commission a landscape plan was also need for the boat ramp area. Mr. Johnson shared with the Commission the talking tree speaker which would be installed at the large oak tree on the greenway near the boat ramp area. Mr. Lee suggested more of these could be installed around historical places in Town. Mrs. Scott responded the Oak Tree would be installed as a test to determine the life of the speaker box and if it was vandalized.

Mrs. Scott further stated that for the past several years, the Appearance Commission has had to encumber funds at the end of the fiscal year because projects were not getting completed. She stated it was important for the Commission to spend the funds each year on beautification projects.

Other Ideas

Julia Narron suggested the Appearance Commission find projects that would not require a lot of additional maintenance for Town staff. Chairperson Peggy Scott agreed with Mrs. Narron stating she felt the Appearance Commission should move away from landscaping projects and focus on hardscapes, statues, or art projects. Mrs. Narron informed the Commission in the downtown area of Greenville, South Carolina they have lights in the trees, but these light are larger than Christmas lights. Adding this type of lighting

shouldn't cause a lot of work for Town staff. Mrs. Scott stated that while she liked the Christmas lights in the trees on Market Street, it did detract from the up lighting. Also, some of the Christmas lights were vandalized.

Connie Barbour questioned if staff preferred the added maintenance responsibility of landscaping or natural décor to lights in the trees. Lawrence Davis responded the lights were less maintenance than plantings. Mrs. Barbour stated she would like to see the trees on the west side of the Market Street bridge lighted. Mrs. Narron suggested the lights could be tested in one area, possibly on Second Street near the courthouse. Mr. Lee suggested contacted the City of Greenville to obtain their tree lighting plans. He further suggested that since the boat ramp area has been a focal point, then it may be a good idea to add lighting near the greenway.

Mrs. Scott stated she would like to investigate having speakers installed downtown. They could be used during the parades, for public service announcements and light music.

Mrs. Narron suggested the Appearance Commission coordinate its efforts with the Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation (DSDC) and the Johnston County Visitors Bureau (JCVB) since those organizations have more resources. Mrs. Scott responded the three organizations have worked together on projects such as the Wayfinding. It would be a good idea to come together to discuss thoughts on the Town Hall Park. JCVB Executive Director Donna Bailey-Taylor has been working with Ava Gardner's attendant to develop a plan for the front corner of Town Hall Park to include yellow roses and a statue of Ava. Ms. Bailey-Taylor investigated the price of a bench with an Ava Gardner sitting statue so people could take photos, but the cost was almost \$60,000.

Donate-A- Tree Plaque

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission the plaque had been received, but it had not been installed. The approximate cost of the plaque was \$5,000. Mrs. Scott also informed the Commission eleven trees have been donated this year.

DSDC Report

Jeremy Pearce informed the members of the Appearance Commission the primary focus of the DSDC was providing grants to downtown businesses. Since so many events have been cancelled or postponed, the DSDC decided to use those funds for \$3,000 grants for downtown businesses. Mr. Pearce also stated the DSDC was investigating ways to bring art downtown through the use of vacant store front windows.

Memorial to Billie Stevens

MaryFoy Ragsdale informed the members of the Appearance Commission that she spoke with Mrs. Stevens husband about Billie's accomplishments. It was apparent Mrs. Stevens lived a life of service to the community. Chairperson Peggy Scott questioned if the Commission wished to honor Mrs. Stevens with some kind of marker / monument in the Town Hall Park. She stated Mr. Will Crocker had already purchased a tree from the Donate-A-Tree project in her memory.

Mr. Lee suggested that since the Commission was discussing the installation of lights in the downtown trees, maybe they could consider connecting that idea with a memorial for Mrs. Stevens. Each year the Appearance Commission could identify someone who has been a light in the community and install lights in a particular tree to honor that person. Mrs. Stevens could be the first and the it could also be named after her. Potentially the "Billy Stevens Light of the Community" Award. Recommendations for the annual honor would be submitted to the Appearance Commission for approval. Mr. Lee further suggested the Appearance Commission could purchase a glass plaque for the person receiving the award.

Discussion on the next Project: Planning for 2021

Ideas:

Town Hall Park- Complete renovation: Options: Ava Statue with yellow rose garden: Planters for the front entrance

Street Trees Planning for streets Like 2nd with the Bradford Pears.

Large statue or art work

Trees for Market Street

Chairperson Peggy Scott provided a list of trees to the members of the Appearance Commission for consideration to be planted on Market Street to replace the dying Paper Bark Maples. She suggested choosing a tree that would accentuate the up lighting. Mrs. Scott asked the Commission to have project ideas ready to discuss at the next meeting.

July Meeting

The Appearance Commission typically does not meet in July, but because they have been unable to meet since February due to the Coronavirus meeting restrictions, they agreed to meet on July 14, 2020 at 5:00pm

Adjournment

Being no further business, Jeremy Pearce made a motion, seconded by Connie Barbour, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Shannan L. Parrish
Town Clerk