

SMITHFIELD APPEARANCE COMMISSION
Minutes

Tuesday, June 20, 2006
6:00 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Co-Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 20, 2006 in the conference of the Smithfield Municipal Building.

Members present: Kay Long; Ann Ragland; Regina Sanders; Phillip Starr; Bettie Robinson; Harold Tharrington; and Joe Morgan

Staff present: Code Enforcement Officer Mike McKinney

Members absent: Wallace Ashley, Jr.

Invocation

Mr. Morgan

II. Approval of Agenda

On motion of Mr. Tharrington, seconded by Mr. Starr and duly carried, the agenda was approved.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes, May 23, 2006

On motion of Mr. Starr, seconded by Mr. Tharrington, the minutes were approved as presented.

IV. Financial Report

1). Appearance Commission Budget in Public Works

Mr. McKinney noted the current unexpended balance remains at \$4,665.

2). J. B. George Fund

Mr. McKinney and Mr. Morgan noted there should be about \$3,500 available for the approved projects in the current fiscal year. The Town Finance Director has been asked to transfer the available funds to the Town Treasury for expenditure in the upcoming fiscal year as the projects can be scheduled by the Public Works Department Appearance Division staff.

The possibility of a finance committee to guide the financial responsibilities of the Commission was suggested by the Co-chairmen.

Mr. Tharrington noted that an extensive effort is being made by the Town Appearance Division of the Department of Public works, which is evident in the well-kept condition of most of the public spaces in Smithfield. Such excellent care comes at considerable expense from the Public Works Department budget.

V. Old Business

1). Brogden Road Entryway

Mr. Morgan reported that contact has been made with the NC Department of Transportation regarding participating in the entryway program, as well as other cooperation on entryway improvements. At a May 1 meeting with Mr. Gay of NCDOT, Mr. Morgan and City Manager Pete Connet, the following information was shared:

The questions asked and the answers received were:

- How to cut and maintain the banks of Brogden Road as it passes over I-95;

Mr. Gay advised his staff maintains the bridge embankment and will continue to periodically remove brush and apply weed killer and growth retardants. The bank received a much needed cutting this spring.

- How Crepe Myrtles may be planted along the entrance or exit ramps, as was done at the US 70 interchange;

Mr. Gay indicated Mr. Robert Simpson of NCDOT may be able to assist with planting similar crepe myrtles this year along the Brogden Road intersection exit ramps.

- How perennial beds may be planted at the interchange, as the day lilies have been planted at the US 70 interchange;

Mr. Gay indicated Mr. Robert Simpson of NCDOT would need to identify a funding source; however, at this time there does not appear to be a good Brogden Road location for the lily beds and the priority should be on the crepe myrtle plantings along the exit ramps.

- Plans for the removal or thinning of the attractive pine groves that exist in the cloverleaf loops;

Mr. Gay advised his staff maintains the pine groves and there are no plans to alter the groves in the foreseeable future.

- General advice on how the Appearance Commission can best work with NCDOT;

Mr. Gay suggested we keep in communication with Mr. Simpson, so that as improvements are made to I-95 as it passes through Smithfield, landscaping can be a part of any major construction or repair in as cost effective manner as possible.

- Advice on funding any new plantings and maintaining the existing landscaping;

Mr. Gay advised we should keep in contact with Mr. Simpson and let him know our overall plan, then perhaps he can assist with components of the plan affecting I-95 and NCDOT roads at an opportune time;

- What regulations to review in considering adding a Town of Smithfield welcome sign for traffic entering Smithfield via Brogden Road.

Mr. Gay indicated the Smithfield Housing Authority lot on the northwest corner of the Brogden Road exit is a logical location for a new welcome sign.

Additional helpful information Mr. Gay offered included:

- It may be possible to coordinate the mowing of the south shoulder of Brogden Road between I-95 and the CSX Railroad on a more regular basis, perhaps cooperatively with the Town Appearance Division staff.

- It may be possible to remove outdated, signage, no longer relevant to an on premises business or used as a billboard, particularly at the northeast quadrant of the Brogden Road intersection.

-It may be possible to obtain a permit for removing underbrush and cleaning fence lines of vegetation at key spots along I-95 as it passes through Smithfield in order to improve the visual attractiveness of the Town to passing I-95 motorists. Potential spots are the Market Street and the Brogden Roads entrance and exit ramps, Johnston Community College Campus, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, and the Industrial Drive commercial areas.

Mr. Morgan advised he plans to contact Smithfield Housing Authority Director Warren Grimes regarding an entrance sign location on the Authority property on the northwest quadrant of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and Brogden Road intersection.

Mr. Morgan suggested the Brogden Road Committee meet prior to the next Commission meeting to complete the entryway planning and the draft news media release announcing the project.

2) Chamber of Commerce Development Committee

Mr. Starr reported he will be in contact with Kelly Wallace or Rick Childrey of the Chamber staff to follow up on attending the monthly, third Wednesday, noon meeting of the Chamber Committee.

3). Update of J. B. George Approved Projects

Mr. Morgan reported that Appearance Division Supervisor Lenny Branch has agreed to schedule installation of the Brogden Road / Bright Leaf Boulevard northeast quadrant plantings replacement and the Spring Branch Second Street culvert bank downstream stabilization plantings prior to cold weather at an optimum time for planting. Mr. Morgan also advised he would be contacting Parks and Recreation Director Tim Johnson regarding the Town Commons Trail Riverside Day Lilly bed planting. He further advised coordination of the Brogden Road street yard plantings would depend on the final Brogden Road Entryway Plan and cooperative property owners.

4). East Market Street Civic Welcome Sign

Mr. Ashley was unable to attend but has started to gather the contact information for clubs with club logo plaques on the welcome sign.

5). Seasonal Decorations Committee

Co-Chairman Ragland reported Public Works Director Marty Anderson has requested a committee of the Commission to advise him on decoration selection. He suggested the committee make its recommendation prior to October. Commission members Long, Ragland, Sanders and Robinson agreed to serve on the committee. The first meeting of the committee will be by August.

6). Appearance Commission Budget

Ms. Long reported contact with the Town Finance Director, Mark Stephens, to seek carry-over of sufficient unexpended funds in the current fiscal year for needed Commission plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

VI. New Business

1). Recognition Celebration with Heritage Center

Co-Chairmen Long and Ragland reported they are planning a fall event. An early October schedule will allow coordination with the expected Creating Place Grant. A procession from the Heritage Center to the Town Hall Park, along with a visual presentation featuring Smithfield's best visual venues was suggested. Included in the visual presentation should be past Commission accomplishment and hoped for accomplishments in the Commission Plan of Work. However, emphasis is to be placed on the people that have been active in the three decades of Commission history.

2). Publicly Owned Properties Report

Chairman Long reported of a recent tour by the Co-Chairmen of Town publicly owned properties, which may need visual improvement. An example of candidate properties is the traffic island at the junction of Routes 210 and Business 70 (Market Street West). The intention of the Co-Chairmen is to provide a monitoring service for opportunities of improvement. Other examples of outstanding maintenance are the Town Park and the Ava Gardner Museum. Commission members are encouraged to add to the listing of properties opportune for improvement. Mr. Starr suggested the Town Commons boat ramp would benefit from general mowing, weed control, landscaping and mud removal. Co-Chairman Long suggested coordination by Mr. Starr with Barry Long of the Downtown Smithfield Development

Corporation regarding gathering information on planning for the boat ramp improvement. Mr. Tharrington noted several areas with great appearance: West Market Street medium; West Market Street Welcome Sign; Garris Bi-Centennial Garden; Gertrude Brady Johnson Memorial Park; Graytown Park; Sunset Cemetery; and the southern roadside entrance way, planted in crepe myrtles and day lilies approaching downtown. It was noted the current plan of work addresses the need for planning for buffers of cemeteries, such as the Oakwood Cemetery. Co-Chairman Long will continue to develop the monitoring list. Follow up action on the list will be requested through the Town Management.

3). Neighborhood Clean-up Group

Ms. Robinson reported she has agreed to organize a neighborhood group in the North Fourth Street area. She noted the problem with clean up of sidewalks with uneven surfaces until the sidewalks are repaired.

4). Guest Speaker

Co-Chairman Long reported both Recreation Director Tim Johnson and Planning Director Paul Embler will be invited to meet with the Commission in future months. One item of immediate concern is prevention of unsafe and unattractive indoor style furniture on residential front porches.

5) Mr. McKinney noted May was a record month, during which he conducted seventy-two zoning and appearance related violation investigations. He reported conducting over 1,200 investigations for the year.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, July 18 at 6:00 p.m. at the Smithfield Town Hall.