

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, October 20, 2020, at 5:00 in the Town Hall Council Chambers located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Peggy Scott – Chairperson
Robin Cook – Vice Chairperson
Connie Barbour
Stuart Lee
Julia Narron
Jeremy Pearce
MaryFoy Ragsdale

Members Absent

Councilman David Steven

Staff Present

Joey Price -

Staff Absent

Shannan Parrish – Town Clerk

Call to Order

Chairperson Peggy Scott called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm

Invocation

Stuart Lee offered the invocation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2020

Vice Chairperson Robin Cook made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron, to approve the September minutes as submitted. Unanimously approved.

Mission of the Appearance Commission

Chairperson Peggy Scott explained that after reviewing the minutes, there was a lot of discussion concerning beautification projects to enhance the downtown businesses. She explained the bringing of people downtown to the businesses should be a side effect for the Appearance Commission's projects. The goal of the Appearance Commission should follow the by-laws of the Appearance Commission. The idea was to make a positive impact throughout the Town.

Chair Person and Vice Chairperson

Traditionally they are voted in at our January Meeting.

- **2 nominees will be needed**
- **I will be stepping down from this position.**

Chairperson Peggy Scott explained in January the Appearance Commission voted to elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. She stated she would be stepping down from the Chairperson's position because she has served in this roll since she has been on the Commission. She felt it was important for different members to lead the group.

Financial Report

Appearance Commission General Fund Balance – \$ 15,369.66

Chairperson Peggy Scott explained the only expenditure for the month was \$500.00 for the installation of the flag pole.

Donate-A-Tree Account Balance – \$200.00

J. B. George Fund Balance – \$3,637.34

J.P. George Fund Balance – \$708.73

Suggestion for Lights in the Downtown Trees

Appearance Division Crew Leader Joey Price informed the members of the Appearance Commission that Public Works Director Lenny Branch received a request to have multi-colored Christmas lights installed in the trees downtown. Mr. Price explained tree lights have been subject to routine vandalism. MaryFoy Ragsdale questioned why not clear bulbs. Chairperson Peggy Scott responded that a lot of the clear lights do not work because they have been cut. She further stated those lights also diminish the appearance of the up lighting. Staff had decided they would remove all the white lights from the trees. Mrs. Scott stated Mr. Price was bringing it to the attention of the Appearance Commission because someone made a recommendation to have multi-colored lights installed in the downtown trees which she was aware the Town Council would not be in favor. It was the consensus of the Appearance Commission to have the tree lights removed.

ElectriCities Downtown Revitalization Grant

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission she had notified by Tim Kerigan of a \$10,000 ElectriCities Downtown Revitalization Grant. If interested, the Town could submit an application on behalf of the Appearance Commission. Mrs. Scott stated the funds could be used for any downtown projects such as: sidewalk repairs, continuing the iron fencing, or even adding blue tooth speakers in the downtown trees. The speakers in the trees would add light music for citizens and visitors that are walking, shopping and dining downtown. It could also be used during the parade to allow everyone along the parade route to hear the announcer. It was the consensus of the Appearance Commission to ask the Town to apply for the grant on behalf of the Commission.

Yellow Rose Donation in Honor of Ava Gardner

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that Ava Gardner's personal secretary would like to donate thirty yellow rose bushes to be planted in a garden honoring Ava. She stated there was some conversation that the roses would be planted in Town Hall park because of its close proximity to the Ava Gardner Museum. Todd Johnson previously contacted Mrs. Scott about this project, but there were questions which need to be answered such as: how the Appearance Commission would be involved and who would maintain the rose garden. Vice Chairperson Robin Cook responded it was her understanding the rose bushes would be purchased and the Appearance Commission would plant and maintain them. Mrs. Cook stated she would speak with Mr. Johnson because it would be an appreciated donation of the rose bushes, but would like determine if the Ava Gardner Museum would provide some type of grant for maintenance because it would take a professional to tend to the roses. Joey Price stated his staff could not maintain the roses because they require a lot of attention. Stuart Lee questioned if another organization could take on this project such as a horticultural program at Johnston Community College. Mrs. Cook responded she would reach out to the Garden Club and Johnston Community College Arboretum to determine if there was any interested in the project. She would also discuss with Mr. Johnson his thoughts about the project. It was the consensus of the Appearance Commission to do this project, but only if the rose bushes would be maintained by someone other than the Town.

DSDC Report

Jeremy Pearce informed the members of the Appearance Commission that there were four vacancies of the Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation's Board of Directors. Their meetings are held the Third Tuesday of every month at lunchtime. Also, the DSDC will be holding the Third StrEATery events every Friday and Saturday in October from 6:30-9:30pm. The Parks and Recreation Department will be holding a Veteran's Day Fireworks Display at Community Park. The DSDC is working on Small Business Saturday and the Christmas holiday, but with COVID-19 restrictions, planning has been difficult.

Project Updates

Market Street Trees

Appearance Commission recommendations have been given to Lenny Branch

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that she compiled a list of the Commission's recommendations for the Market Street trees. The list has been submitted to Public Works Director Lenny Branch for review and consideration. Mrs. Scott stated she did speak with Mr. Branch about thinning the Crepe Myrtle Trees. Joey Price responded that Mr. Branch has been thinning some of them out. Mrs. Scott questioned if some of the outside trunks could be removed without harming the tree. She believed that based on

the information provided by NC Forestry Services, those outer trunks could be removed thus helping with the width of the tree. Mrs. Scott also stated that the Town would not remove any healthy planted trees.

Jeremy Pearce questioned if the Oak Trees on South Fourth Street were going to be removed. Mrs. Scott responded both trees would be removed because it was determined they were diseased.

Boat Ramp

Steps: replace large set make wider, add another set closer to the Boat Ramp

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson contacted her regarding the installation of the steps. The contractor was currently working on the project.

Landscaping

Vice Chairperson Robin Cook informed the members of the Appearance Commission that the landscaper has provided a cost estimate for the first phase of the project. The first phase was the area between the boat ramp and the river. The second phase would be the section between the boat ramp and the greenway trail and the third section would be the area around the tables. She did talk about installing AstroTurf between the flagpole and the cement at the top, but was told it would have to be hosed down twice a week. The trees in the parking lot area medians needed to be removed and replaced. The estimated cost of the first phase (removal of everything and new landscaping) would be \$4,100 with \$1,400 of that cost being labor. Julia Narron questioned the types of plants that would be used. Mr. Cook responded there would be switched grasses and Mali grasses. Chairperson Peggy Scott stated the landscaper had done a lot of research to ensure those chosen plantings could withstand flood waters. Mrs. Scott further stated she would like the Appearance Commission to focus on the picnic area first. Stuart Lee questioned the purpose of the picnic area. Mrs. Scott responded the intent was to make it a picnic area, but other things such as large boulders or child climbing amenities (large turtle) could be added to provide a natural area. Mr. Stuart suggested having a landscape engineer develop a plan for the entire area. He stated instead of AstroTurf, a soft playground material could be used. Mrs. Narron suggested dwarf Mondo grass could be planted near the portable restroom. Mrs. Scott suggested the Commission receive a list of the proposed plantings. Mrs. Cook questioned who would remove the trees. Mrs. Scott responded she would talk with the Parks and Recreation Director about the removal of the trees

Mrs. Cook stated the up-light at the middle tree next to the Methodist church is still not working. She further stated that the leaves also need to be removed because they are blocking the up-lighting. Also, the lights of the Library statue were not working. She asked who was responsible for removing the leaves. Joey Price responded the Town's landscaping contractor was responsible for removing the leaves along Market Street. As for the lights, Mrs. Scott suggested placing small flags next to all the lights that were not working so staff knew what lights needs to be fixed.

Light in the Community

- DSDC is planning to zig zag across 3rd st. from Jewels to Howell Theater
(do we need to do anything there?)
3 Block Sections Downtown / along 70 starting east from I 95
- Where to begin
- Any information on Availability of Electrical connections
- 1.5 Globe lights
- Before we go too far approval from the town

Stuart Lee informed the members of the Appearance Commission that after speaking with Rodney Johnson it appeared it would not be possible to move forward with the project due to the lack of electricity in the proposed areas. If the Commission chose to do something similar to what the DSDC was proposing it could cost approximately \$300-\$400 (\$55-\$75 for a set of 100 feet globe lights). Solar panels supporting the lights would cost approximately \$500. Chairperson Peggy Scott explained she felt the zig zag lights was something that the DSDC should do. She suggested looking at tree lighting options or lighting options near Riverside Cemetery around to the Hastings House or even around the boat ramp walkways. Mr. Lee explained there was electricity from the Amphitheater to the boat ramp, but he was unsure if walking around that area at night was encouraged. Vice

Chairperson Robin Cook stated if the purpose was to honor Billy Stevens, should the Commission consider doing something at one of the entrances of Town. Mr. Lee stated he would investigate what other Towns have done. He suggested looking for projects along the East and West side entrances of Town that could assist with bringing people into the downtown area.

Smithfield Art Walk:

Stuart lee informed the members of the Appearance Commission that he would draft a project and proposal for the Town Council's approval. The Commission could do a paint donation drive whereby unused paint is donated for the artists. People would then submit their art proposal for approval. One issue could be obtaining the property owner's permission for the mural. Connie Barbour suggested working with the Johnston County Arts Council since they know the local artists. Mr. Stuart suggested that prime spots be devoted to murals associated with Smithfield. People could bid on those spots. Julia Narron stated she was visiting a Town and they had used white Christmas lights to outline the tops of their downtown buildings which looked very nice.

Additional comments or concerns:

Vice Chairperson Robin Cook informed the members of the Appearance Commission that she had been approached by one of the businesses owners that assisted with the funding for the traffic island on 301 South near the BP gas station. Since the area has not been maintained, the business owner has requested the removal of the sign bearing the business name. Chairperson Peggy Scott responded that the area was the responsibility of the Town's landscaping contractor. Mrs. Cook stated it was her understanding that the business owners listed on the sign would fund the maintenance of the area and fund the replenishment of the plantings, but because the area has not been properly maintained, they stop donating funds for the area. Mrs. Scott questioned if the sign could be removed. Joey Price responded he would have to check with Mr. Branch and/ or the Town Manager. Mrs. Scott stated she would speak to the Town Manager about having the Appearance Commission's concerns sent to the Town Council. Connie Barbour stated she understood that some of the Appearance Commission's projects were maintained by Town staff, she knew the staff sometimes had other priorities. If the Town has a contractor that is supposed to maintain some of these things and they are not meeting their contractual obligation then something should be done. It was an embarrassment that one of the Appearance Commission members would be approached by a donor because the area was not being maintained.

Adjournment

Being no further business, Vice Chairperson Robin Cook made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Shannan L. Parrish
Town Clerk