

The Smithfield Town Council reconvened at its March 24, 2025 meeting on Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 6:50 pm in the Council Chambers of the Smithfield Town Hall, Mayor M. Andy Moore presided.

Councilmen Present:

Roger Wood, Mayor Pro-Tem
Sloan Stevens, District 2
Stephen Rabil, At-Large
John Dunn, At-Large

Councilmen Absent

Marlon Lee, District 1
Travis Scott, District 3
Dr. David Barbour, District 4

Administrative Staff Present

Michael Scott, Town Manager
Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk
Andrew Harris, Finance Director
Pete Hedrick, Chief of Police
Shannan Parrish, HR Director
Stephen Wensman, Planning Director

Also Present

Administrative Staff Absent

Ted Credle, Public Utilities Director
Jeremey Daughtry, Fire Chief
Lawrence Davis, Public Works Director
Gary Johnson, Parks & Recreation Director
C. Timothy Short, Asst. Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 6:50 pm.

FY 2025-2026 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

GENERAL GOVERNMENT:

Town Manager, Mike Scott began by listing all the employee positions that comprised the General Government Department. They were the Town Manager, Town Clerk, Human Resources Director, and Administrative Assistant and the Public Information Officer. He stated these positions were split between all three funds, electric, water and the general fund. He also noted the Council and Mayor salaries are split between the three funds as well. Manager Scott stated the funds for training and cell phone allowances are status quo. He stated the legal fee budget was increased as it continues to go up as related to the Town attorney's office, or if we solicit an outside attorney for assistance on rare occasion. He stated that as we are invoiced for attorney services, that invoice is passed along to that appropriate department's budget.

Mayor Andy Moore asked what the current Town Attorney's rate was. Manager Scott deferred the question to the Human Resources Director, Shannan Parrish, who stated she believed it was \$185 an hour, and his paralegal is \$85 per hour, and the other attorney utilized on his staff has a rate of \$155 per hour. There was some discussion regarding when the attorney is sought, how payments are distinguished among staff and whether phone calls from citizen issues related to the Town, however may not initiated by the Town, are billed. Mayor Andy Moore stated any calls by citizens that reach his office need to be re-directed to the Town. Manager Scott stated he has directed the attorney's office to do this.

- **Professional Fees and dues:** Increase 18%; Manager Scott stated professional fees and dues are up due to the cost for the Mayor's Association. There is also an increase in funding for engineer Bill Dreitzler's office, noting that in nine years he has never increased his fee until now, and that is only due to things going up.
- **Supplies and operations:** Increase 22%; The Manager stated that supplies are going up due to postage and overall increased cost of supplies.
- **Contract Services:** New Cost \$42,310; The Manager stated that is the new service contract with NeoGov, for which the cost is spaced out over a three-year period.
- **Capital Projects:** The Capital Outlay line item went up due to adding \$250,000 for architectural plans for Town Hall. The Manager stated we want to look at expanding out into the courtyard area or into our parking lot. Manager Scott noted that plans to develop town hall to go up another story in height is not feasible due to the original architectural structure of this building. However, the current plans to expand into the courtyard area may include a two-story structure big enough to sustain the Town.

Councilman John Dunn asked if the current budgeted salaries included the position of the new assistant Town Manager. Manager Scott stated yes, and that we may hire that position.

Manager Scott noted other requests in the budget to repaint town hall, which he stated was needed, and a request for a Communications Assistant that he was not prepared to talk about at this time. He stated these requests may come up later in the budget process.

NON-DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET

Town Manager Mike Scott stated the costs for insurances and bonds is still being discussed. He noted the Human Resources Director is currently having discussions for workers comp insurance and property and liability as to where that will go. The \$200,000 is an estimate, and will be covered by the three funds water sewer, electric and the

general fund. He stated election expenses were budgeted at \$7,000 this year. Manager Scott also spoke about the downtown development tax rate which would be an estimate of \$150,000, which as of now is at \$.19 cents.

The Manager did not review each individual line item proposed in the non-departmental budget. He referenced the \$25,000 for Economic Development, stating this money was primarily used to pay back East River for their contract.

The S.H.A.R.P. Reimbursement line item for \$649,750 is for property tax, grants that are being paid back to Amazon and the Allen Iron building per agreement. The Manager noted this was also an estimate due to the Town not knowing where the current property tax valuations would put that actual number.

The Town Manager also noted that the form for nonprofit funding did go out to Wilsons Mills Elementary School, as directed. They have acknowledged receipt, but that we have not heard back from them to date.

Manager Scott asked the Board if they preferred hearing from all the non-departmental asks this year, or if they would rather receive a packet of requests on paper for review in the interest of saving time. It was discussed that the Town should not be soliciting nonprofits, rather if they choose to seek funding, they should seek out the paperwork and apply. It was the consensus of the Board to receive one packet of information to review and discuss.

Town Manager Scott stated no salary increases were put in any of the departments; therefore, the General Fund Salary adjustment line item was created last year for \$300,000. He stated that number equates to the 5% increase on September 1, 2025; or a 4% increase July 1, 2025 and if there were merit increases, it could be used for that also. Depending on how many salary adjustments down the line, this money has been put aside.

DEBT SERVICE

The Manager stated that as a community, our debt is relatively small. He stated the Town still owes debt for a Fire truck, a Ladder Fire truck, the Police Department expansion; he noted the Smithfield Crossing Loan is a huge debt that will be paid off in 2044. He stated the Town looked into refinancing this loan years ago when the interest rates were low, but this would have doubled the Town's payment.

Councilman John Dunn asked about the fire truck engine loan, noting it was the first engine that was replaced five years ago in 2017. He asked how many miles was on the truck now. Fire Chief Jeremy Daughtry stated in January there was 62,238 miles.

The Manager continued with review of the Debt Service budget. He stated DSDC is still paying the Streetscape loan from when the lines were buried on Market Street. They make a small payment every year directly to the Town without interest. He reminded the Board this was a high interest debt owed by DSDC that the Town paid inadvertently. When this was discovered, an agreement was made to pay the Town back for the loan. If DSDC continues to make the \$12,757 annual payment, the loan will be paid off in full by 2036.

FINANCE:

Manager Mike Scott noted the Finance budget started on page 23 of the proposed budget book. Finance Director Andrew Harris reviewed the line-item changes, stating that salaries and wages increased due in part to a request to add a full time Finance Director; training and education request is \$2,000 for the Finance Director, and \$1,500 each for Payroll and Accounts Payable (AP) technicians' courses. He further requested \$15 per month for a cell phone allowance for the AP and Payroll technicians. Harris stated professional fees and dues were reduced from \$500 to \$300 dollars for the Government Finance Officer's Association and the NCGFOA. Supplies and operations budget proposed was status quo from the prior year at \$11,000. The contract Services budget requested is \$8,500 due to software cost increase. He asked the Board if there were any questions.

Mayor Andy Moore asked what was the proposed salary for the Assistant Finance Director position. Harris stated high 60s or low 70s.

Mayor Andy Moore questioned the new cell phone stipend requests, and why were they need it. He stated he understands it's not a lot of money, but just thinking of other employees who do not receive a stipend. Harris stated his employees routinely used their cell phones for various reasons, including weather or to answer questions for employees, but he understands it is the Board's decision to grant or deny the request.

There was some discussion regarding the current part-time assistant Finance Director position, and how that would change when it transitions to full time. The current part-time assistant salary is budgeted at \$54,390, for basically 1000 hours. Harris stated that including 401K, insurance and retirement contributions, the new full-time employee may cost \$90,000 of the budget. It was noted that the current part time employee does not get town insurance.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (I.T.)

Finance Director, Andrew Harris spoke regarding the increase in the IT budget, due to our IT support contract with the company VC3, and also with Intelliplex as an internet service provider. He stated there would be a 3% increase in cost for VC3, and an added \$2,200 per fund for the Intelliplex internet service.

Councilman Steven Rabil asked why FICA was so high in the budget. Harris stated what was in the proposed budget was a key in error and was compared to numbers the year before. Manager Scott stated it would have been less but one particular position got a salary increase for two reasons, one for the salary study, but also, it's a salary position, not an hourly position. There were some changes made via the federal government as to what level

that had to be at, and the salary had to be at a certain level to keep the position as a salary employee. Alternatives were looked at, as to moving the position back to hourly, but it wasn't cost effective.

Harris continued, stating the Training and Education budget for IT, was reduced by \$1,000. He reduced mileage to reimburse for actual miles submitted. Supplies and operations budget was based on historic trends.

Mayor Andy Moore asked about the historic trend estimates, noting that some requests were spelled out and others appeared based on what they think they may need. Harris stated he sent a budget request to each department but only two departments responded. What is presented is based on that response, with some estimates based on the previous year.

There was some general discussion about the new telephone install and how it was basically up and running now much better operational than months prior.

PLANNING:

Planning Director, Stephen Wensman addressed the Board regarding the proposed Planning Department budget. He skipped down to the training and education portion of the budget, stating that he had two employees interested in CZO training at the cost of \$1,300 per each employee—one an admin, the other is the code enforcement officer. He stated the additional training would allow staff to pick up the pace and step in across department as the Town gets busier with new development. Councilman Stephen Rabil asked if the training was online or in person. Wensman stated it was an online course. He went on to state that the telephone allowance line item increased to add the code enforcement officer. The Manager clarified that the code enforcement position in the budget last year was a part-time position. That position belonged to a former police officer whose phone stipend was still being paid from the Police Department's budget. Now, that it is a full-time code enforcement officer in the Planning Department, the cell phone stipend is paid from the Planning budget.

Wensman continued, there was no change in maintenance and repair fees. Professional fees changed because when employees receive their CZO training, that will come with annual dues to keep their licenses. Wensman stated vehicle and supplies has dropped considerably because the code enforcement officer has a new car that has been budgeted, which will not really need any maintenance. There were two other vehicles used by his department which often fall in disrepair. Operations and supplies are status quo from the prior year. Service contracts are up due to software changes and upgrades for customers to be able to pay fees online, interactive for staff to see and track. Wensman also stated a new system would allow the code enforcement officer to do work from his truck rather than coming into the office to do paperwork. He also stated it would allow for Planning Department application tracking and correspondence. Wensman also proposed \$4,000 for the Spring Grass Trail and bridge engineering and permitting. He also noted the \$35,000 in Capital Outlay funds for the purchase of a new vehicle for the Code Enforcement Officer.

Councilman John Dunn asked about the maintenance for the Spring Branch bridge. While it may look nice on the front end, it may not be nice when it becomes overgrown and the wetlands may harbor snakes. It was noted that its maintenance might be a good Scout project.

Mayor Pro Tem, Roger Wood asked the Manager to reiterate how the code enforcement officer's cell phone stipend came to be added to the Planning budget. The Manager explained for all intents and purposes; the prior part-time code enforcement officer was moved to the police department. His stipend was being paid from the police department budget, due to pension requirements. Given the position of Code Enforcement Officer belongs to the Planning Department, the salaries, benefits and the cell phone stipend needed to be there as well.

Mayor Pro Tem, Roger Wood asked about the cell phone stipend for the administrative assistant. Planning Director Stephen Wensman explained that the administrative assistant attended meetings after hours, and corresponds with Board members and staff regarding what happens at those meetings.

Wood also asked whether the Town would surplus the 2009 Dodge Charger and the pickup currently used by the Planning Department. Wensman stated yes. The Manager added the Town's intent was to surplus both. Mayor Andy Moore asked if mileage could be added to the listing of rolling stock inventory. The Manager stated yes.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Police Chief Pete Hedrick addressed the Board. He started his budget review with the Training and Education line item. He said this line had a slight increase due to all the relatively new employees hired in the Police Department. Hedrick stated each employee could cost between \$1,000 to \$2,000 to train, but there was also free training available at times which the department utilized.

Hedrick stated the telephone line item had a substantial increase due to the body worn cameras, and their phones. He noted two years of that money would be paid out of a grant. Councilman John Dunn asked if the budget number presented was a true number, or if it factored in the grant. Hedrick answered, yes some of it would be paid by grant money.

Hedrick continued, stating there was no proposed increase in utilities, no increase in equipment maintenance or repair. He stated there was actually a slight decrease in that. Professional fees and dues are still status quo. The majority of things that we use this budget for is with our outside attorney that we call. They have on-call, 24 hours a day service. There was an increase in fuel. Vehicle maintenance is status quo, but did go up a little bit because we're now having more vehicles on the road--being fully staffed. An increase in supplies and operations, but very minute. Wireless cards drove that increase up a little bit. Police canine services went up as dogs are expensive.

We have a \$16,000 allotment to cover the dogs. Uniforms, you'll see another substantial increase there of \$7,000 that's being driven because of our new body worn cameras. We're finding that the most efficient way to get a good quality, stable position is to have it on the vest. The vest that we currently wear, now that they double as a shirt. Our ballistic panels, don't have the adequate loops. As we provide new vests to the new officers, we're going to start transferring one that has loops on the bottom sections where we can put some equipment there and they can put the body camera there. Another item that will have substantial increase, one is the Casper program that will be used by our narcotics division. It basically enables us to use cell phones and then as all of our electronic devices for doing undercover work. Those are some of the big increase items. Hedrick asked if there were any questions on the line items he has discussed, before moving on to the capital items. Councilman Stephen Rabil asked about the cost for Narcan, asking was it not free. Hedrick replied it is free sometimes, but the problem is it comes with a six-month window until its expiration date.

There was some discussion regarding the free dog the Police Department received, with \$4,500 being the cost for an additional cage. This dog now adds a spare dog to the department with a total of four dogs, three who are in operation—two patrol dogs and one narcotic dog. Hedrick stated the additional dog helps with coverage so that there is one on every day.

Hedrick continued to Capital Outlay, stating the department is asking for two more additional flock cameras. He is also requesting to replace a K-9 who is almost ten years old. There was some discussion regarding how flock cameras are used to quickly solve crimes. Hedrick added that flock cameras are the industry leader in automated license plate readers, it never sells any of the data, and it maintains the information for thirty days. Councilman John Dunn asked what line item shows the fees for the flock cameras. Chief Hedrick stated the Service Contracts line item adds \$21,000 for an annual flock camera contract.

Police Chief Pete Hedrick explained the taser upgrade request:

- The department is moving from X26 to X26P tasers
- The new tasers have a slightly longer cord and modified electrical wavelength
- The warranty for the new tasers is four years
- After four years, Taser will still service the devices, but they're stopping service on the older X26 models
- The current request is for 10 tasers, which will upgrade all officers and provide a few spares
- The department is not purchasing the latest Taser 10 model, as the X26P meets their current needs
- The upgrade ensures all officers have the same level of equipment and maintains manufacturer support

The Council discussed the practicality of the upgrade, with Mayor Pro Tem Roger Wood stating that as long as the tasers continue to work, they support the purchase.

Hedrick also discussed his request for fleet purchases in the Police Department's Capital Outlay fund:

- Requesting two SUVs for the department
- Currently using used vehicles with low miles (under 20,000) to save money
- Vehicles can be 30-40% cheaper than new ones, with some remaining factory warranty
- The department has several vehicles marked in red that need replacement
- New police vehicles cost approximately \$69,000 fully equipped (including radios, lights, sirens, and cage)
- The chief would like to replace at least four vehicles this year
- Currently have about eight vehicles that need to be retired
- The department has around 46 total officers, including 43 full-time and 3 reserve officers
- They lack spare vehicles and need vehicles for reserve officers
- The national average recommends 5-10% spare vehicles in a fleet, which they currently do not have

Hedrick emphasized they are trying to be financially responsible while maintaining an effective fleet for police operations.

Chief Hedrick described the Tip411 software program as a tool to improve community engagement, also listed in is Capital Outlay budget request. His key points were:

- Allows people to opt-in and receive real-time messages on their cell phones
- Enables anonymous, interactive communication between the public and police
- Allows the department to push out information about incidents
- Provides a way to send updates like "incident at 403 Street, no threat to public"
- Enables anonymous tipsters to communicate back with police while remaining unidentified
- The program comes with custom logos for the Smithfield Police Department
- Has a yearly fee
- The company provides training and helps with implementation

Hedrick was particularly impressed by its use in Rocky Mount.

Police Chief Hedrick discussed the need for an additional Public Safety Assistant (PSA) officer:

- Current PSA works 7am to 5pm, Monday through Friday
- The new position would allow 12-hour shift coverage every day, including weekends
- Current PSA writes around 900 tickets annually
- Handles approximately 40 wrecks per month
- Helps free up police officers from traffic and parking enforcement
- Can address problematic parking areas, like those near Dollar Tree and other shopping centers
- Aims to be proactive in addressing parking violations
- Potential to develop into an evidence technician role
- Would help with crime scene documentation and photography
- Allows for more flexible scheduling to target problem areas at different times
- Councilmembers expressed interest in targeting specific high-violation times and locations

- The position would help address community concerns about parking and traffic violations

The chief emphasized the value of the PSA program and its effectiveness in addressing community safety and traffic issues.

Hedrick also discussed his department's desire for Lexipol software. Hedrick explained the Lexipol software for policy and procedure management:

- Currently, officers receive policies on thumb drives that quickly become outdated
- New software allows automatic updates to policies and procedures
- Customizes policies specifically for Smithfield Police Department
- Updates occur automatically when laws or accreditation standards change
- Officers receive updates directly on cell phones or computers
- Provides a record of when officers acknowledge policy changes
- Offers weekly tests to ensure officers understand new policies
- Eliminates the need to manually update and track policy acknowledgments
- Helps maintain accreditation standards
- Provides a checks and balances system for department practices
- First-year cost includes \$10,000 for customization
- Annual recurring cost is \$17,000
- Supports being an accredited agency with national best practices

Hedrick emphasized the value of being an accredited agency and having a systematic approach to policy management. Chief Hedrick continued discussing the Lexipol software as a comprehensive solution for policy management in the police department. The software provides a centralized system for tracking and distributing policies, allowing sergeants to monitor officer understanding and compliance. By eliminating the need for shared thumb drives, the system reduces potential cybersecurity risks while ensuring quick updates to policies based on new federal or state laws. The software supports the department's professional standards by creating a robust tracking system for policy education and compliance. Hedrick emphasized the critical importance of having a modern, efficient method to manage departmental policies and keep officers current with the latest procedures and legal requirements.

Chief Hedrick also discussed the addition of a new resource officer due to the annexation of the West Smithfield Elementary School site. He stated the County shared this cost at 80% and provided the officers' salary and vehicle costs and the officers come equipped. Councilman Sloan Stevens stated he feels that the Town should ask for more from the County as far as the percentage, and that the positions be funded by the County at 100%. He stated he agreed with the idea of SROs in schools, but this was typically a county position that the town is now supplying.

There was some discussion among the Board about the benefit of being able to use SROs during the summer when school is out to supplement staff. Hedrick stated that he and the manager determined mathematically that since SROs are in school 80% of the year, they could give the town the 20% of the year they are not in school in the summer. Assistant Police Chief Timothy Short added that the new SROs came in very motivated and do a lot of training. He said they really look forward to the summer to get back into patrol as a nice change from being in schools all day.

Police Chief Hedrick requested several staffing additions for the department:

1. Two Additional Patrol Officers

- Currently have 43 total officers
- Aim to have 22 officers in patrol
- Would allow for two lieutenants and two sergeants supervising four officers each
- Supports projected town growth
- Improves command structure and operational efficiency

2. Two Governor Highway Safety Program Positions

- Grant-funded traffic enforcement positions
- Address community complaints about traffic issues
- Positions previously existed but were not consistently filled
- Focused on specific traffic enforcement and monthly reporting requirements

3. Additional Records Clerk

- Needed due to increased workload from body-worn cameras
- Current clerk spends significant time downloading and uploading video evidence
- Body cameras generate extensive video documentation for each arrest
- New clerk would improve department efficiency in processing and managing evidence
- Allows existing records clerk to focus on other critical tasks

Hedrick explained these requests as necessary to maintain departmental efficiency, improve community safety, and manage the increasing administrative workload created by new technologies like body-worn cameras.

Mayor Pro Tem Roger Wood asked how many officers would potentially be necessary during a nonviolent traffic stop. Chief Hedrick stated this was hard to say, but if there was an arrest, they would have three officers there. Hedrick added that the department had to produce data from body worn cameras, dash cameras, and front and rear seat cameras from that stop which is a mountain of data. It was also discussed that the officer's equipment is routinely checked to ensure proper functionality.

Police Chief Hedrick requested \$10,000 for additional training supplies, primarily focused on improving firearms training. Key points include:

- The department lacks its own shooting range
- Currently alternates between training at woods and a correctional facility
- Last year, they made a significant investment in new firearms with updated sighting systems

- They've switched to using steel targets for better training reactions
- The \$10,000 would primarily be used to purchase a trailer for transporting steel targets
- Current transportation of targets is problematic, with sergeants having to place them on car seats
- They want to purchase specific targets to enhance training effectiveness
- The department aims to have all officers equipped with patrol rifles
- Requesting 10 patrol rifles with slings, totaling \$16,432

Hedrick emphasized the importance of maintaining proper training standards and equipment for the department's officers. The goal is to ensure all officers have consistent, high-quality equipment and training.

Mayor Andy Moore asked if there were any questions from the Board for Chief Hedrick. There were none.

Manager Scott mentioned that the Town staff has applied for a grant that would cover 100% for two additional officers requested. Hedrick added that the captain has put in for this grant before, they expect to hear something next month, and that the grant was successful the last time the Town applied for it, and it resulted in two new officers.


ADJOURN

Councilman Stephen Rabil made a motion, seconded by Councilman Sloan Stevens to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 pm. Unanimously approved.

ATTEST:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk




M. Andy Moore, Mayor