

**Draft
Town of Smithfield
Planning Board Minutes
Thursday, June 6, 2019
6:00 P.M., Town Hall, Council Chambers**

Members Present:

Chairman Stephen Upton
Oliver Johnson
Ashley Spain
Michael Johnson
Teresa Daughtry
Alisa Bizzell

Members Absent:

Vice Chairman Mark Lane
Leslie Lazarus

Staff Present:

Stephen Wensman, Planning Director
Mark Helmer, Senior Planner
Julie Edmonds, Administrative Support Specialist

Staff Absent:

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Stephen Upton asked each board member to acknowledge themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES from May 2, 2019

Oliver Johnson made a motion, seconded by Teresa Daughtry, to approve the minutes as written.
Unanimously approved

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Teresa Daughtry made a motion, seconded by Michael Johnson. Unanimously approved

NEW BUSINESS

Smithfield Town Plan: Kimley-Horn & Associates and Stewart Engineering presentation of the Smithfield Town Plan.

Mr. Wensman introduced the Town Plan consultants, Jake Petrosky from Stewart Engineering Inc. and Allison Fluitt from Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. They will present their presentation which will be recorded and added to the Town website. It will give everyone an overview of the Town Plan. Next week we will have the full three volume plan to review and Mr. Wensman asked everyone to provide comments back to him. This will allow the Planning Board time before the next meeting on July 11th.

Mr. Upton asked if these three volumes encompass the UDO material.

Mr. Wensman said no this is entirely about land use.

Allison Fluitt came before the board to give the framework of the three volumes that compose the Town Plan. The first volume is introductory, the second volume is for the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and the third is for transportation. She stated that this had been a community driven planning process. The Town Plan will help guide the decision making for this group and a Town as a whole in the future.

The initiation phase is where we started to show what we were doing and receive some initial feedback and vision from the public. This also allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the Town as well. We now have a greater idea of what the existing conditions are and what tools are available from a data and previous planning standpoint. We now can establish the vision and goals of what the Town is hoping to achieve with the Town Plan. We ultimately translate all the data collected from the community and formulate them into obtainable goals, objectives, policy recommendations and implementation strategies.

Some of the key milestones from this planning effort include the future land use map and a transportation plan with recommendations. We are now in the final process of this planning effort, and present to you a draft of the plan that has been compiled and available for your review.

Ms. Fluitt said the study area includes the entire Town corporate limits as well as its Extra Territorial Jurisdiction. It's been important for us to work with our agency partners such as NCDOT, Rural Planning Organization that the Town belongs to and all other groups and departments within the Town. We came to the public with both the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and the Transportation Plan gathering feedback in a unified and consistent way. We had six focus groups as part of our Stakeholder interview process. This provided sit downs to learn more information about particular topics. We were present at the Ham and Yam festival in 2018 which provided great feedback from citizens given their vision for the Town. The first public workshop had 70 attendees. It was complimented by a survey that was run at the same time. It asked similar questions and obtained information from people. There were 189 participants which added up to 1200 data points. The second public workshop was held in February 2019 where 40 attendees showed up to review recommendations and draft findings. A second online survey came online about the same time with 175 participants.

Mr. Upton asked if there were many repeat participants.

Ms. Fluitt said yes there were some people that stuck with them through the process, as well as new faces too.

Jake Petrosky came forward to discuss the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. Smithfield will be a place of opportunity for everyone. It will grow in ways that are true to its history, character and charm by investing in a vibrant downtown in connections to the river, balancing growth and creating safe and healthy neighborhoods. From that vision there is a little more detail in the goals in the plan. There are five goals you will read about in the plan. They are Balanced Growth, Vibrant Downtown, Healthy Neighborhoods, Community Character and Move and Connect. A big part of this plan is the future land use plan. The Future Land Use Map displays a different color and these represent each character area. It explains the kind of uses allowed and the scale of development and intensity and should change between each character area. As you read this document you will see there are particular policies that are related to individual character areas. The map is meant to provide guidance for rezoning decisions. It will also help guide where Town services should be and where growth can and should go.

In looking at the Land Use Map we wanted to balance land uses. We wanted to make sure we had enough land for industrial and employment growth. Those areas are in purple on the map. The office and higher density residential areas are in blue as well as commercial and mixed use where we would like to encourage commercial growth. They treated the Downtown differently by identifying a core and supportive area. From a residential prospective they wanted to distinguish where medium density or smaller lot subdivisions should go as well as more traditional larger lots should go. Economic development is another area we wanted to focus on. Encouraging a diverse tax base is critical. Studies have shown a lot of residential doesn't really pay for the services it needs such as police, fire or schools. We want to make sure the commercial areas that we have are healthy and there isn't an oversupply or under-utilized land. We're documenting where we want to support rezoning's in those nonresidential and mixed use areas on the Future Land Use Map. We point out where we would like to discourage commercial rezoning's, due to a bad access or underutilized property. One economic opportunity Smithfield has is the vacant shopping centers on the west side of Town. We encourage the redevelopment of those vacant shopping centers. We could see these mixed use centers transition from unutilized commercial to some commercial with a mix of housing as well. The northern gateway area by Buffalo Road over to Booker Dairy Road is another area we see opportunity for economic development. Up near Hwy 70 we're recommending a mixed use center such as office or light manufacturing or industrial if it's designed appropriately. We feel that roadway connections are critical at Buffalo and Booker Dairy. We also would like to make sure there is compatible development adjacent to Johnston Regional Airport. It's a great resource and it'll only continue to grow. We would like to coordinate with Johnston County Public Schools and make sure the Town has an open dialog with them and support their mission.

In balancing growth, you look at balancing the type of residential that the Town would receive. In one of the surveys done, there were a lot of different types of residential options currently available in the market. 51% wanted a house with a large yard, even if it isn't near shopping or services. 45% said they preferred a low maintenance patio home or townhouse near shopping and services would be of interest. 43% said a house with a small yard and within walking distance of a school or park. We have a lot of recommendations in the design of these type homes that are more medium density products because design is important when you allow for higher density stuff. Another important factor to balanced growth is environmental protection. Respecting areas historically impacted by floods is a big one. Everyone knows the damage done from Hurricane Matthew. Thinking about it proactively and limiting uses and density, especially in undeveloped areas, restricting fill and considering additional structure elevation to limit property value damage because this is tax based. One of the big things that we wanted to recommend and encourage is active uses on the ground floor frontages on downtown. We're recommending new overlay or zoning to encourage different kinds of development that can be allowed. New market rate housing within walking distance to downtown would be encouraged; there is a demand for it.

One recommendation is to complete the mountain to sea trail through Smithfield and consider some connections from the main trail. They would like to recommend ideas for maintaining and improving parks. The Towns gateway corridors were a big topic of interest at previous meetings. Primarily these would consist of Market Street and Hwy 301. Smithfield has a commercial corridor overlay district but it's not customized for Market Street and Hwy 301. That makes it hard for the Planning Department to make recommendations on how different sites should happen on those. As a board everyone here can decide what kind of modifications to the UDO is appropriate in order to accomplish the things recommended in this plan.

Ms. Fluitt discussed the transportation plan and how congestion and safety were major concerns among survey applicants. We heard a lot of feedback about the safety for pedestrians. We created a street typology. The intent is to help us look at what Jake and his group have been helping to define in terms of our proposed land uses. We focused on a few corridors or spot locations in the Growth Management Plan. The US 70 Business/ East Market Street Railroad Bridge are intended to act as a gateway into Downtown Smithfield. This corridor is recommended to have a phased approach to improvements, with access management and operational improvements as a first phase and capacity addition in the second phase. Improvements would include:

- Widening to four-lanes with a grass median and dedicated turn lanes from US 301 to I-95. □
- The Southeast Area Study recommended bicycle lanes going in both directions in addition to sidewalks. As a part of the Town Plan, this recommendation was updated to a sidewalk running along the northern section and a shared-use path running along the southern portion of the corridor. This modification provides a greater separation for bicycle and pedestrian traffic than unbuffered bicycle lanes.
- Additionally, the railroad bridge and lines are recommended to be raised to allow for sufficient clearance for trucks and other large vehicles. The bridge would also need to be widened to accommodate the additional travel lanes and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Another focus area is North Brightleaf Blvd. The recommendations for the corridor include:

- A four-lane divided roadway with a landscaped median
- A multi-use path along one side and a sidewalk on the other.

The number one complaint they have received in terms of safety and citizens just not happy is the Outlet Center Drive Roundabout. In asking concerned citizens what changes they would like to see to the current roundabout, most answered they didn't care what was done just so it didn't remain the same as it is now. Several alternatives were proposed and studied, including modifications of the roundabout and neighboring intersections as well as eliminating the roundabout and replacing it with a traffic signal. A modified roundabout configuration was identified as the likely preferred scenario. The modified roundabout scenario would be the most cost-effective solution, since it retains most of the existing infrastructure. This scenario also greatly reduces the possibility of a traffic backup onto I-95 since traffic would never experience a full stop condition.

Ms. Fluitt spoke on pedestrians and how the extension of the Greenway will be beneficial. She stated that the Town already has standards in place for new or redevelopment of sidewalks being constructed. What the Town has in place is doing well and should continue. She and Jake would like to identify particular areas of importance to focus on pedestrian accommodations. It could mean the tradeoff of space or what should go and what should stay. Another possibility is to look at a sidewalk and a side path. We need to be mindful of pedestrians and connections to downtown Smithfield, JCC, Johnston Health, SRAC and parks. We currently have sidewalks in the Downtown and Market Street area. However a concern for many is crossings. Crossing times, ease of crossings and safety.

Mr. Upton asked how the Town was connected to Downtown Development.

Mr. Wensman said we work closely with them but they have their own board. They get a lot of their funding from the Town. Director, Sarah Edwards is on our Steering Committee and she has worked closely with the Town on this project.

Mrs. Daughtry asked if the NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant could be done now instead of having to wait until later.

Ms. Fluitt said yes, that's why we try to have a blend of facility recommendations. The Town would be a good candidate for this grant.

Mrs. Daughtry asked if the consultants could give a list of grants the Town could begin working on.

Mr. Petrosky said there is an action plan that identifies some things that are more short term. There are ongoing tasks and some that are short and long-term. As you read through the Transportation Plan you will find some tasks that can be done sooner than later. Give your feedback to Stephen about these projects.

Mr. Wensman mentioned to the Planning Board that they would receive the three volume set of the Town Plan for their review. He asked that each member mark them up how they wanted and provide as much feedback as possible. He would gladly accept emails or a hardcopy of the Town Plan with markups.

Mr. Upton asked when the Planning Board needed to have their comments and suggestions to Mr. Wensman.

Mr. Wensman said he would like all comments back within two weeks of receiving the Town Plan. He stated this was one of the most important roles for the board members. He offered to sit down one on one with anyone that would like to and answer any questions they may have.

Old Business

Town Council Minutes for February 21, 2019

Mr. Upton asked Mr. Wensman for an update about the Public Hearings.

Mr. Wensman said we have just reviewed several articles yesterday in the UDO Sub-Committee Meeting. They were about introducing conditional zoning to the Town. We actually have Conditional Zoning through the PUD process. Instead of Special Use Permits in the use table in some cases those Special Use Permits would now say Conditional Zoning. You would have to rezone to a conditional district in order to do those uses.

Mr. Upton asked if the Planning Board could have a say so but not a hearing about the public coming in and expressing their opinions.

Mr. Wensman said it isn't recommended that you have two hearings for a Special Use Permit. The problem is the quasi-judicial nature of the Special Use Permit is difficult for the public to provide meaningful comment.

Mrs. Daughtry stated that she didn't want us to get ourselves into cases where nothing but opinions was brought up.

Mr. Wensman stated that he understood that Mrs. Daughtry wanted cases to stay somewhat factual but the problem is the people impacted by these decisions don't have expert witnesses nor the means to pull one together to stand up to a developer. Whereas a legislative process evens the playing field and provides a say.

Mr. Wensman said the board needs to identify which land uses should remain quasi-judicial SUP and go to Town Council like they do now. Then which ones would benefit from a plan and a legislative process where you guys have a hearing and make a recommendation to Council.

Administrative Actions report

Planning Department Development Report
Site plan for Johnston County Regional Airport FBO

Adjournment

Being no further business, Ashley Spain made a motion seconded by Teresa Daughtry to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Edmonds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Edmonds
Administrative Support Specialist