

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, September 15, 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

Shannan Parrish – Town Clerk

Staff Absent

Lawrence Davis – Public Works Superintendent

Call to Order

Chairperson Peggy Scott called the meeting to order at 5:01 pm.

Invocation

Chairperson Peggy Scott offered the invocation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 18, 2020

Vice Chairperson Robin Cook made a motion, seconded by Connie Barbour, to approve the August minutes as submitted. Unanimously approved.

Financial Report

Appearance Commission General Fund Balance – \$ 15,869.66

Donate-A-Tree Account Balance – \$200.00

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

J.P. George Fund Balance – \$708.73

DSDC Report

Chairperson Peggy Scott introduced Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation (DSDC) Executive Director Sarah Edwards to the members of the Appearance Commission. Ms. Edwards informed the members of the Appearance Commission there were several design projects the committee was considering. The downtown core has had a lot of improvements, but the DSDC wanted to start making improvements on the block of Market Street between 5th and 6th streets. This would include Tucker Furniture, Wiggs Cleaners, Crickets and adjacent businesses. The DSDC was also considering extending the brick and ironwork (currently in the downtown core) further east on Market Street. The property owner of Crickets has expressed interest in enhancing that area, but they are investigating the types of assistance that may be available for improvements.

Ms. Edwards explained that several years ago, the DSDC had a lighting survey conducted. Someone who specialized in lighting was contracted to survey every area of downtown to make recommendations on locations for additional lighting. The DSDC implemented a lighting grant to keep storefront lights burning until midnight. The DSDC has recently begun talking about adding festoon lights on the 100 block of South Third Street. The lighting would be hung from the tops of the buildings in a zigzag pattern from Jewell's Bridal Shop to the Howell Theater. At this time, the DSDC is unsure if this idea will come to fruition. Also, the DSDC is hoping to move forward with the downtown master plan.

Ideas for Next Project

- **Light in the community – Stuart**

Stuart Lee informed the members of the Appearance Commission after driving around, he determined it may be more esthetically pleasing to light a three-block section of trees instead of one single tree in honor of someone. If the Commission chose to move forward, this would be a seven to eight-year strategy that would move in a continuous pattern downtown. Since the inaugural year would be in honor of Billie Stevens, Mr. Lee thought it would make sense to light up the trees near the church where she faithfully served. The three-block section would start at the corner of South Front Street and Church Street and then Church Street to Market Street. The next three block section would be South Front Street to Market Street and the corner of South Front Street on East Johnston Street to Second Street. The first year, you would have 6 blocks completed. The first three blocks in honor of Billy Stevens and then the other three blocks in honor of someone else. Mr. Lee felt that lighting one tree on a block may look strange. He also felt this would be an effective way to get people to visit streets other than Market Street in downtown.

Chairperson Peggy Scott commented this idea could be implemented anywhere in Town. Mr. Lee agreed that this concept could be used for the main corridors into Town. This would have focal points when you drive and could help move people from I-95 into the downtown area. Mr. Lee stated he contacted some cities that had similar tree lighting and they were not forthcoming with an estimated cost. Mr. Lee spoke to a friend with the City of Greenville and their first step wasn't to worry about the cost of the lights. His friend suggested purchasing high quality outdoor Christmas lighting. Mr. Lee believed the Commission should work with the Town to determine if there were electrical connections in those mapped out areas to light the trees. The Commission also need to consider the added electric cost to the Town. Mr. Lee explained that in Boise, they have solar panels on buildings to supply power to the lights. Mrs. Scott stated where there were light poles, the electric department should have the ability to connect to the tree lights without too much trouble.

Vice Chairperson Robin Cook inquired as to the type of lights that would be used in the trees. Julia Narron responded the Commission talked about using the 1.5 globe lights. Mrs. Scott stated Perry Harris could possibly assist the Commission with ordering the lights for the trees. Mr. Lee stated this would also give the Commission a path in which to plant trees.

Mrs. Narron stated she thought this was a great idea, but she would advocate for starting on South Third Street because that was where most of the businesses were located. The ultimate goal was to attract more people to downtown. Mr. Lee responded the festoon lights would be a supplement for South Third Street. Mr. Lee explained the reason he chose Second Street was because Billy was so committed to her church and the project the Appearance Commission completed was at the Boat ramp so these section would be closest to the greenway.

MaryFoy Ragsdale stated she would like the lighting to begin on Second Street. Mrs. Narron stated she was still going to advocate for beginning at Third Street because Billy was active in all of Town and not just at her church. She felt that Billy's husband would be very touched that the Commission would want to honor Billy in any way.

Mr. Lee stated in the proposal, the Commission would actually do six blocks. The first three blocks in honor of Billy Stevens and the next three for year one's recipient. He stated Second Street could be done in honor of Billy and then Third Street could be done in honor of someone else making sure that both connect via Johnston Street. Mr. Lee stated the first step would be to contact the Town and determine if this was even feasible. Mr. Lee will Work with Mrs. Cook and Mrs. Ragsdale on this project.

- **Smithfield Art Walk – Stuart**

Stuart Lee informed the members of the Appearance Commission that in a previous meeting the commission discussed the idea of having murals painted downtown. He explained he walked around the downtown area investigating places for murals. He explained there were buildings adjacent to the Town Hall parking lot where murals could be painted. The alleyway on South Third Street between Investors Title Insurance and the Law Offices of Antown Whidbee could have a mural painted which would link South Third Street with the rear side of the buildings adjacent to the Town Hall parking lot thus creating the start of an art walk. Viewing the murals would encourage people to walk in the downtown area instead of simply driving through it. Mr. Lee provided an art walk concept to the members of the Appearance Commission. He suggested children and young adults from the area schools could work together to paint the murals. There were also other areas in the downtown where mural could be painted; such as, the side of the Ava Gardner Museum. Different areas could have different themes. Each year more sections could be added to the overall art walk.

Project Updates

Boat Ramp

Flag pole: installed (the cross bar is still coming) flags are in

Steps: Bid is accepted work in progress

Landscaping – Robin

Chairperson Peggy Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that Vice Chairperson Robin Cook has been working with the landscaper. He will meet with the members of the Commission at 6:00pm to outline his vision for the boat ramp area.

Mrs. Cook explained the landscaper had not included an estimated cost because he was unsure how much of the project the Appearance Commission wished to complete. Cost will be included with plants and installation.

Mrs. Scott informed the members of the Appearance Commission that the flag pole has been completed. The flags have not been hung, but would be soon. She spoke with Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson about the installation of the steps. Mr. Johnson informed her he hadn't spoken with the contractor. Once the steps and the landscaping are installed, the boat ramp project would be completed.

Street Trees for Market Street

Chairperson Peggy Scott discussed with the members of the Appearance Commission options for the street trees on Market Street. She provided a map showing the location of all the trees on Market Street. Starting with the trees closest to the river, there were healthy Paper Bark Maple trees and they should not be removed. Across the street are healthy Crepe Myrtle Trees and they should not be removed. The Crepe Myrtle Tree that was closest to Simple Twist restaurant was removed because of a vehicle accident. That tree should be replaced with another Crepe Myrtle tree. Heading east of Market Street, all of the dead/dying Paper Bark Maple trees should be replaced. Vice Chairperson Robin Cook stated she would prefer not to remove trees that were doing well just because they had not been properly trimmed. The Commission should try to have staff properly trim the trees. Mrs. Scott stated towards the center on Market Street there are 9 Trident Maple Trees that seem to do fine, but they are not recommended as street trees. Trees along Market Street do cause parking issues, but that is caused by improper trimming. Heading east on Market Street there are overhead power lines. Because of those power lines, only a type of tree that will grow no higher than 15 to 20 could be planted there.

MaryFoy Ragsdale suggested the Paper Bark Maple Trees be replaced with Savannah Holly Trees.

Mrs. Scott asked Connie Barbour if she found anything other than a tree to replace the dead Paper Bark Maples. Mrs. Barbour responded every other option she found was extremely expensive.

Julie Narron suggested replacing the Paper Bark Maples with the Lace Bark Elm. Mrs. Scott responded those trees can reach 40 to 50 feet. It was possible the trees in front of Frist Citizens Bank were a smaller variety.

Mrs. Scott stated the Horn Beam was highly recommended, but because of its shape, it would have to be lifted. She felt those trees and the hollies would not accentuate the street tree lights. Mr. Lee stated the Appearance Commission has talked about trees for Market Street during several meetings. He suggested choosing a tree. Mrs. Narron stated since this was a recommendation made by the Appearance Commission, provide the Council two options with cost and let them choose.

Adjournment

Being no further business, Jeremy Pearce made a motion, seconded by Connie Barbour, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannan L. Parrish". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Respectfully Submitted,".

Shannan L. Parrish
Town Clerk