

The Smithfield Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Smithfield Town Hall, Mayor M. Andy Moore presided.

Councilmen Present:

Marion Lee, District 1
Dr. David Barbour, District 4
John Dunn, At-Large
Stephen Rabil, At-Large

Councilmen Absent

Roger Wood, Mayor Pro-Tem
Sloan Stevens, District 2
Travis Scott, District 3

Administrative Staff Present

Michael Scott, Town Manager
Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk
Jeremey Daughtry, Fire Chief
Lawrence Davis, Public Works Director
Andrew Harris, Finance Director
Pete Hedrick, Chief of Police
Gary Johnson, Parks & Rec Director
Shannan Parrish, HR Director
Stephen Wensman, Planning Director
Ted Credle, Public Utilities Director

Also Present

Robert Spence, Jr., Town Attorney

Administrative Staff Absent

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor M. Andy Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Councilman David Barbour followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Councilman John Dunn made a motion, seconded by Councilman Stephen Rabil, to approve the agenda amended as follows. Unanimously approved.

Add to Consent Agenda:

- *NC Auto Solutions Grand Opening – NC Auto Solutions is requesting to hold their Grand Opening Celebration at 1140 W. Market Street on April 26th, 2025.*

Remove the following Public Hearing Discussion:

- *Preliminary Plat – Powell Tract Subdivision (S-25-02); It was the consensus of the Board to open, then table the Public Hearing for Powell Tract until the 5/20/2025 Council meeting*

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Introduction of Miss Smithfield – McKayla Young

Mayor Andy Moore introduced Miss Smithfield, Michaela Young, to the Board to make a presentation regarding her key initiatives during her reign. Michaela Young, Miss Smithfield, presented her community service initiative called "Polished Pathways, Empowering Communities through Confidence and Care". She highlighted that 30% of Smithfield residents live in poverty, with 38% being children. Her focus is on partnering with local nonprofits, particularly *Street Reach*, which helps homeless individuals. She aims to support students affected by homelessness, especially those impacted by the McKinney-Vento Act. Her goal is to provide holistic care, not just basic necessities, but resources and connections to help people escape poverty. Young emphasized her desire to use her platform to give back to the community and create pathways for those lacking resources. She offered to help out in the community wherever she can.

Mayor Moore thanked Young for her presentation, offered to lend a hand regarding her initiatives via the Town's social media and web page.

Councilman Marion Lee shared that he met Michaela shortly after their first government meeting. He had dinner with her and her coordinator, Cora Godwin, a former assistant principal at Clayton High School. Lee mentioned that Michaela might attend the upcoming Easter Egg Hunt at Smith Collins Park, potentially partnering to encourage children, especially young ladies. He praised her passion and cause, noting that it aligns with his own interests, and expressed appreciation for her representing Smithfield.

PUBLIC HEARING:

- 1. Preliminary Plat – Powell Tract Subdivision (S-25-02):** Swift Creek Road – Lan Development, LLC is requesting preliminary plat of a 20-lot single family subdivision on 21.24 acres in the R-20A Zoning District, located on Swift Creek Road approximately 1850 feet north of the Cleveland Road intersection with the Johnston County Tax IDs 151080141 and 15108014.

Mayor Andy Moore summarized the petition request. He called for a motion to open the public hearing for this case.

Councilman John Dunn made a motion, seconded by Councilman Stephen Rabil to open the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Councilman David Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman Marlon Lee to table this request until the May 20, 2025 Town Council meeting. Unanimously approved.

2. Conditional Zoning Request – Johnston Hotel MF Renovation (CZ-25-02):

Noviomagus LLC is requesting a conditional rezoning of 2-lots (0.63 acres) from O/I-Office/Institutional to O/I CZ – Office/Institutional Conditional to convert the old Gabriel Johnston Hotel into a 9-unit multi-family apartment building. The property is located at 313 E Johnston Street with the Johnston County Tax IDs 15025020 and 15025021.

Councilman John Dunn made a motion, seconded by Councilman Stephen Rabil to open the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Planning Director Stephen Wensman stated that this was the old Gabriel Johnson Hotel, and the request is for the hotel renovation project located at the corner of Fourth Street and Johnston Street. The project involves two lots totaling 0.63 acres, which are within the historic preservation overlay. The developer plans to reuse the existing building and parking lot with some modifications. The current shared entrance with the adjacent manor will remain, along with its parking area. The secondary entrance will be closed, and its parking lot removed to create open space, with potential for a future addition. The project will require review by the Historic Preservation Commission for exterior changes, and the proposed development has a net density of 14 dwelling units per acre.

Wensman further explained that the comprehensive plan guides the property for office and residential use, making the O&I Conditional Zoning appropriate. The development density of 14 units per acre exceeds the code's 9.61 units per acre limit. The project is in the historic preservation overlay, requiring Historic Preservation Commission approval for exterior modifications. The development will provide 39 parking spaces, exceeding the required 20 spaces for nine two-bedroom apartments. The developer will upgrade parking lot landscaping, replace deteriorated sidewalks, driveway aprons, and gutters. Deviations from standard requirements include no perimeter buffer, exceeding density limits, and having a zero-lot line development with no front yard setback. Staff recommends approval, noting the developer is investing significant resources to restore an old building and maintain its historic character.

The Planning Director presented staff's opinion of the consistency statement for the conditional zoning request.

CONSISTENCY STATEMENT (Staff Opinion):

With the approval of the rezoning, the Town Council is required to adopt a statement describing whether the action is consistent with the adopted comprehensive plan and other applicable adopted plans and that the action is reasonable and in the public interest. Planning Staff considers the action to be consistent and reasonable:

- **Consistency with the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan** – *The development is consistent with the comprehensive plan.*
- **Consistency with the Unified Development Code** – *The property will be developed in conformance with the UDO conditional zoning provisions that allows a good faith negotiation of development standards.*
- **Compatibility with Surrounding Land Uses** - *The property considered for rezoning will be compatible with the surrounding land uses with the additional conditions of approval.*

Staff recommended approval of CZ-25-02, with the following three conditions:

- *That the two properties be combined into a single tax parcel*
- *Dilapidated public sidewalk, curb and gutter and driveway aprons be replaced with new in accordance with Town standards*
- *The existing/future disused driveway apron be removed and replaced with new curb and gutter*

Councilman David Barbour asked if any Parks and Recreation fees were charged with the redevelopment of this building. Planning Director Wensman stated this was something he needed to explore because typically these fees were collected as part of a new subdivision request. If it is required it would be collected through the site plan approval.

Councilman David Barbour asked about the infrastructure upgrades for the building, specifically questioning the condition of sewer lines and water lines, given the building's age. He wanted to know if these utilities would be reviewed and approved, and whether the town's utility director was working with the developers to ensure necessary upgrades would be made. Wensman stated the developers would have to go through site plan approval where this would be addressed. The developer has submitted plans and it is currently under review.

Mayor Moore asked if there was anyone in attendance who wished to speak on the matter.

Ginger Summer, the architect for the project addressed the Board. She expressed her excitement about restoring the old Gabriel Johnson Hotel. She confirmed that engineers have been on site examining water and sewer systems, and they plan to install new electrical infrastructure. She noted the building's interior steel structure will require significant repair work. Mayor Andy Moore asked when they proposed to get

started on the construction. Summer stated they plan to submit drawings in early May and move forward with construction after receiving approval. Mayor Moore asked Summer about closing the driveway for future expansion, and whether that will be part of the current plan. Summer indicated that potential future plans would depend on the budget for the current phase, with the current closed entrance area potentially being used as a common patio space for tenants. Mayor Moore asked if there were any plans for potential retail or office space. Summer stated no due to the setbacks, and also the ceiling heights being low within the building are not conducive for commercial. Mayor Moore asked if the roof had any potential for use. Summer stated that the structural engineer relayed to her that it would take a lot to put people on the roof. Not only will they have to reinforce the roof, but that potential load has to go all the way down to the foundation. Summer stated they really liked and wanted the idea, but structurally, the building was not designed for that.

Mayor Moore asked if the developers planned to keep the brick in its current state, or if they planned to paint it. Moore stated that he would like it as a condition that painting of the building would need to come before the Council for approval. Wensman stated that with it being in a Historic Preservation District, there are conditions as to what can happen on the exterior. Any changes thereof would need to go before the Historic Preservation Commission. Councilman Barbour agreed that it would not hurt to add it as a condition to approve any changes to the exterior brick, even if it meant double protection. Wensman stated he would make that recommendation. He restated the fourth recommendation of approval as:

- *Any exterior brick painting be presented to the Town Council for review and approval.*

Mayor Moore asked if any signage had to meet Town requirements. Wensman stated it would have to meet UDO requirements for signage.

Councilman David Barbour made a motion seconded by Councilman John Dunn to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Councilman David Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to approve the conditional zoning of the former Gabriel Johnson Hotel renovation case CZ-25-02 with the four conditions declaring the request is consistent with the Town of Smithfield Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, and other adopted plans, and that the amendment is reasonable and in the public interest. Unanimously approved.

Conditions of approval re-stated:

- *That the two properties be combined into a single tax parcel*
- *Dilapidated public sidewalk, curb and gutter and driveway aprons be replaced with new in accordance with Town standards*
- *The existing/future disused driveway apron be removed and replaced with new curb and gutter*
- *Any exterior brick painting be presented to the Town Council for review and approval*

Citizens' Comments: None

Councilman David Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to approve the consent agenda as amended. Unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda Items:

1. Approval of Minutes
 - a. March 4, 2025 – Regular Minutes
 - b. March 4, 2025 – Closed Session Minutes
2. Consideration and request for approval to promote three Police Officers to the ranks of Police Sergeant for the Patrol Division
3. Consideration and request for approval to allow NC Auto Solutions to hold their Grand Opening Celebration: The Council is being asked to allow NC Auto Solutions at 1140 W. Market St to hold their Grand Opening Celebration on April 26th, 2025.

Business Items:

1. FY 2025-2026 Budget Discussions

It was the consensus of the Board, that given the number of members not present at this meeting, that no budget discussions be held at this time.

Councilmember's Comments

Councilman David Barbour shared his experience at the annual Skills USA event, where the fire chief represented and led the state high school firefighter program contest. He noted 106 contestants participated with no complaints, which he found impressive. Barbour praised the event's professional execution and highlighted the diversity of participants, including women and minorities.

He emphasized the importance of the high school firefighter program in exposing young people to opportunities that were previously restricted. He specifically thanked Jeremy Daughtry for his involvement and noted the critical need to encourage and develop young firefighters given the current shortage of firefighting personnel.

Councilman Marion Lee made several comments: First, he expressed condolences on the passing of Georgianna McLean, a long-time chorus teacher who would have turned 99, and mentioned her daughter Rhonda. He suggested potentially featuring her story during Black History Month due to her experiences during school integration. He also noted Dr. Carolyn Ennis, a longtime resident of Pine Street in Smithfield is having a 95th birthday. Lee then discussed the SRO officer at Triple S, explaining he received numerous calls from concerned parents and staff about the officer's potential promotion and departure. After consulting with Chief Hedrick, they worked out a transition plan that satisfied the parents. Lastly, he raised concerns about vehicles and three/four-wheelers driving on Durham Street and the walkway, suggesting the need for "no parking" signs to address safety issues. He concluded by promoting the upcoming Easter egg hunt at Smith Collins Park on Saturday. He encouraged everyone to come out to support the event. Councilman Marion Lee added that the "Tallest Easter Bunny in Smithfield" will be making an appearance.

The mayor echoed Councilman Lee's concerns about three and four-wheelers near the pond, acknowledging the need to address parking and sidewalk issues from a maintenance perspective. He appreciated the collaborative effort in resolving the SRO officer situation, noting the positive response from parents. He then announced the upcoming concert on Friday night featuring the RT Johnson Band at the amphitheater, encouraging attendance and mentioning that Chick-fil-A would be present. He emphasized the event as an opportunity for people to come downtown, especially during the holiday weekend.

Town Manager's Report:

Town Manager Mike Scott announced that SoDoSoPa will be closing temporarily for renovations at the end of the month. The restaurant will be expanding into the adjacent building, almost doubling its size and renovating the upstairs meeting area. They are changing their concept to a steakhouse called Victory Steakhouse (named after the old Victory Theater). The renovation will include new windows, improved lighting, a new bar setup, and outdoor seating on Johnston Street. Scott expressed excitement about the owners' investment in downtown Smithfield and looked forward to the restaurant's reopening in approximately two to three months.

The mayor suggested town staff send a pole to Councilmembers to determine the next date for budget sessions. The Manager stated we would do that.

Adjourn

Councilman Stephen Rabil made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:46pm. Unanimously approved.




M. Andy Moore, Mayor

ATTEST:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk