

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 5:00 in the Town Hall Council Chambers located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Stuart Lee – Chairperson
Connie Barbour
Tim Depp
Mary Foy Ragsdale
Peggy Scott

Members Absent

Councilman David Steven
Robin Cook – Vice Chairperson
Julia Narron

Staff Present

Joey Price – Public Works Appearance Crew Leader
Michael Scott – Town Manager

Staff Absent

Shannan Parrish – Town Clerk

Call to Order

Chairperson Stuart Lee called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm

Invocation

Peggy Scott offered the invocation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 20, 2021

Connie Barbour made a motion, seconded by Peggy Scott, to approve the minutes as amended. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Chairperson Stuart Lee explained to the members of the Appearance Commission the financial report and current year budget status.

Update from Presentation for Town Council

Chairperson Stuart Lee provided an update to the members of the Appearance Commission on the annual report presentation made to the Council at its August meeting. He stated Mayor Moore made favorable comments regarding the Commission's ability to see entire projects through to competition and their willingness to plan these projects prior to undertaking them.

Boat Ramp Project

Chairperson Stuart Lee discussed the landscaping plans for the boat ramp area at the riverfront. Chairman Lee stated that the commission should make sure they include upkeep and maintenance for one to two years in the request for quotes for the boat ramp area project.

Chairman Lee then discussed the need for three quotes for the waterfront/boat ramp project. These do not require a formal publicized bidding.

Peggy Scott stated she had talked to Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson and informed him the completion date for the plantings would not be until April 1, 2022.

Connie Barber felt that some companies may be having trouble finding workers so extending the completion date may attract more bidders.

Chairman Lee stated that at the previous Appearance Commission Meeting, Public Works Superintendent Michael Sliger was going to create a scope of work for the boat ramp project, along with a timeline. The Town Manager was asked to follow up with Mr. Sliger to ascertain the status of the scope of work.

Tim Depp felt that one year of warranty and maintenance of the plantings was normally acceptable for the contractor, with the possibility of purchasing a warranty and maintenance for a second year. Most contractors won't warranty plantings beyond two years.

Discussion with Town Manager on Landscaping Concerns

A discussion ensued about concerns of the maintenance of grass and vegetation under control of the contract between Mark Lane Landscaping and the Town of Smithfield. Town Manager Michael Scott asked for examples of failures in the ground's maintenance performed by Lane Landscaping.

Mary Foy Ragsdale used the landscape beds near the South Smithfield Food Lion as an example. She also stated this was a similar problem in 2020. She also stated that vice Chairperson Robin Cook had previously indicated that the maintenance and replacement of dead trees on Highway 70 West was a constant problem and eye sore.

Connie Barber asked how the contractor, Mark Lane Landscaping, was monitored to be certain they were performing up to the standards required in his contract with the Town of Smithfield.

Peggy Scott requested that a list be created, if one did not exist, as to when mulching was going to take place so this could be better monitored.

Chairman Lee requested a copy of the Mark Lane Landscaping Contract with the Town, if it was considered public information. Mike Scott stated it was public information and he would email the Chairman a copy.

Connie Barbour asked who was responsible for oversight of the landscaping contract and to monitor that the completed work is on time and appropriate. She also used an example of the median maintenance near Food Lion where those responsible for donating the plantings asked that their sign be removed because they were embarrassed by the lack of maintenance.

Chairman Lee explained that he had heard that Mark Lane Landscaping had recently lost a contract in at least one other community due to poor workmanship. His main concern however is the ongoing maintenance and accountability for future projects funded and approved by the Appearance Commission.

The Town Manager explained the contract for grounds maintenance was active through the current fiscal year and bidding would be completed for FY 2023 in the spring of 2022 during budget preparations. He further explained that the staff was evaluating hiring its own personnel to complete some of the work currently completed under contract and shifting other work, such as the mowing of FEMA lots to contractors, as opposed to having contractors responsible for high visibility areas. Scott further explained how bidding processes work in NC and the responsibility of the Council to select the lowest responsible bidder and how the term "responsible" plays into their decision.

Tim Depp stated that one thing the Town might consider was to break the large contract up into smaller contracts and have a requirement that only "Licensed Landscape Contractors" can bid on the contracts.

Chairman Lee summarized the concerns over maintenance and asked the commission members to take pictures of deficient areas of maintenance to pass along to the Town.

Art Walk

Chairperson Stuart Lee shared with the members of the Appearance Commission a letter he drafted for downtown property owners regarding interest in having a mural painted on the side of their building. A discussion of the letter ensued in regards to continued maintenance of the mural and who would pay to have mural painted. Chairman Lee stated that normally the entity paying for the mural would be responsible for maintaining it. He further articulated that the painter, if done professionally, would likely enter into an agreement to repair any damage for a set period of time.

Connie Barbour suggested that in the draft letter that the following words be struck, “the mural will be maintained by the Appearance Commission throughout the life of the mural” on lines 9 and 10. This way the distribution of the letter could move forward with the maintenance issue being decided at a later meeting.

Chairman Lee agreed to strike the verbiage and bring back a second draft at the September meeting. He also stated that normally who pays for the mural is responsible for its maintenance. He further stated the Appearance Commission should consider creating a retention account for repairs. He also stated that the contract with the artist should include a declaration that the artist is responsible for repairs for a two-year period. He further suggested a waiver be signed by the property owner so mural could be painted.

Chairman Lee continued that when volunteers were used, the mural would be simply painted or sandblasted over and a new mural painted, if one is damaged. This would be because there were no originating costs associated with the mural.

Ava Gardner Museum Request

Town Manager Michael Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that he had received a request from the Ava Gardner Museum to remove the pink Crepe Myrtle tree next to the museum so a mural could be applied to the side of their building that was associated with Ava Gardner. The Museum Board would pay for all expenses, including the mural. The consensus of the Commission was to allow the removal of the tree as long as a mural was painted in a timely manner. This was not without some discussion about the removal of a healthy tree in that area.

Meeting Summary

Chairman Lee summarized the action items decided upon during the meeting:

- The Town Manager would speak with Public Works Superintendent Michael Sliger on the scope of work at the boat ramp area;
- Chairman Lee would circulate the contract for Mark Lane Landscaping, once it was received;
- Chairman Lee would attempt to get pictures of examples of poor grounds maintenance and asked other commission members to do the same;
- Chairman Lee would redraft the letter to property owners in the downtown area regarding their interest in having a mural on their building. Chairman Lee would present the revised letter at the September Commission meeting.

Market Street Trees

Peggy Scott questioned when the 14 trees on Market Street would be replaced. Appearance Crew Leader Joey Price responded that the old trees had to be removed and the soil prepared for the new trees. There was concern that this project would not be completed in the fall and would be pushed back until the spring. The Town Manager suggested the Appearance Commission and Public Works settle on a date certain this fall to have the trees delivered, then Public Works could plant them on their schedule throughout the fall. October 1st was suggested. Joey Price will confirm a date with the Public Works Director.

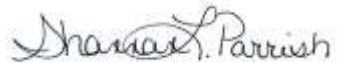
South Second Street Crosswalk

Chairman Stuart Lee also brought up that a crosswalk should be added crossing South 2nd Street between the Court House and the County Parking lot. The Town Manager responded he would investigate the possibility of having a crosswalk added at this location.

Adjournment

Being no further business, Peggy Scott made a motion, seconded by Tim Depp, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannan L. Parrish".

Shannan L. Parrish
Town Clerk