

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 at 5:00 pm in the Town Hall Conference room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Kaitlyn Tarley – Chairperson
Julia Narron
Pam Yelle
Christina Arena
Donovan Radley

Members Absent

Carmen Zepp
Luke Stancil

Staff Present

Elaine Andrews – Town Clerk
Lawrence Davis – Public Works Director

Staff Absent

Also Present

Emery Ashley, Jr., Jr. – Former Vice Chair

Call to Order

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

New Members Update:

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley allowed each new Board member to give a brief introduction of themselves and their backgrounds. She and the Board welcomed Donovan Radley and Christina Arena to the Board.

Approval of Minutes:

The Appearance Commission reviewed the minutes of June 17, 2025 and June 24, 2025.

Donovan Radley made a motion, seconded by Pam Yelle to approve the minutes of 6/17/2025. Unanimously approved.

Julia Narron made a motion, seconded by Donovan Radley to approve the minutes of 6/25/2025. Unanimously approved.

Financials and Mural Updates:

Members discussed the following items:

- Magen Pike, artist for the Bridge Mural project sent an additional invoice to cover extra paint and labor, partly due to weather-related damage (rain before paint dried).
- The commission had already approved the mural up to approximately \$18,000. No new approval was needed; this update was informational.
- Pike is designing and handling the signage for the display herself, including production and installation, with cost to be included within the existing total (or revisited if needed).
- The town manager has agreed to release an additional \$3,000 now for this invoice, with any remaining amounts to be paid later upon completion of the project; Pike has been informed.

- Due to the mural being a priority and the need for clarity on available funds, Chair Tarley recommended “**putting a pin in**” **new trash cans** until mural finances are fully settled. Rationale being to avoid overspending or misrepresenting available funds and ensure actual remaining balance is known before committing to further physical improvements.

Donate-a-Tree Locations:

Public Works Director Lawrence Davis provided an overview of the Donate-a-Tree Program as follows:

- Any town resident can participate; the standard donation is \$100 for a tree plus plaque, with a tiered system allowing smaller monetary contributions (e.g., \$50) that still receive a card acknowledging support.
- Donors' names are placed on a yard sign/board behind Town Hall and later associated with a designated tree location once finalized.
- Currently, they are still identifying permanent tree locations, including along Second and Third Streets and on or near the Greenway and other public spaces.
- Davis is coordinating with an NC State agriculturalist to identify flowering, suitable trees.
- The plan is to begin new tree planting next fall, as that is the best planting time.
- There is an operational note about ordering a sufficient quantity of plaques/placards to avoid overhead charges for small orders; staff are working to order a batch large enough to be cost-effective.

Davis stated they are working to finalize donate-a-tree locations. He also discussed paperwork and plaque ordering workflow with Public Works Admin Jaquie Smith to ensure that when a donated tree form/payment is received, paperwork is processed promptly so plaques can be ordered in batches and installed without delay.

Upcoming Projects:

Board Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley discussed upcoming projects and collaborations with DSDC.

- Third Street alleyway project, a collaboration to bring aesthetic and design to downtown business alley.
- Updating signage on the Greenway that has faded out over time
- Possibly adding more trees to the Greenway in pocket areas, such as near the Water Treatment Plant.

Tarley encouraged members to bring any fresh ideas to the next meeting scheduled in January.

Exiting Board Members Discussion

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley announced to members that in January they will vote for new Board positions (Chair and Vice-Chair). She stated that she would be leaving the Board after January 2026. For record Tarley noted that Board members Sharon Lynch, Elizabeth Baker and Michelle Choe had resigned the Board due to conflicts. She stated Robin Cook's term on the Board had expired. Current vacancies were reviewed with the Town Clerk, which were three after January 2026. It was also noted that a new member could possibly face removal for attendance, in accordance with Section 2-240 (1) of the Town of Smithfield's Administrative Code of Ordinances. The new member has not yet attended a meeting in quorum.

Tarley made mention that she and former Vice-Chairman Emery Ashley, Jr. would collaborate on a low scale Standard Operation Procedures manual to pass along to new members.

Added Item:

New Meeting Schedule:

Board Chair Kaitlyn Tarley discussed a memo from the Town Clerk whereby the Town Manager requested a meeting schedule change for the Appearance Commission's meeting day and time:

Michael Scott, Town Manager
Kimberly Pickett, Asst. Town Manager
Andrew Harris, Finance Director
Shannan Parrish, HR Director
Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk
Bethany McKeel, Admin. Support Spec.



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Memo

To: Kaitlyn Tarley, Board Chair
and Members of the Smithfield Appearance Commission

From: Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

Reforonco: Appearance Commission Meeting Schedule 2026 -

Date: November 18, 2025

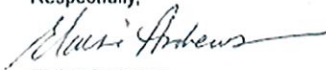
Dear Members of the Appearance Commission:

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to inform you that Town Administration has requested a change to the Appearance Commission's regular meeting schedule effective **January 2026** and going forward. Specifically, it is the desire of management to move the monthly meeting from the third Tuesday to either the **second or fourth** Tuesday of each month.

At this time, we are asking the Commission to discuss and decide which of these two Tuesdays, second or fourth, would be most suitable for all future meetings. Once the Commission has selected its preferred option, we will update the official meeting schedule accordingly, and relay this information to the public as mandated by statute.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued service to the Town.

Respectfully,



Elaine Andrews
Town Clerk

Cc: Micheal Scott, Town Manager
Kim Pickett, Assistant Town Manager

Tarley discussed the potential buffer changing the meeting day and time would grant the Public Works Director, and Town Clerk, who also have Council meetings on the same day as the current schedule. Members discussed which date would possibly work best. It was the consensus of the Board to change the meeting day to the first Tuesday of the month, and changing the meeting time from 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

Board member Donovan Radley made a motion, seconded by Pam Yelle to change the meeting day from the second Tuesday of the month to the first Tuesday of the month, and to change the meeting time from 6:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Unanimously approved.

DSDC Collaboration – Store Front Decorations

Tarley explained that the downtown Christmas storefront decorating contest, started last year, invites businesses to decorate their windows and compete in multiple categories. Last year she and a couple of others walked around, judged the displays, and found it fun and a great way to boost the town's holiday feel and visibility for the Appearance Commission. This year, the contest will be tied to the November 28 tree lighting, and the public will vote on the winners instead of a small committee, and she encourages commissioners to participate and be visible at the event.

Annual Report Discussions

Former Vice Chairman, Emery Ashley, Jr. addressed the Board regarding the Annual Report Presentation to the Smithfield Town Council. He stated he would take lead for presenting the report to the Town Council, and emphasized the need for a clear understanding of all financial figures from the Town's Finance staff before doing so. He made note of the following points:

- Fiscal year confusion: The Commission noted ongoing difficulty distinguishing what was approved vs. what was actually spent in a given fiscal year, especially for projects approved in one year but invoiced or paid in the next (e.g., the \$8,000 Bartlett tree survey, cemetery plantings, and fall planters).
- Carryover and rollover funds: Financial summaries currently combine the annual \$15,000 allocation with unspent funds rolled over from previous years, which produces totals (e.g., around \$19,000–\$28,000) that are not intuitively explained in existing reports.
- Need for clearer financial reporting: The Commission requested more detailed reports showing:
 - Beginning balance and annual allocation,
 - Amounts carried over from prior years,
 - Project-level expenditures (what was spent, on what, and when),
 - The remaining balance at year-end.
- Support from Finance and Public Works:
 - Andrew Harris, Finance Director stepped in to speak regarding the financial report. He agreed to generate more granular financial reports that separate current-year spending from prior-year allocations and clearly document major project expenses. Lawrence Davis, Public Works Director offered to supply a list of all Appearance Commission-related expenditures processed through Public Works to improve transparency on where funds have gone.

The Board also discussed internal tracking improvements: The Commission agreed it should maintain a simple internal tracking tool (e.g., a spreadsheet) showing approved projects, earmarks, actual expenditures, and remaining funds to support accurate and efficient annual reporting going forward.

DSDC Collaboration Updates:

Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation director, Heidi Gilmond presented collaborative updates to the Board.

She made mention of the following projects:

Library Corner Pocket Park

- The redesigned Library Corner near the Frank Creech statue is nearly complete and “looking really good.”
- The Garden Club has pledged \$2,000 to adopt the plantings around the statue.
- Planned features include:
 - Colorful benches (in different colors) to add visual interest.
 - Concrete gaming tables with checkerboard tops.
 - Concrete disc seats placed on the turf to serve as playful seating/stepping elements while discouraging sleeping.
 - A new mural concept showing a book opening into butterfly wings with literary characters (inspired with AI artwork), to go on the wall facing the green space.
 - Playful musical “flower” and “mushroom” sculptures (playground-grade equipment that also functions as interactive art).
 - A round picnic table and a smaller square table with three-sided seating.
- Design goals: keep most furnishings under 4 feet to reduce long-term loitering/sleeping, maintain clear sightlines, and choose North Carolina-appropriate, lower-maintenance plants.
- Operations and Maintenance Considerations
 - The turf area has gravel underneath, so liquids can drain through; only solids need to be picked up.
 - A dog waste bag station is planned just outside the fenced area so people can clean up after pets without specifically encouraging dogs *into* the turf.
- Holiday Programming & Events
 - DSDC will host holiday movies at the theater, coordinated with other downtown events:
 - Example plan: “Polar Express” after Breakfast with Santa, “A Christmas Story,” “Miracle on 34th Street,” and possibly “The Grinch” on selected dates in December.
 - Heidi is also coordinating a new “Hot Cocoa Crawl” event:
 - Includes free pictures with Santa as part of the promotion.
 - Intended to draw people downtown and support local businesses.
- Downtown Holiday Décor and Engagement
 - She encourages broad downtown participation in decorating, especially along carriage-ride routes, to strengthen the holiday atmosphere.
 - Notes that these events and decorations are good opportunities to showcase collaborative work between DSDC, the Appearance Commission, and local organizations.

Adjourn:

Donovan Radley made a motion, seconded by Pam Yelle to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:05 pm. Unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

