

The Smithfield Town Council met in a special session Monday, April 21, 2025 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers of the Smithfield Town Hall. Mayor M. Andy Moore presided.

Councilmen Present:

Roger Wood, Mayor Pro-Tem
Marlon Lee, District 1
Sloan Stevens, District 2
Travis Scott, District 3
Dr. David Barbour, District 4
John Dunn, At-Large
Stephen Rabil, At-Large

Councilmen Absent

Administrative Staff Present

Michael Scott, Town Manager
Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk
Ted Credle, Public Utilities Director
Jeremey Daughtry, Fire Chief
Andrew Harris, Finance Director
Pete Hedrick, Chief of Police
Timothy Short, Assistant Police Chief
Gary Johnson, Parks & Rec Director
Shannan Parrish, HR Director

Also Present

Administrative Staff Absent

Lawrence Davis, Public Works Director

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

FY 2025-2026 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Fire Chief Jeremey Daughtry presented the Fire Department budget. He began by discussing the line item for salaries and wages, which covers 25 full-time employees including 21 shift personnel and 4 administrative staff. For part-time personnel he noted they have 1 part-time fire inspector limited to 999 hours and part-time firefighters allocated 6,240 hours per year, providing 2 part-time firefighters for 12 hours per day Monday through Friday.

Chief Daughtry reported a decrease in the volunteer firefighter budget from \$90,000 to \$75,000, noting they currently have 10 volunteers but hope to add more. He stated overtime remained the same as they have been staying within budget.

Daughtry continued with firefighter physicals, for which the budget request remained at \$12,000. Retirement and training/education budgets also remained the same at \$17,500. The telephone line item stayed at \$7,000 and utilities at \$42,500.

Service awards and recognition is status quo at \$3,600. Daughtry stated the Fire Department asked for a slight increase for equipment maintenance and repair, up 2%, and also an increase to vehicle supplies of 8% or \$5,000. Chief Daughtry noted often these line items ran close to budget, requiring prioritization of projects at year-end.

Professional fees remained at \$10,000, which includes the Johnston County Fireman's Benevolence. The fuel budget stayed at \$45,000. Supplies operations remained at \$65,000. Chief Daughtry explained uniforms now includes turnout gear purchases previously budgeted as capital projects. He noted turnout gear costs about \$5,000 per set and must be replaced at least every 10 years, per NFPA standards. The department aims to purchase 10-15 sets per year. Daughtry stated an 8% increase to \$1,400 was requested for service contracts due to a contract increase.

Daughtry stated line item 9110 shows the final transfer of \$290,000 for the new fire engine with delivery expected in September/October 2025.

There was some discussion regarding how turnout gear costs more now versus pre-COVID, and other turnout gear issues that affect cost. Daughtry explained their turnout gear replacement process. He also added that pre-COVID, a set of turnout gear would cost around \$2,000, but now it costs about \$5,000.

The department replaces gear every 10 years per NFPA standards, or earlier if it's damaged or cannot be cleaned properly. They sometimes donate older gear to high school programs for training purposes, ensuring the gear is not used in live fire environments. The chief noted they purchase between 10-15 sets of gear per year, prioritizing gear nearing the end of its life or with functionality issues. The captain inspects turnout gear quarterly, checking for tears or damage that might compromise safety.

Councilman Barbour asked if the Fire Department Budget still included the \$1,000 set aside for the high school fireman's program, adding that the new director must request the funds. Daughtry stated yes, the funds are available to them for the coming year. He added that it was about this time last year that they would come over to request those funds.

Barbour also asked, referring to the Fire Chief's request for part time help, if this was all the part time help the department would need. Chief Daughtry discussed part-time firefighters and their reliability. He explained that while part-time firefighters can help fill staffing needs, they are not as dependable as full-time career firefighters. Part-time personnel often have primary jobs elsewhere, which means their loyalty is first to their full-time employment. If there's an issue at their main job or personal life, they can easily call off their part-time shift. The chief suggests that part-time firefighters can partially address staffing needs, but they cannot provide the same consistent coverage as full-time personnel.

Councilman David Barbour asked Daughtry, based on historical data, could he identify the time period of the day when the call volume was high. He stated this would likely be the time for additional part time help. Chief Daughtry stated that their call data shows most calls occur during weekdays, primarily during daytime hours and typically in the colder months where heating was at issue. The department's part-time staffing is currently structured for Monday through Friday, 6am to 6pm. However, he notes that even with this schedule, part-time firefighters may not arrive exactly at 6am due to their primary job commitments. The goal is to have more personnel available during these high-volume daytime weekday periods, which is traditionally how they've approached part-time staffing. It was also noted that part time staff is utilized when full time staff takes time off in order to maintain the minimum level of staffing.

Councilman Travis Scott inquired about the \$75,000 previously set aside for Fire Station Three, and if that money will be carried forward. Specifically, what would happen with the money if the Town does not do anything with it. Town Manager Mike Scott stated it would go back into the general fund to the fund balance. Councilman Scott stated it could be repurposed for obtaining property. Councilman Steve Rabil asked have we got any property for station three. The Fire Chief explained that they initially found a potential lot for the station but discovered issues with the site that made the town uncomfortable proceeding. They are currently searching for alternative locations, considering factors like wetlands and access. Councilman Scott suggested putting the \$75,000 into a capital reserve fund specifically for Fire Station Three, which would help preserve the funds for future land acquisition. The council agreed this would be a good approach to ensure the money remains earmarked for the station's future development.

Councilman Travis Scott urged a more aggressive approach to land acquisition, noting that land prices will only increase. The Fire Chief mentioned they have spoken with the planning director on projects happening in Town for leads, but they have not reached out to any realtors. Councilman David Barbour emphasized finding the right location, even if it means negotiating with developers during new subdivision proposals. The Fire Chief noted they don't want to go too far west of Booker Dairy Rd, as it would reduce the station's effectiveness. The council suggested being proactive by asking developers if they would be willing to donate an acre of suitable land for a fire station during their development approval process.

For capital outlay, Chief Daughtry requested:

- \$30,000 for Station 1 ceiling repairs
- \$30,000 for Station 2 walls and ceiling repairs
- \$7,500 for a gear extractor at Station 2
- \$50,000 for a digital sign at Station 2

Fire Chief Jeremy Daughtry requested a full-time fire inspector and 15 firefighters. Daughtry emphasized the need for a fire inspector, stating the current fire marshal keeps up with annual inspections and also facilitates plan reviews for the Town's planning department. Chief Daughtry highlighted the need for an average of 729 annual inspections across 1760 commercial properties, with the current staff struggling to keep up. Daughtry added his request includes a vehicle, equipment, uniforms, training, and benefits. Councilman Travis Scott questioned the high cost for additional personnel, noting it equates to about \$90,000 per person. The Chief clarified the first year's total cost would be around an average of \$149,006 per person, with significant reductions in subsequent years. The council discussed the need for fire inspection fees to offset staffing costs. They suggested comparing Smithfield's fees with other towns and exploring ways to track revenue generated from inspections. The Chief noted recent changes to the fee schedule, including charging based on square footage for fire suppression systems. Councilman David Barbour emphasized the importance of fair pricing that covers the cost of inspections, ensuring that all taxpayers aren't subsidizing the service.

Councilman David Barbour suggests that the town should track the time and effort spent on fire inspections, similar to how professionals in other industries allocate their time to specific projects. He proposes creating a system where the fire inspector's work can be attributed to specific fees or revenue streams. Barbour believes this would help justify the existence of additional staff by demonstrating the direct revenue generated from their work. He wants to understand how much money is being brought in through fire inspections and whether the current staffing and fee structure are financially sustainable.

The Chief further stressed the need for 15 firefighters to address staffing shortages, particularly at Station Two, which was opened with personnel from Station One. He explained the challenges of relying on part-time staff and the importance of having full-time, reliable firefighters. The conversation concluded with the Chief reiterating the department's need for additional staffing to effectively serve the growing community. Town manager Mike Scott added that the cost to add the additional staff would cost about a million dollars initially, with an ongoing cost of a little over \$900,000. There was also some discussion about a Jr. Firefighter program, with Daughtry stating he would like to see one implemented, but as of now he does not have the staff to do so.

PUBLIC WORKS:

In the absence of Public Works Director, Lawrence Davis, Town Manager Mike Scott reviewed the budgeted line items for Public Works with the Board.

Prior to discussing the budget, Councilman Travis Scott inquired about the air conditioning unit at Town Hall. Manager Mike Scott reported that the air conditioning unit for the meeting room is currently experiencing issues. Heinz Starling has been working on it since Tuesday, to pinpoint a leak at the core of the unit. The repair is estimated to cost around \$10,000.

o General Services

Manager Scott proceeded to review the Public Works budget starting in the proposed budget book. The manager explained that the town is having difficulty getting summer help approved. Town Manager Scott stated they have budgeted \$36,000 for temporary labor and are working with Lawrence to find solutions. The goal is to hire people to help with various projects, and they hope to utilize the budgeted funds before the fiscal year ends, particularly

between now and fall. They are actively trying to find ways to bring on additional temporary workers to support town maintenance needs.

There was some discussion about the utilization of part time staff funding, which Town Manager Scott mentioned would be done this spring when the grass starts to grow. Councilman Travis Scott raised the issue of grass cutting in areas maintained by the state, such as M Durwood Stevenson highway and areas near schools. Manager Scott suggested they could handle these areas either through part-time staff or by contracting it out. Councilman Scott expressed concern about the appearance of these areas, particularly around intersections and roadways and also left over car pieces from crash incidents. Mike acknowledged the problem and noted they want to improve maintenance but are constrained by staffing. The council discussed potential solutions like using temporary help to cut grass in areas that are currently neglected, with the manager explaining they could potentially reallocate staff from cemetery work to handle these additional maintenance tasks due to the inability of part time or temporary staff to use Town mowers.

The Manager continued the Public Works general services budget review with service contracts, stating they added \$8,000 for the Community Garden to build new boxes. Councilman Travis Scott asked who would be building the boxes. Manager Scott stated a contractor. It was mentioned that this may be a good scout project or one done in partnership with local schools. Manager Scott continued with service contracts noting \$20,000 for tree replacement.

Manager Scott reviewed capital outlay, which included replacement of a mower and bagger, and the replacement of a 1998 pickup truck.

○ **Streets Department**

The Town Manager discussed the Street Department's budget, covering several key points:

Staffing:

- Two current vacancies: crew leader and treatment worker
- Only one person in the sign specialist role
- Sign specialist responsible for replacing faded signs and street blades across town

Training and Education:

- Slight increase to support training for new crew leader
- Focus on street repair and certification

Traffic and Intersection Concerns:

- Councilman Travis Scott raised issues with the North and Buffalo Road intersection, suggesting a potential three-way stop to improve traffic flow
- Discussion about traffic challenges near the Neuse Charter School

Street Lighting:

- Budget covers electricity for street lights
- Ongoing conversion to LED lights as existing lights burn out

There was some discussion regarding Duke Energy's charges for electricity for street lighting, and their process for street light replacement.

Sidewalk Repairs:

- Reduction in budget from \$80,000 to \$40,000 due to completed downtown sidewalk repairs
- Ongoing strategy of milling down uneven sidewalks versus full replacement due to tree root damage

Purchases Request:

- The Manager stated the budget includes replacement of a 2003 truck with 106k miles on it used for snow plowing and a water tank used to mix brine for spraying on roads

The Board briefly discussed the new DOT recommendations for changes to Downtown parking, which included DOT's concern for accidents on Market Street and eliminating the parking thereof, the recommendation to include paving of Second Street, and the recommendation for the minimum 12-foot parking space size.

○ **Garage**

The Manager continued with review of the garage budget. He stated the garage budget discussion focused on the department's efficiency and staffing. He noted they have one and a half employees who more than make up for their costs through service repairs. Before hiring a good diesel mechanic, they were spending \$60,000-\$70,000 on repairs. The mechanic also works well with other departments, helping with surplus vehicle assessments. They added \$5,000 to supplies and operations to cover increased costs of basic maintenance items like nuts, bolts, and gaskets. The only specific equipment request was for a wheel balancer for smaller vehicles, which would complement their existing equipment for larger vehicles like garbage trucks.

Town Manager Scott also discussed the Powell Bill budget, focusing on patching and resurfacing. They have added \$2 million to the line item, bringing the total to nearly \$2.5 million for road repairs. Specific plans include work on Outlet Center Drive, with estimates ranging from \$780,000 to \$1.2 million. The Town Manager stated he expects to receive official bids in early May. The project will cover the road from the Selma city limit to the roundabout where new pavement currently starts, including restriping and repaving. Some areas will require more extensive work, with road sections needing to be torn up and replaced. The Manager also mentioned potentially pursuing another million-dollar paving project this year, depending on the final cost of the Outlet Center Drive repairs.

○ **Sanitation**

The Sanitation budget discussion centered on staffing and growth. The Public Works director requested two additional sanitation workers to handle anticipated growth for the next two years. The current garbage truck is operational and ready for the expansion. The Town Manager expressed concerns about yard waste management, noting that some businesses and homeowners are improperly disposing of yard debris by leaving it on city curbs. He suggested they might need to evaluate the current system, potentially implementing stricter regulations to control costs. Manager Scott reiterated that at some point the yard waste fee may need to be addressed, as abuse of this service is driving up costs and is hard to police. The Manager stated the sanitation department is adding 550 new trash cans for \$10,000, with each can costing about \$65. The department expects a 5% increase in landfill fees and is planning accordingly. They're not requesting a rate increase for sanitation services, believing the growing customer base will help cover additional costs. Capital expenditures include replacing a 1995 Ford Ranger and a 2007 model knuckle boom truck. The Manager noted that the new equipment is currently in stock and should be relatively quick to acquire. The discussion highlighted the department's proactive approach to managing growth and maintaining service efficiency.

The Town Manager clarified that the additional \$114,000 for two new sanitation workers would be partially offset by increased sanitation fees as the customer base grows. He noted they are not requesting a rate increase for residents, but will pass on increases in tipping fees.

Councilman Travis Scott raised concerns about the appearance of the Greenway Trail area behind the garage, describing it as looking terrible with old equipment, cans, and debris. He also complained about the sewer like smell emanating from the area. The Town Manager acknowledged the area's condition and agreed to address the issue, suggesting some of the dirt piles might be from cemetery work. The discussion highlighted the need for better maintenance and organization of town work areas.

○ Stormwater

Manager Scott stated they have one employee who is a street sweeper operator. The primary budget request is for a new street sweeper, with the current 2016 model having about 6,500 hours and frequently breaking down. The plan is to keep the existing sweeper as a backup. Manager Scott emphasized that they expect to be able to purchase the new street sweeper relatively quickly. It would allow them to have one operational street sweeper at all times instead of being completely without one, when, or if the current machine breaks down.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Gary Johnson highlighted several key points in the Parks and Recreation budget:

Budget Increases:

- 8% increase in part-time salary due to increased participation
- 41% increase in overall participation compared to last year
- Increased visits to facilities, 692,000 visits this year

Specific Budget Adjustments:

- Increased overtime for special events and tournaments
- Extended temporary labor from 30 to 40 weeks to handle facility maintenance
- Increased referee and umpire costs due to more games and participation
- Added professional fees to join National Recreation and Parks Association
- Utilities have gone up, also due to increased participation
- Equipment maintenance and repair has gone up due to increasing cost for supplies
- Service contracts have gone up due to the increasing costs of turf management

Capital Outlay:

- \$75,000 for 210 park development, with \$50,000 coming from tourism per Manager Scott
- \$70,000 for court resurfacing at Community Park and Smith Collins, a new court lasts for 4 to 5 years
- \$10,000 for athletic field lights automation
- New equipment including a Skag mower, boom sickle mower and loader bucket
- \$7,500 for dog park amenities, including an agility course

Johnson noted that most staff are now CPRP certified. He emphasized that increased costs are primarily driven by higher participation rates, and that he is expecting to offset increased expenses with higher revenue from program fees.

Councilman David Barbour inquired about the land donation previously discussed, asking when the community partner would donate the 57 acres and what maintenance would be required. Johnson confirmed he has not gotten it yet, but that no immediate maintenance would be needed unless they add features like a disc golf course. Barbour then asked about the fence project near the Boy Scout hut, and Johnson explained they want to replace the existing unsafe wooden fence with a sturdy black chain-link fence to improve safety and aesthetics.

There was general discussion regarding the increased spending on equipment and whether the additional costs were being offset by program fees. Johnson confirmed they are collecting more revenue due to increased participation, though the revenue doesn't completely cover all expenses. Barbour suggested the increased fees help mitigate the budget increases. Also briefly discussed was potentially raising the fee for field rental fees given the time-consuming process of field preparation for different groups. Manager Scott added that the Town did increase its revenue for recreation receipts by \$10,000.

Councilman Travis Scott raised concerns about safety at the community center, suggesting the need for security measures like metal detectors and a comprehensive safety plan. He noted the potential risks during large events and wanted to explore ways to screen people entering the facility. Gary Johnson acknowledged the concern and mentioned that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has already passed a policy requiring security through the Police Department for large events. Councilman Scott emphasized the importance of preventing potential incidents and protecting people, especially children. There was further discussion that highlighted the need for proactive safety measures, potentially including metal detectors, security personnel, or a screening process to ensure the safety of facility users during events.

SRAC

Johnson stated that there is a slight increase in general part-time payroll and a small increase in pool staffing. However, there's a decrease in instructors' pay, which he noted is more about realigning positions and moving staff to their appropriate categories. When the three columns of payroll are added together, the total funding for part-time staff remains approximately the same. He also mentioned a small increase in telephone expenses to provide a \$25 monthly stipend for the assistant aquatics director, who uses her phone frequently while on call or on duty during weekends. He stated there is a 3% increase in SRAC utilities. Fuel, maintenance and repair were status quo. Service contracts increased due to software costs for membership management for all the programs for Parks and Rec. Johnson continue that the Capital Outlay included the resurface of the Splash Pad bottom. There was some discussion regarding expanding the locker rooms, with Johnson noting this would require a lot of funding.

SYCC

Gary Johnson reviewed the Sarah Yard Center budget as mostly status quo. The main proposed improvements include repainting the interior, which hasn't been done in several years, and replacing an aging air conditioning unit. Johnson mentioned challenges with the current AC, particularly during hot weather when doors are left open when the AC is on. There was also discussion for potentially adjusting operating hours to better accommodate the senior citizen group, specifically considering extending morning hours from 9am to noon on certain days. Johnson noted they could be flexible with the hours to support the senior group's activities. The Town Manager also briefly touched on the Boys and Girls Club's continued interest in using the facility, which had been a previous point of contention with moving our elderly group out. The Manager stated he did not offer anything to the group as this point, but stated they may appear before the Board during a future Citizen's Comments section of the Town Council agenda.


Councilman Marlon Lee stressed the safety concerns for the children who cross the street to get to the Splash Pad. The mayor echoed these concerns, mentioning having witnessed a child running out and almost getting hit by a car. The mayor commented that some communities have signs, speed bumps and have install pedestrian crosswalks to address such concerns.

Mayor Andy Moore also asked Parks and Recreation Director, Gary Johnson to send him a breakdown for the 41% increase in overall participation costs compared to last year. Johnston stated he would get Mayor Moore the actual numbers.

Non-Profit Requests

There was no specific discussion of non-profit funding requests during this portion of the meeting.

Councilman David Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:04 pm. Unanimously approved.


M. Andy Moore, Mayor

ATTEST:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

