

The Smithfield Town Council met on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers of the Smithfield Town Hall, Mayor M. Andy Moore presided.

Council Members Present:

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens
Dr. Gettys Cohen, Jr., District 1
Travis Scott, District 3
Doris L. Wallace, District 4
John Dunn, At-Large
Roger Wood, At-Large

Council Members Absent:

Stephen Rabil, At-Large

Administrative Staff Present

Kimberly Pickett, Interim Town Mgr.
Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk
Tracy Stubblefield
Gary Johnson, Parks & Rec Director
Pete Hedrick, Police Chief
Brent Reck, Planning Director
Shannan Parrish, HR Director
Jeremey Daughtry, Fire Chief
Ted Credle Public Utilities Director
Lawrence Davis, Public Works Dir.
Micah Woodard, Planner I

Also Present:

Robert Spence, Jr., Town Attorney

Administrative Staff Absent:

CALL TO ORDER:

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

INVOCATION:

The invocation was given by Councilman Travis Scott, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. to approve the agenda, amended as follows. Unanimously approved.

Add:

- *Closed Session Pursuant to NC G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)*

Remove Business Item No. 4:

- *Consideration and Request for discussion to adopt a Loitering in the Parks Ordinance*

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Baseball Venue Project Update

Mayor M. Andy Moore asked Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson to present an update for the Baseball Venue Project. Gary Johnson addressed the Council. He presented a slideshow presentation, which detailed the general proposed layout of the stadium. Johnson stated that the proposed baseball stadium at 1500 Buffalo Road will be oriented southeast for solar reasons, with dimensions of 330 feet down the lines and 385 feet to center field. The stadium will include a grandstand of 1,151 seats, consisting of 180 chair-back seats, 42 field-level/VIP box seats, and the remainder as bleacher-back seats, plus bullpens in center field, a scoreboard, batter's eye, a grass berm in left field by a kids' zone, concessions, and a ticket booth.

He stated the immediate focus is on constructing the field and area from the grandstands out toward the playing surface. To address sound impacts, the design uses multiple low-mounted directional speakers aimed toward the grandstands and away from the outfield and nearby neighborhood. For lighting, existing soccer field poles will be reused with three additional poles, all converted from metal halide to LED to provide more focused lighting and an estimated 50% reduction in spillover. He also noted that the soccer field area is wet and a stormwater pond is planned in that area to manage runoff.

Johnson stated that the project will include an overhang around the perimeter of the bleachers and deeper-than-normal dugouts equipped with bathrooms, which can serve as changing areas in place of separate locker rooms. The initial phase also includes field-level areas located below field grade, all within the current project scope. He reported that the field will be synthetic turf, noting it is not significantly more expensive than natural grass but provides approximately 60–70 additional playable days per year, which he emphasized as important for playability. Johnson added that stormwater and erosion control permits have been submitted to DEQ, that removal of the DAV house, as discussed at the October meeting, is proceeding, and that plans have been submitted to the Town Planning Department for site plan approval. The next steps are to apply for building permits and relocate the FitGround amenities. In response to questions about setbacks and netting by Councilman Travis Scott, Johnson explained that the O&I zoning setback is 25 feet, and there is 25 feet between the parking lot and the property line; the protective netting for home-run balls is 10 feet off the property line, with side setbacks of 8 feet and a rear setback of 15 feet, confirming that all O&I zoning setback requirements are met.

Councilman Travis Scott expressed concern over having to take more trees out, due to the setbacks. Johnson, referencing the rendering in the presentation, stated only a few trees may need to be removed.

Councilman Travis Scott stated that this was the first time the council had seen this specific site plan in a public meeting and questioned whether it truly fits the town's recreational concept, saying that while the project is technically recreation, it functions more as entertainment. He noted that the UDO and code ordinances currently prohibit alcohol sales in parks and said this issue will need to be addressed. He also expressed concern that the town would be selling tickets on behalf of a private company's development, and requested that planning staff carefully confirm appropriate setbacks and buffering between residential (R-10) and O&I zoning, emphasizing that buffers generally should not contain structures—however received confirmation from Johnson that this was the only way the field would fit with the tracts of land the Town owned.

Scott then shifted to budget concerns, asking Johnson to display the cost slide and pointing out that the estimate, about \$6 million, does not include several key items, specifically a parking lot, restroom buildings, and some other amenities. Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett explained that the \$6 million reflects the existing contract amount, and that any additional amenities (such as permanent restrooms) are expected to be funded through state-appropriated funds, if state budget allows, and through fundraising, not from the town's existing budget. In the interim, Pickett said the town would rely on portable toilets and that the parking lot could be gravel. Scott objected to a gravel parking lot for a project of this scale, warning it would set a precedent for other businesses and stressing that the town should adhere to its own standards. He also raised concerns about an existing grant related to current park facilities (veterans walking trail, outdoor equipment, and the soccer field), noting his research indicated roughly \$250,000 in grant funding and that the council had not fully discussed the cost and implications of relocating or replacing those amenities. Pickett and Johnson referenced prior discussions, including at an October meeting, where removal or relocation of the DAV house, walkway, and FitGround equipment were mentioned, but Scott requested a clear, transparent cost analysis of removal and replacement, emphasizing that demolishing and rebuilding concrete features and fields under current prices would be expensive. He reiterated broader concerns that the project is likely to run well over the planned budget, that other sites might have offered a better economic development return with fewer replacement costs, and that the council needs full financial information—including missing line items such as scoreboard, sound system, and concessions building—before the town proceeds further. Johnson confirmed that scoreboard and sound system are not included in the current cost list and that only the listed site work, grading, utilities, stormwater, and sidewalks are funded in this phase for the six-million-dollar cost. Pickett added that for now the concession stand could be food trucks. Councilman Scott stated that a concession business stakeholder may not accept that.

There was some discussion about the existing disc golf amenity, with Johnson stating that part of this amenity was taken away with the inclusion park, and also that there would still be a few holes remaining after the ballpark construction.

Councilman Travis Scott asked Parks & Recreation Director Gary Johnson about traffic impacts and related costs, noting he did not see any traffic or turn-lane improvements listed and cautioning that such items would represent additional funds the town would have to spend. Johnson replied that, if required, there is already a three-lane section with a center turn lane near the middle school and DAV house. Scott then questioned the limited on-site parking, estimating only about 60 spaces based on the site plan, and asked how overflow would be handled. Johnson said attendees would also park at the Community Park and the Aquatic Center as needed, and that staff would work to coordinate event schedules with the team. In response to Scott's question about coordination with the school board, Johnson and Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett stated that a potential MOU had been sent to the schools to begin discussions about using middle school and possibly high school parking lots, and that a conversation had already occurred. Scott then raised pedestrian safety, suggesting a crosswalk would be necessary if people were crossing the busy road from school parking; Johnson said a crosswalk is planned, though not shown on the current concept drawing. Pickett added that it had been discussed with the baseball team that if they utilize school parking, they would be expected to hire additional staff or off-duty police officers to manage that crosswalk. Scott next expressed concern that spectators might park in nearby neighborhoods and walk through yards to reach the stadium, potentially affecting neighborhood integrity. Pickett responded that she had spoken directly with a resident about this issue and, based on experience in other towns, one likely mitigation measure would be to post temporary "no parking" signs in adjacent neighborhoods during events, noting there are expected to be about 28 Tobs Baseball home games per season. Pickett further added that other events would be youth ball and recreational events that may not draw large crowds. Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson reiterated her point in agreement, clarifying that in contrast to Tobs 1500 to 2000 crowd, the other events may draw 300 to 400 people at best. Councilman Scott stated "that's not in everybody's back yard."

Councilman Travis Scott stated that the financial impact on the chosen site needs closer scrutiny, particularly the cost of replacing existing amenities being removed ("taking the good out to put something else") when there is vacant land elsewhere in the park that might avoid many of these challenges. He asked whether that alternative area had been seriously considered. Parks & Recreation Director Gary Johnson replied that staff had looked at and discussed that option but had concerns about wetlands in the back area and the need to access it from Buffalo Road, noting that a facility of this type requires two access points. Scott suggested it might be accessed through the main park entrance, but Johnson responded that relying on a single entrance would be "too much," explaining that the current plan already provides two accesses—from the front of the park and from Buffalo Road—and that, given other activities in the park, a second entrance to the back area is necessary for traffic and operations. He added that developing the alternative back site would also require extending utilities and stormwater infrastructure, clearing woods ("clearing and grubbing"), and potentially replacing existing lights, which had previously been estimated in discussion at roughly \$400,000, with Johnson noting a more recent figure of about \$250,000 if light replacement was included. Scott noted this would also be an additional cost. Johnson stated this would not be an immediate cost because this portion of the park is

not grant-funded, however they would eventually and absolutely put back what was removed.

Councilman Roger Wood noted that in the interim, soccer games and practices could be played at another, larger field in town. Johnson agreed.

Councilman Travis Scott reiterated his concerns about public transparency in the baseball venue project and stated that he reached out to the town attorney, because he believes the contract with the private team may be invalid. Scott stated in his view, the town did not follow General Statute 158-7.1, which he said clearly requires additional steps. He asked the council to reconsider the process to ensure legal compliance and requested Town Attorney Bob Spence's response. Spence replied that he believes the contract is valid, noting that the board appeared to intend to carry out the contract; it was passed, has been discussed at nearly every meeting since about August, it was held over for an additional month, and that the lease and memorandum of understanding have both been voted on. Scott acknowledged there had been extensive discussion but pointed out there had been no formal public hearing on the contract despite the town committing over \$6 million, and he argued such a hearing should occur.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to pause the project in order to clarify and document the financial impacts and unknown expenditures and asked that the council also consider an alternate site that could yield better economic benefits with fewer conflicts.

Scott questioned the economic impact of the current location, pointing out the lack of nearby restaurants, saying that using food trucks would not substantially help existing local businesses. He reiterated his concerns about the site's proximity to schools with alcohol sales planned, the lack of discussion of necessary ABC permits, and other unresolved issues. Finally, he referenced the town's current expense of about \$1,000 per month for office space for the team, suggesting that, since the DAV house is vacant, it could be used for that purpose temporarily while the project and location questions are worked out, and then allowed his motion to stand.

Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett responded to Councilman Scott's questions about office space for the team, explaining that the lease for the Tobs organization came under the direction of former Town Manager Mike Scott. The town agreed to prepay six months of rent, so that commitment is already in place. She noted the office is located in the second floor of the former Wells Fargo building on Market Street. Pickett then addressed alcohol concerns, stating she had confirmed that alcohol sales are legally permissible within 50 feet of a school, and reminded the council that the town already allows alcohol sales at the amphitheater, at certain park facilities, and at the aquatic center after hours, provided the appropriate permits are obtained. She emphasized that any alcohol sales at the stadium would likewise require permits and adherence to applicable rules, and that the town is not "just opening it up" without regulation. Councilman Travis Scott replied that he appreciated the clarification and did not object to her statements, but stressed that, in his view, the UDO regulations treat this much like a private business, similar to how the council approves bars in outlying areas. He urged the council to consider the broader impact of the project and reiterated his belief that, given the level of public investment, the town could identify an alternate site with stronger economic impact. Scott also noted that he had not been consulted about details related to the team's booster club or alcohol club near the school and wanted that point on the record.

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens asked that the question be called for the motion before the Board.

Mayor Andy Moore stated there was a motion and a second on the floor. He asked members of the Council in favor of the motion to *pause the project, clarify and document financial impacts and unknown expenditures and to consider an alternate site that could yield better economic benefits with fewer conflicts* to signify by a show of hands.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace, Councilman Travis Scott and Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. raised their hands in favor of the motion. Councilmen John Dunn, Councilman Roger Wood and Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens voted against the motion. Mayor Andy Moore broke the tie, casting the deciding vote opposing the motion. The motion failed with a vote of 3 to 4.

Councilman Travis Scott closed by noting that, since his motion to pause the project failed and the town is proceeding, he is disappointed that he has had no communication from other council members despite the concerns he raised. He asked Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett to be fully transparent with the council about all project costs, emphasizing that, in his view, the project budget is already significantly overrun. Pickett agreed she certainly would do so.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. Zoning Map Amendment Request– (RZ-26-01):** Staff respectfully requests the Town Council to hold a public hearing to review the rezoning of a 1.75-acre tract of land located on Firetower Road.

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

Planner I Micah Woodard presented Rezoning Case RZ-26-01, explaining that the applicant seeks to rezone 1.75 acres on Fire Tower Road near its intersection with US 70 Business. The parcel (Johnson County PIN

15M12027G) is currently split-zoned between B-3 (highway business) on the southern/front portion and R-20A (residential) on the northern portion; the request is to rezone the entire tract to R-20A to construct a single-family residence. He noted the site is a vacant wooded lot in the town's ETJ, within the Pine Level Fire District, with county water and sewer and Duke Energy electric service, and that aerial imagery shows no structures, blue-line streams, or mapped flood hazard areas.

Woodard provided historical context: in 2009 the town's ETJ expanded and this property, along with others, transferred from Johnston County to Town of Smithfield jurisdiction. Under G.S. 160D-202, the town converted the county's zoning districts to the town's closest equivalents (county GB became town B-3, county AR became R-20A). He said the county appears to have applied a broad GB (general business) overlay about 500 feet deep along both sides of the US 70 corridor to encourage business development, which explains why the parent parcel ended up partly B-3 and partly R-20A. The current owner, who inherited the property, was unaware of the B-3 zoning and has never used the land for commercial purposes; to staff's knowledge it has always been agricultural. Woodard stated that it was the applicant's intent to construct a single-family home on his property. Woodard added that the future land use map designates the area as low-density residential, that surrounding uses are predominantly single-family homes, and that development under R-20A would follow standard residential setbacks and requirements.

Woodard concluded that staff finds the request consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and other adopted plans, compatible with surrounding land uses, reasonable, and in the public interest, and therefore recommended approval of RZ-26-01, providing the council with a recommended motion text to that effect. Woodard incorporated the entire record of his request to the town council in their March 17, 2026, agenda packets. He asked the council if there were any questions.

Ernest Allsbrook, Chestnut Drive, Smithfield, spoke in support of the rezoning request, stating he has known the property owner for many years and that it has been the owner's long-held dream (10–20 years) to build a home on the property. He said that subsequent development and "progress" around the site have made that difficult, but he believes the town should allow an exception so the owner can build a residence on this parcel even though it is in the middle of a commercial area. Allsbrook stated the home would not harm the neighborhood, that surrounding commercial uses can still generate revenue, and that approving the request is "the only right thing to do," noting the zoning situation arose after the owner had already formed his plans.

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens made a motion, seconded by Councilman Roger Wood to approve rezoning request R-26-01 with a statement noting that the request is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and other adopted plans, and that the request is reasonable and in the public interest. The motion carried 5 to 1, with Councilman Travis Scott voting in opposition to the rezoning.

2. Special Use Permit Request– (SUP-25-03): The Town Council is respectfully requested to review a special use permit application allowing a residence at 1115 Chestnut Drive to be utilized as a foster home.

All persons wishing to speak during the public hearing were duly sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Councilman John Dunn made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to open the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Planner I Micah Woodard presented Special Use Permit SUP-25-03, explaining that applicant Keisha Davis is requesting approval to use her residence at 1115 Chestnut Drive (zoned R-10, within the city limits) as a family foster home. He read the UDO definition of a family foster home— a private residence where the permanent household provides full-time foster care for children placed by a child placement agency, or for two or more unrelated foster children— and showed the Table of Uses, noting that in R-20, R-10, and R-6 districts this use is allowed only with a Special Use Permit (denoted "S"). Woodard summarized that the existing use is a single-family residence, the proposed use remains a single-family residence with the additional function of a foster home, and that Ms. Davis and her spouse are trained foster parents working under Seven Homes, a licensed North Carolina foster care agency.

Woodard walked through the required findings of fact, stating staff's opinion that: (1) the use will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or general welfare; (2) it will not impede normal and orderly development of surrounding property; (3) adequate utilities, access, and facilities are (or will be) provided; (4) the use will not be noxious or offensive by noise, odor, vibration, dust, smoke, or gas; (5) there is adequate ingress and egress; (6) there will be no adverse impacts on adjoining properties; (7) the use is in harmony with the area because it remains a single-family home with children living there; and (8) the project will conform to all UDO requirements. Woodard concluded by recommending approval of SUP-25-03 based on these findings and provided draft motion language for the council. He also stated that he would like to bring forth a text amendment in the future that would do away with this specific requirement. Woodard provided his written request and a PowerPoint presentation to the council in their March 17, 2026, town council agenda.

Councilman John Dunn asked for clarification on whether any Smithfield residence within town limits that has

more than one foster child must obtain a special use permit. Councilman Travis Scott noted including yes, except in the case of those living in a mobile home park. Planner Micah Woodard confirmed that, under the current UDO, that is correct and noted he was also surprised to discover this requirement; he added that the foster children are already living in the home because staff only learned of the situation after the fact.

In response to follow-up questions about the children, applicant Keisha Davis came to the podium, stated her name and address (1115 Chestnut Drive), and explained that her family moved there in November. She reported that her foster children are ages 9 and 3, and she also has three biological children ages 10, 8, and 5, all of whom were described by a council member as well-behaved. Woodard commented that, had this not come to his attention, staff probably would not have known a permit was required, and he was asked whether other municipalities or state law have similar requirements; he replied that in the municipality where Ms. Davis previously lived, this process was not required, and that typically only licensing and a fire inspection were needed, which is what triggered this review. In response to a further question from Councilman Travis Scott about licensing limits, Ms. Davis stated they are licensed for four foster children in the residence, with the possibility of up to six in an emergency and confirmed that the current foster children are not special-needs placements.

Mayor Andy Moore asked Davis if she had any comments to add, and whether she agreed with the testimony given by staff with regards to the request. Ms. Davis, noted that she has been foster care certified since 2026, and would like to continue doing so. She further stated she agreed with Woodard's statements.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion, seconded by Dr. Gettys Cohen, Jr. to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to approve the request.

Councilman Travis Scott asked whether the zoning map would not change, with Woodard noting that Special Use Permits were property/parcel specific.

Mayor Andy Moore noted that the motion, as stated, did not include the Board's review and consent with the finding of fact as stated by staff. He asked Councilman Scott if he would like to amend the motion to include agreement with staff's findings. Scott concurred.

Councilman Travis Scott made an amended motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to approve the request to include the agreement of staff's finding of fact. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Andy Moore re-stated that there was a motion and a second to approve the Special Use Permit, including the finding of fact. The Board concurred.

3. Subdivision Preliminary Plat Request— Clarius Partners, LLC – (S-26-02): Staff respectfully requests the Town Council to hold a public hearing to consider the preliminary plat for Clarius Park, an approximately 75.61-acre tract of land located on US Highway 70 Business at the northern edge of the Town's ETJ, further identified as Johnston County Tax ID No. 17J07032.

All persons wishing to speak during the public hearing were duly sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilman Roger Wood to open the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Councilman Travis Scott made mention to the Clerk that the presentation for this case had been updated from what was originally distributed to the Council. Town Clerk Elaine Andrews stated there was an update.

Planner I Micah Woodard addressed the Council stating that Clarius Partners, LLC is requesting approval of a preliminary plat for a 75.61-acre site on US Highway 70 Business to create four light industrial lots served by a private cul-de-sac with shared open space and stormwater facilities; the site includes existing agricultural and wooded areas, a stream, and a gas line easement, and lies within a protected watershed requiring enhanced stormwater controls; the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, will be built in one phase, and utilities will be provided by Johnston County; a traffic impact analysis has been completed with improvements under review by Town Staff, Kimley-Horn, and NCDOT; access will be via a shared private cul-de-sac with a granted length variance and a secondary emergency access for Lot 1; required infrastructure includes curb and gutter, sidewalk along US 70, landscaping buffers, and private trash service; a Property Owner's Association (POA) will maintain common elements; the development proposes approximately 60% built-upon area under the high-density option, with design measures to manage stormwater and minimize environmental impacts.

Woodard outlined Staff's Opinion of the Finding of fact for Subdivision requests as follows:

*FINDING OF FACT (Staff Opinion):
To approve a preliminary plat, the Town Council shall make the following finding*

(staff's opinion in Bold/Italic):

1. *The plan is consistent with the adopted plans and policies of the town; **The plan is consistent with the zoning and comprehensive plan.***
2. *The plan complies with all applicable requirements of this ordinance; **The plan will be developed in accordance with the UDO requirements.***
3. *There exists adequate infrastructure (transportation and utilities) to support the plan as proposed. **The development will extend Johnston County public utilities as needed to support the development. A privately owned cul-de-sac constructed to Town standards will provide access to the lots.***
4. *The plan will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or another neighborhood uses. **The site will be well buffered to the north and east by existing vegetation. The area to the south will be light industrial in the future.***

Woodard also stated the five conditions for approval as follows:

Staff recommend approval of S-26-02 with 5 conditions based on the finding of fact for preliminary subdivisions:

1. *A property owners association declarations be submitted to the Town Attorney for review prior to final plat for the operations and maintenance of the private cul-de-sac, stormwater management facilities, shared signs and other shared amenities.*
2. *The property owners declarations shall protect the 100' wide buffer on the north edge of the plat from future development/disturbance.*
3. *Shared access easements shall be provided over shared driveways on the industrial lots.*
4. *A stormwater operations and maintenance agreement be executed for the stormwater management facilities.*
5. *There shall be a 5' wide public sidewalk along the US 70 Business West frontage.*

Woodard stated the recommended motion, including the conditions for the Board:

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

"Move to approve the Clarius Park Preliminary Plat, S-26-02, with 5 conditions based on the finding of fact for preliminary subdivisions." Findings:

1. *The plan is consistent with the adopted plans and policies of the town; **The plan is consistent with the zoning and comprehensive plan.***
2. *The plan complies with all applicable requirements of this ordinance; **The plan will be developed in accordance with the UDO requirements.***
3. *There exists adequate infrastructure (transportation and utilities) to support the plan as proposed. **The development will extend Johnston County public utilities as needed to support the development. A privately owned cul-de-sac constructed to Town standards will provide access to the lots.***
4. *The plan will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or another neighborhood uses. **The site will be well buffered to the north and east by existing vegetation. The area to the south will be light industrial in the future.***

Woodard incorporated his entire record presented to the Town Council in their March 17, 2026, Town Council Agenda packets. He asked the Board if there were any questions.

Councilman Travis Scott noted that the 100-foot buffer on the north edge exceeded what the standard required.

Councilman Travis Scott referenced prior hearings, noting that many nearby residents had previously appeared before the board concerned about buffering, and that the earlier applicant was willing to preserve a substantial buffer, asking that this commitment be clearly reflected in the record. Planner Micah Woodard added that the council had seen this project before, explaining that the property was rezoned in August of the previous year, and that the Planning Board held a public meeting in February on the current plan.

Councilman Getty's Cohen clarified that the case was approved by the manager. Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett agreed.

Councilman Roger Wood asked Woodard to confirm that the preliminary plat now under review is substantially the same as what was shown at rezoning, including the concept discussed with homeowners. Woodard confirmed that it is, stating that the original rezoning presentation included a preliminary sketch plan for four speculative light-industrial buildings, and that nothing of substance has changed in that concept.

Toby Coleman, Attorney with the firm Smith-Anderson of Raleigh, NC addressed the Council speaking on behalf of Clarius Partners LLC. He noted that because this is a quasi-judicial proceeding, the applicant

wanted to ensure adequate evidence is placed in the record, though much of it had already been provided by staff and would not be repeated. He reminded the council that this same project was before them a few months earlier at the rezoning stage, when the plan and the zoning was changed to allow light industrial consistent with the surrounding area. He stated that the proposed subdivision complies with the UDO requirements, that the required findings have been met, and that the applicant is in agreement with all conditions recommended by staff. Coleman noted that the proposed Clarius Park development will be served by Johnston County utilities and that there is adequate transportation infrastructure to support it. He then introduced Mr. Overcash, the project's traffic engineer.

Mr. Overcash stated he is a licensed professional engineer in North Carolina and Virginia. He cited his experience, specializing in traffic studies for private developments as well as public transportation and safety projects. Overcash reported that his firm prepared a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) for the project, dated February 19, 2025, evaluating approximately 600,000 square feet of light industrial space. Traffic counts were collected on December 11, 2024, while area public schools were in session, and the study was conducted in accordance with NCDOT and Town of Smithfield standards using typical Institute of Transportation Engineers methodologies. He testified that, based on the Traffic Impact Analysis, his firm recommends several on-site traffic improvements integrated into the site design. The development will have two access points on US 70 Business: a northern driveway functioning as right-in/right-out only with a right-turn lane on US 70 Business, and a southern driveway serving as the primary, full-movement, signalized access, with right-turn lanes on US 70 Business and left- and right-turn lanes on the driveway itself. He stated that parking, internal circulation, and service access for the industrial uses will be entirely internal to the site, and that sidewalks will be provided along US 70 Business. Overcash concluded that the development is in harmony with the surrounding area, the proposed improvements mitigate traffic congestion impacts anticipated by the TIA, and that there is adequate transportation infrastructure, including for emergency access, to support the project. He asked the Board if there were any questions.

Councilman Travis Scott asked whether the developer had been in communication with Johnston County and its utility provider regarding water and sewer service to the Clarius Park site.

Nicholas Aarons, project engineer with Kimley-Horn, responded that they have been in contact with the county, submitted utility plans, and received responses confirming a concept for both water and sewer service. He explained they plan to tap an existing 16-inch water main along US 70 Business and to provide sewer via a force main from an on-site pump station routed toward facilities on St. Anne's property.

The petitioner's attorney then called Nick Kirkland of Raleigh, NC, a state-certified general appraiser, who testified that he was asked to evaluate whether subdividing the tract for multiple industrial lots would affect adjacent property values. After reviewing comparable industrial developments along US 70 near homes, Kirkland concluded that, particularly with the proposed 100-foot wooded buffer (which some other industrial sites lack), the project would not adversely impact nearby property values, and that in his professional opinion there would be no negative effect on adjoining or nearby residential properties.

Councilman Travis Scott asked appraiser Nick Kirkland what factors he considers when assessing whether the project will affect nearby property values, including potential noise and other industrial impacts. Kirkland explained that appraisers evaluate "externalities"—conditions that can positively or negatively influence value—such as nearby agricultural operations or more intensive uses, and that in this case he was asked specifically whether subdividing one large industrial tract into several industrial lots would change impacts, not whether industrial use in general would. He stated that, given the 100-foot wooded buffer and traffic mitigation already analyzed, there is no expected increase in noise, traffic impact, or visual issues attributable to the subdivision itself, and thus no measurable negative effect on adjoining or nearby property values, whether the site is developed as one large project or as multiple lots. When asked by mayor Andy Moore, Kirkland confirmed he agreed with staff's testimony.

When asked about job creation, Craig Danninger of Clarius Partners, Chicago, IL projected job creation, stating that rule-of-thumb employment ranges from 1 job per 10,000 sq. ft. to 1 per 1,000 sq. ft., which for this project equates to roughly 60–600 jobs, with a reasonable midpoint of about 1 job per 3,000 sq. ft.

In response to Councilman Travis Scott's question on phasing, Danninger explained that Phase 1 is intended to begin as soon as permits and approvals are secured—targeting late summer of this year—with construction running through about 2027, followed by lease-up; Phase 2 would likely start within about a year after Phase 1's completion, with full build-out in roughly five years.

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Councilwoman Wallace made a motion, seconded by Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. to approve the preliminary plat for subdivision request S-26-02 with the five conditions based on the findings of fact for subdivision requests. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Andy Moore thanked the developer for strong communication and cooperation with neighboring residents, noting their professionalism and willingness to keep neighbors informed even amid concerns about change.

4. Subdivision Preliminary Plat Request—Mallard Crossing— (S-26-01): The Town Council is respectfully requested to hold a public hearing to consider approval of a preliminary plat for the Mallard Crossing subdivision,

an approximately 469.9-acre tract of land into 1,326 residential units. The property is located on both sides of Mallard Road, extending from Old Mallard Road approximately two miles to the east, and is further identified as Johnston County Tax ID Nos. 15L11043, 15L11042B, and 15K11047.

All persons wishing to speak during the public hearing were duly sworn in by the Town Clerk.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to open the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

Planner I Micah Woodard addressed the Council stating that Mallard Smithfield NC, LLC is requesting approval of a preliminary plat for 469.99 acres to develop 1,326 residential units, including 872 single-family detached and 454 single-family attached (townhomes), in accordance with the R8-CZ master plan; the site consists of a mix of residential and agricultural land with woodlands, wetlands, fields, blue-line streams along the south side of Mallard Road, and a Duke Energy powerline running east to west; the project stems from a June 7, 2022 rezoning approval for the Woodleaf Development, originally allowing 2,005 units, with a revised master plan approved on July 15, 2025 reducing the total to 1,327 units, removing apartments, eliminating an area near the solar farm, introducing age-targeted housing, and incorporating five residential product types along with amenities such as two clubhouses and pools, premium vinyl siding, valley curb for narrower lots, and overflow parking for townhomes; the preliminary plat represents the next phase of development, is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for medium-density residential, and will include a voluntary annexation petition; development is planned in five phases beginning in late 2026 or early 2027 with completion by 2032; utilities will be provided by the Town of Smithfield, including expanded water and sewer infrastructure and two pump stations; access will be provided via seven intersections along Mallard Road with required turn lanes per a traffic impact study; streets will be 27 feet wide within 50-foot rights-of-way with multiple cul-de-sacs that staff recommend revising to meet Town standards, and valley curb is proposed for narrower lots and townhomes; pedestrian infrastructure includes 5-foot sidewalks on both sides of streets, a sidewalk along Mallard Road, and multi-use trails along Mallard Road and within the Duke powerline easement with boardwalks through wetlands; approximately 25 acres of open space and amenities are proposed, including clubhouses, pools, playgrounds, dog park, gazebo, sports courts, and trails; landscaping will include a berm and decorative fencing along Mallard Road and compliance with all UDO requirements; stormwater will be managed through conceptual SCMs and ponds with fountains, with plans under review; trash and recycling will be screened or stored on individual lots; the development proposes five housing product types with varied architectural features, though staff recommend additional details such as patios or decks and enhanced façade treatments; parking requirements will be met with additional townhome parking and HOA enforcement of on-street parking restrictions; the conditional zoning includes enhanced amenities and design standards exceeding UDO requirements; additional considerations include coordination for a potential access easement to an adjacent solar farm and concerns from a neighboring property owner regarding a proposed road stub.

Woodard incorporated his presentation in maps, a traffic impact analysis and staff report information provided to the Town Council in their March 17, 2026 agenda packets.

Woodard outlined staff's approval of the findings of fact for preliminary plat requests as related to the project as follows:

FINDING OF FACT (Staff Opinion):

To approve a preliminary plat, the Town Council shall make the following finding (staff's opinion in Bold/Italic):

1. ***The plan is consistent with the adopted plans and policies of the town; The plan is consistent with the approved rezoning master plan and the comprehensive plan.***
2. ***The plan complies with all applicable requirements of this ordinance; The plan will be developed in accordance with the UDO requirements.***
3. ***There exists adequate infrastructure (transportation and utilities) to support the plan as proposed. The development will extend public utilities as needed to support the development.***
4. ***The plan will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or another neighborhood uses. The pump station will be designed such that it can be expanded to meet adjacent development needs in the sewer shed. Roads will be improved in accordance with NCDOT's requirements and TIA findings.***

Woodard stated staff recommendations as follows:

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Town Council approve the Mallard Crossing Preliminary Plat with 8 conditions based on the finding of fact for preliminary subdivisions.

1. *The elongated cul-de-sacs be redesigned to meet town standards.*
2. *A public trail easement be provided for the trail within the Duke Power Line easement.*
3. *The stormwater ponds shall have fountains for aeration and as an amenity.*

4. *That the trash and recycling roll-off containers in the single family and townhouses units be screened from the public right-of-way or stored within a garage or the rear yards and enforced by the HOA.*
5. *That an HOA be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of all common amenities including landscaping and property maintenance for the entire development, the stormwater SCM, parking lots, recreational amenities, and open space.*
6. *The HOA enforce no parking on Town streets.*
7. *The architectural standards shall be incorporated into the declarations and enforced by the HOA to include: A variation in exterior finishes including premium vinyl siding with cottage style elements including a mix of siding styles, including horizontal lap siding, shake shingle accent siding and board and batten style siding. Each unit will have a garage with either carriage style adornments or windows. Age targeted products shall contain some stone/brick accents in addition to the vinyl siding. Corner side yard homes will have windows facing the public right of way or extra trees to break up blank walls. All units are to have rear decks or patios of at least 100 sq. ft. in size.*
8. *The HOA declarations be submitted for review by the Town Attorney prior to Final Plat.*

Woodard recommended approval of the preliminary plat request based on the finding of fact for preliminary subdivision plat requests with the eight recommendations by staff. He asked the board if there were any questions.

Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. referenced nearby I-95 exits 93 (Brogden Road) and 95, noting recent redesign of the connection from I-95 to US 70 and asking about the new connector road between Mallard Road and US 70 Business. The member then asked how much of the project area is already in the city. Planner Micah Woodard explained that the entire site is presently within the Town of Smithfield's ETJ, but not yet inside town limits, and that the developer intends to petition for satellite annexation so the property will become part of the town.

Councilman Travis Scott asked questions about water and sewer being extended by the town, and whether the developer would be paying for that infrastructure. Woodard stated he was not sure. Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett stated this was typically how developers operate, in paying for such fees and upgrades. There was also discussion, and confirmation that the town would be providing the electricity for the development.

Dr. Gettys Cohen asked about the sidewalks, with Woodard stating that standard-sized sidewalks would be proposed on both sides of the street, and on a portion of Mallard Road.

During review of the Mallard Crossing subdivision, mayor Andy Moore questioned the size and shape of the cul-de-sacs, noting they appeared larger than required and could encourage residents to park in the bulb, potentially blocking access. Planner Micah Woodard explained that staff concern was mainly about the shape, not just size; non-traditional shapes can function like informal parking areas, whereas more traditional circular cul-de-sacs discourage parking and maintain clear access. He said this could be refined at the construction drawing/administrative site plan stage.

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens then asked about the buffer berm along Mallard Road, recalling discussion of a greater height and asking whether a three-foot berm with fencing was sufficient, especially near townhomes, and suggested a more substantial berm with fencing similar to previous projects. Woodard confirmed his understanding that the condition was for a berm with a fence on top, and said he would verify the exact commitment. Stevens also urged that final architectural standards ensure variation in elevations and rooflines, so that all homes do not appear identical, referencing prior conditional rezonings where rooflines ended up uniform.

Town Attorney Bob Spence then asked further about lateral access, noting that while the preliminary plat shows some stubs to the south, he did not see a curb cut serving the existing solar farm and believed there should be one for long-term, harmonious development regardless of easement timing (which he noted may not come in place for another fifty years). Spence wanted to ensure with staff that that cut would be shown on any approved plan. Spence also questioned the lack of access to the north of the project. Staff and the applicant's team responded that the solar farm access curb cut is shown on the approved plan and would be coordinated, and Spence indicated he also had a question about the lack of lateral access to the north, which he wished to explore further.

In response to questions about the solar farm access easement and curb cut, staff noted that the curb cut does not yet appear on the drawing simply because there has not been time to revise the detailed plans, which are complex to amend.

Michael Pitts, General Counsel for the Mallard Crossing developer (Contender Development) of Greenville, SC, then addressed the mayor and council, stating the development team is very excited about the project and believes it will be a strong addition to the town. He commended Planner Micah Woodard's presentation, indicated that the applicant would present additional evidence through team members including engineer Beth Blackman, a traffic engineer, and other development staff, and confirmed that the developer has no issues with the conditions recommended by staff. Pitts further explained that the solar farm access curb cut and easement are being coordinated with Town Attorney Bob Spence, that the curb cut is envisioned as the future access point once the road is built, and that the developer has no objection to including it on the plan; he invited Beth Black (Timmons Group) to speak further and she confirmed she agrees with staff's testimony and

has additional information to provide.

Beth Black, principal senior project manager and professional engineer with Timmons Group, introduced herself and explained that the solar-farm curb cuts have not yet been added to the plans because the team only received TRC comments the previous day, and the drawings have not been revised since the January submittal and Planning Board review where they agreed to add them. She stated that, to the north, extensive wetlands limit where street stubs can logically be placed, so stubs were only added where they could serve future development without causing undue environmental impacts. Along the south side of Mallard Road where there are no stormwater ponds, she confirmed the agreed 3-foot berm with a fence from the rezoning stage. Black noted that sidewalks will be on both sides of all internal streets, and along Mallard Road the project will provide a 5-foot side path on one frontage and an 8-foot multi-use path on the other. She explained that cul-de-sac bulbs are large to meet fire code, which can make the bulb and short streets visually blend together, and that the HOA will enforce no-parking in those areas; the developer will work with staff during construction drawings to refine details. She added that the neighborhood will tie into Mallard Road at multiple locations to disperse traffic, that water and sewer extensions to this side of town will be at the developer's expense, and that with planned traffic, pedestrian, and utility improvements there will be adequate public facilities and no detriment to adjacent agricultural or single-family areas, noting a low overall density of about 2.8 units/acre and significant open space for a smooth transition to neighboring homes. In response to Councilman Travis Scott's question regarding the number of phases to completion, she said the project is expected to build out in roughly four phases (within a four-to-five-phase range as products are distributed) and that, as is typical, the school system will calculate projected student impacts using its own formulas once notified of the development.

Councilman Gettys Cohen Jr. stated that he noticed there were no additional schools being proposed east of I-95 and asked how many children the development might bring. Blackman explained that the Town notifies the public school system about new residential developments and unit counts; the school system then uses its own formulas—factoring in unit types, including age-targeted units likely to generate fewer students—to project enrollment growth and plan for impacts.

Traffic Engineer Jeff Hochanadel of Timmons Group introduced himself as a registered professional engineer in North Carolina and three other states, a Professional Traffic Operations Engineer, and an NC State graduate, with about 26 years' experience. He reported that his firm completed the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) for Mallard Crossing, on January 27, 2026, following Town and NCDOT standards. Study parameters (growth rates, background developments, etc.) were coordinated with NCDOT and the town, and traffic counts were collected on Tuesday, December 2 while area schools were in session. The TIA analyzed three build phases (not required to match construction phasing) and recommended off-site improvements including a signal and turn-lane improvements at US 70 Business and the connector street (Polecat Branch Road), as well as turn-lane improvements at Mallard Road access points. He stated that NCDOT's final comments, received that day, largely agreed with the TIA recommendations, with one added requirement to monitor for future signalization and provide a turn lane from Brogden Road to Mallard Road. He noted that the study modeled all attached and detached homes as standard single-family units and did not discount age-targeted units, so projected trip generation is conservative (higher than likely actual traffic).

Councilman Travis Scott asked how many cars the development would add to Brogden Road every day, with Hochanadel stating about 2500 vehicles—noting the current capacity is 12,000 cars. He further stated as of now per NCDOT records, there are 2900 cars that travel on Brogden Road on average. This development will add roughly the same amount so the road will be at half capacity.

Councilman Scott also asked if there were any traffic signals recommended. The traffic engineer stated that the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) recommends a new traffic signal at the Mallard Road/connector road (Polecat Branch) intersection, with another signal at the Brogden Road/I-95 interchange to be installed once traffic meets FHWA signal warrants, at the developer's expense. The TIA, which exceeded 500 pages, evaluated numerous study-area intersections and concluded that, beyond the turn-lane improvements already proposed (e.g., at Brogden Road and Mallard Road), no additional turn lanes are recommended internally to the site.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace asked Attorney Michael Pitts what the price ranges for the houses in the development were. Pitts replied that he thinks in the low to mid threes—but that he did not know for a fact. Wallace also asked if there were any programs for first time buyers. Pitts answered no but stated the builder of the homes may have some incentives or market programs.

Councilman Travis Scott asked Pitts about the sewer and infrastructure and whether they have checked with the County verifying capacity and associated fees. The developer confirmed that utility capacity for the project has been verified and agreed that the developer will be responsible for the cost of necessary water/sewer improvements, subject to standard procedures. When asked if utility capacity fees could be paid on a phase-by-phase basis rather than entirely upfront, the developer stated they would need to review that option against their financial modeling, as full upfront payment may not be budgeted.

Joseph Pierce, a nearby property owner at 695 Mallard Road (farm/event venue) then addressed Council. He explained that a planned stub-out street would terminate at his property line, which he had only recently learned about. While he now supports the overall development and expects it could benefit his farm business, he requested a clear buffer at the shared boundary (such as a berm, fence, or trees) to protect the character of his farm and "forever home." He asked when and how a final design decision on this separation would be made. Council and staff discussed the issue using the site map and acknowledged it had also been raised at Planning Board.

Mr. Pierce reiterated his concerns about a future road connection reaching his farm/event venue, noting he had received mixed messages and wanted clear protection at the boundary before the project advanced further. The Town Attorney, Bob Spence, clarified that while the road right-of-way would extend to the property line on the plat, the paved street itself did not have to be constructed all the way to the line at this time, and that any future connection into Mr. Pierce's property would have to come back before Council for approval.

The developer's representative, Mark Stokey, for the Contender team, 1500 Stoneridge Rd, Sampson, NC stated they wished to be a good neighbor and proposed that, although the right-of-way could go to the property line, the pavement would stop short; they further offered to construct a buffer consisting of a 3-foot berm with a 6-foot fence (approximately 9 feet total height), beginning at the Mallard Road right-of-way and extending 100 feet beyond the last townhouse behind Mr. Pierce's property. Stokey stated he would add that as a condition if needed.

Council and staff discussed location and maintenance responsibilities for this berm and fence, agreeing that it should not become a Town maintenance obligation and that the condition should specify HOA maintenance, with the berm and fence removable if future street connectivity is determined necessary by the Town. Attorney Spence directed that, before final plat approval, an appropriate recorded agreement or easement be prepared to capture these berm/fence obligations and the potential for future reference so that this commitment is preserved in the land records if connectivity became an issue in the future. In closing, Councilman Travis Scott confirmed with Mr. Pierce that the proposed berm, fence, and street design would not interfere with his present operations as a small farm/event venue—and is for the purpose of separation.

Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. pointed out that during public comment Mr. Pierce stated that the project was initially a surprise to him and that he did not personally receive mailed notice; he stated he first learned of it from a neighbor about a week before the February 5 meeting. Staff responded that mailed notices are generated using software that pulls all properties within a 350-foot buffer of the site, with letters sent, signs posted along the road, and a legal ad placed in the newspaper; while they could not guarantee postal delivery, his property would have been included in the mailing. Pierce stated his broken mailbox during that period might explain the missed notice.

Jake Craddock (209 West Wilson Street), having been duly sworn, asked whether the small lot sizes (approximately 0.10–0.14 acres) for single-family homes fell below the Town's minimum; Planner I, Micah Woodard clarified that such lot sizes are permitted because they were specifically allowed under the previously approved conditional rezoning, which modified the usual minimums for this project.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to close the public hearing. Unanimously approved.

The Council then discussed the addition of the ninth condition to the subdivision approval and agreed it would state: *"The developers agree to install a vinyl fence and berm buffering along the beginning at the right-of-way and extending 100 feet to be maintained by the HOA."*

Councilman Travis Scott noted that the developers should explicitly reference sewer capacity being obtained by phase, consistent with prior cases. Staff noted they could update the presentation materials to reflect the full set of conditions; however, Councilman Scott noted his statement was not an additional condition, and discussions are of record.

After confirming that the motion included all conditions on approval, a motion and second were made. In brief discussion, Councilman Travis Scott commented that the traffic engineer's presentation was comprehensive and raised whether language about traffic signals and their timing should be added; Mayor Andy Moore clarified that installation timing for signals is governed by NCDOT requirements and signal warrants, not Town alone. Following this clarification, Council voted, and the motion to approve the preliminary plat with all stated conditions carried five yay votes to one nay vote:

Councilwoman Doris Wallace made a motion, seconded by Dr. Gettys Cohen Jr. to approve preliminary plat request S-26-01 with the nine conditions based on the finding of fact for preliminary subdivision approvals. Motion carried five to one, with Councilman Travis Scott voting against the request.

Conditions re-stated:

1. *The elongated cul-de-sacs be redesigned to meet town standards.*
2. *A public trail easement be provided for the trail within the Duke Power Line easement.*
3. *The stormwater ponds shall have fountains for aeration and as an amenity.*
4. *That the trash and recycling roll-off containers in the single family and townhouses units be screened from the public right-of-way or stored within a garage or the rear yards and enforced by the HOA.*
5. *That an HOA be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of all common amenities including landscaping and property maintenance for the entire development, the stormwater SCM, parking lots, recreational amenities, and open space.*
6. *The HOA enforce no parking on Town streets.*
7. *The architectural standards shall be incorporated into the declarations and enforced by the HOA to include: A variation in exterior finishes including premium vinyl siding with cottage style elements including a mix of siding styles, including horizontal lap siding, shake shingle accent siding and board and batten style siding. Each unit will have a garage with either carriage style*

adornments or windows. Age targeted products shall contain some stone/brick accents in addition to the vinyl siding. Corner side yard homes will have windows facing the public right of way or extra trees to break up blank walls. All units are to have rear decks or patios of at least 100 sq. ft. in size.

8. The HOA declarations be submitted for review by the Town Attorney prior to Final Plat.

9. The developers agree to install a vinyl fence and berm buffering along the beginning at the right-of-way and extending 100 feet to be maintained by the HOA

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

- Scott Gandolph, a resident from Parkway Drive raised two concerns regarding the proposed baseball stadium. First, he asked whether, under applicable bylaws and state alcohol regulations, spectators would be allowed to carry alcoholic beverages outside the stadium and how such alcohol would be controlled, including the role of security. Second, Gandolph noted that in Mr. Johnson's concept drawing, a stormwater pond is shown behind two or three homes in her neighborhood and requested that the pond be shifted farther from the houses to reduce impacts such as mosquitoes. Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett responded that, based on the information the resident provided before the meeting, she would meet with the developer/contractor on Thursday, relay the request to move the pond, determine if there is any flexibility in its location, and then report back to the resident.
- Resident Richard Buckner, 106 Cobblestone Court, then spoke about the direction of growth in Smithfield, particularly the amount of high-density housing proposed near his neighborhood and the addition of a baseball stadium nearby. He stated that many residents appear to oppose the stadium, that it feels frustrating to have it sited next to his home, and that there has not been, in his view, a clear public hearing where those most affected could be fully heard. He referenced a prior comment by the Mayor Pro Tem about not minding making people mad over growth decisions and contrasted that with his belief that officials have a responsibility to represent the community.

Buckner cited concerns about transparency, including a public records request on the project he was told could take 90–120 days to fulfill, which he compared to the relatively quick movement from project start to vote; an email from a former town manager advising council members to limit email comments because they could become public, which led him to question what information was not readily shared; and the apparent purchase by the Town of a nearby house in the proposed stadium area for approximately \$500,000, in addition to the \$6 million already committed, which he does not recall seeing discussed or voted on in a public meeting and for which he requested clarification. He stated that, after receiving no response to a certified letter objecting to the public records timeline, he has contacted the State Auditor, the NC Parks and Recreation Land and Water Grant section, and the NC Attorney General's Office—not to escalate the situation, but to ensure proper procedures are being followed. He closed by stating that his goals are transparency, accountability, and confidence that decisions affecting his home and neighborhood are handled openly and lawfully, and he asked for a timely response and clearer communication going forward.

Buckner submitted a copy of his complaint attached to his original request for records release to the Town Clerk.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens made a motion, seconded by Councilman Roger Wood to approve the consent agenda as submitted. Unanimously approved.

Consent Agenda Items:

1. Approval of Minutes:

a. February 17, 2026 – Regular Session

2. Career Ladder Promotion Request: The Police Chief is requesting to promote one employee from Master Police Officer to Police Lieutenant.

3. Resolution No. 801 (04-2026) in Support of Preserving Municipal Property Tax Authority and Protecting Property Tax-Funded Services:

TOWN OF SMITHFIELD RESOLUTION NO. 801 (04-2026) IN SUPPORT OF PRESERVING MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX AUTHORITY AND PROTECTING PROPERTY TAX-FUNDED SERVICES

WHEREAS, the North Carolina House of Representatives has convened an interim committee to examine the State's property taxation system, exemptions, and related fiscal impacts prior to the 2026 legislative short session; and

WHEREAS, property taxes represent the primary and only substantial revenue source over which municipalities in North Carolina maintain direct authority and control; and

WHEREAS, revenues generated through municipal property taxes fund essential public services including, but not limited to, police protection, fire protection, emergency response, sanitation services, street maintenance, infrastructure improvements, code enforcement, and administrative services; and

WHEREAS, public safety expenditures alone typically exceed forty percent (40%) of municipal general fund budgets statewide, and among North Carolina's nine largest cities, public safety spending averages approximately forty-seven percent (47%) of general fund expenditures; and

WHEREAS, public safety spending has increased by an average of more than six percent (6%) annually since 2022 as municipalities work to maintain adequate staffing, equipment, and emergency response capabilities; and

WHEREAS, since 2020 municipalities, like families and private businesses, have faced substantial increases in operating costs due to inflation, including higher personnel costs for police officers, firefighters, sanitation workers, building inspectors, and other frontline public servants, as well as increased costs for roads, equipment, fuel, and other infrastructure needs; and

WHEREAS, significant reductions to municipal property tax authority or revenue capacity would limit a municipality's ability to fund critical services and could directly impact the safety, infrastructure, and quality of life of North Carolina communities and their residents; and

WHEREAS, municipalities must retain adequate and reliable revenue streams to meet current service demands, comply with state and federal mandates, and responsibly plan for future obligations; and local elected officials are in the best position to determine appropriate tax rates and service levels based on the needs and priorities of their respective communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Smithfield respectfully urges the North Carolina General Assembly to preserve municipal property tax authority and avoid legislation that would significantly reduce or restrict this essential local revenue source without providing a sustainable and equivalent alternative; and to carefully evaluate any proposed changes to the property tax system to ensure municipalities retain the ability to adequately fund public safety, infrastructure, and other essential services necessary to keep communities safe and functioning effectively.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be entered into the official records of the Town of Smithfield and transmitted to the members of the North Carolina General Assembly representing our municipality, as well as to the North Carolina League of Municipalities, to express support for protecting local government fiscal stability.

DULY ADOPTED THIS 17th DAY OF MARCH 2026

- 4. Consideration and Request for approval to Award Contract for Constructing the Rebuild of the Town's Pump Station No. 1:** Staff respectfully requests that the Town Council award the construction contract to Moffat Pipe, Inc. in the amount of \$4,139,570, with \$2,000,000 funded through ARPA and the remaining amount contingent upon approval of a \$2,700,000 loan.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

- 1. Consideration and request for approval to rename a section of Pitchi Street to Legion Park Drive.**

Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett explained that former Manager Scott had received a request from the American Legion to rename the private road leading into their property, which currently branches off Peedin/Pitchi Street, to "Legion Park Drive." Pickett stated that she confirmed with the county that the name is available and acceptable, she noted that it applies only to the private portion leading into the Legion, and estimated a sign cost of about \$70. She added that the county requires formal Council approval before updating the address and signage in GIS.

The Board questioned whether a public hearing was needed and why the item is before the Board if the segment is a private street. Pickett and the Town Attorney explained that the Town does not maintain that portion so it is treated as a private access drive rather than a public street, and reiterated that the approval of the Board is necessary for County/GIS/mapping updates.

Applicant Mr. Ernest "Ernie" Alsbrook, Commander of the American Legion, described the surrounding Legion property (about 13 acres) and clarified that the paved drive beyond the utility termination point is effectively their parking/access area, not part of public Pitchi Street. He noted that Pitchi Street was historically named for a local family and that there are no longer any occupied addresses fronting that public segment. The Legion's goal is to have a clear, GPS-recognizable address associated with their building and ballfield that is not labeled as Pitchi Street, and to show up correctly in county GIS as "Legion Park Drive." He stated the Legion is willing to pay the sign cost, prefers the Town to obtain and install the sign, and may attach additional Legion-related information to the post.

Staff and council emphasized they did not wish to change the historic Street name itself and confirmed that this action only names the private lane and does not alter the public street.

After discussion, a council member moved that the private road providing access to the American Legion be named "Legion Park Drive," the motion was seconded, and the Council approved the naming.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace made a motion, seconded by Councilman Travis Scott to change the name of the private road to Legion Park Drive. Unanimously approved.

2. Consideration and request for approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the SYCC and the Boys and Girls Club

Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett reported that the Boys & Girls Club had approached the Town several months earlier seeking to relocate its Smithfield program from South Smithfield Elementary School to the Sarah Yard Art Center, noting that the current school location cannot accommodate some middle-school programming and that the Art Center is underutilized by youth. Pickett recapped that the Club presented to Council in February, after which a well-attended community meeting was held at the Sarah Yard Center where questions were addressed. Pickett then outlined the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), under which the agreement would begin August 15, 2026, allowing the Club to finish the school year at the elementary school and start the new school year at the Sarah Yard Center.

Under the MOU, the Boys & Girls Club will operate, manage, and supervise the program; provide curriculum, materials, sports equipment, and staffing (including a dedicated site supervisor and staff sufficient for a 20:1 participant-to-staff ratio); conduct required background checks; designate a liaison to coordinate with the Town; maintain safety and security; leave the facility clean after each session; maintain membership documentation; repair or reimburse the Town for any damage; and coordinate scheduling around existing users of the building, including a weekly senior/women's Bible study group. The Town will provide the space (Sarah Yard Center), existing furnishings and equipment, promotional support, secure storage, and, in year one, utilities and janitorial services. Beginning in year two, the Boys & Girls Club will assume janitorial services and reimburse the Town for 50% of utilities (capped at \$400/month), with those reimbursements deposited into a restricted fund for future capital needs at the Sarah Yard Center. Program hours will generally be 2:30–6:30 p.m. during the school year and 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. in summer, and the Club will continue providing a hot meal for participants.

Board discussion was for whether current neighborhood residents who use the facility, but are not Boys & Girls Club members, might lose access, and whether that had been addressed at the community meeting. Boys & Girls Club representatives responded that all local children are welcome to join the Club, that membership is \$7.50 per year, and that scholarships are available, so cost is not a barrier.

Pickett added that the existing women's Bible study and similar community groups can continue to use the space, and that Club staff can schedule around them (including using outdoor space and field trips during those times). Councilman John Dunn also sought clarification on an MOU provision related to the \$400 capital projects fund, noting that most reimbursements are typically handled via enterprise funds. Pickett explained that the Town will pay the full utility bills from the existing Sarah Yard Center budget and then invoice the Boys & Girls Club monthly for its 50% share (up to \$400), which will be deposited into a dedicated special-use fund for Sarah Yard Center capital projects.

Upon this discussion, Councilman Gettys Cohen Jr. made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Doris Wallace to approve the MOU between the SYCC and the Boys And Girls Club. Unanimously approved.

The Town Council and staff thanked the Boys & Girls Club representatives for their patience and expressed enthusiasm that the partnership will be a positive addition for the community.

3. Consideration and request for approval of various Board Appointments: The Town Council is respectfully requested to consider appointments to the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment and the Appearance Commission.

Town Clerk Elaine Andrews presented a list of current board and commission vacancies, directing Council to the Mayor's agenda where the positions up for vote were broken out. She noted that two appointments required ballot votes: the Planning Board and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Council briefly discussed timing of a related text amendment expected at the second April meeting, but agreed they should go ahead and fill regular, non-alternate seats, referencing a prior issue where an applicant believed they were being appointed as a regular member but was actually made an alternate.

When asked about applicants, Interim Town Manager Kimberly Pickett reported that one new application had been received for the Planning Board, and that the Appearance Commission now has three vacancies due to one member's exit today, which will be requiring re-advertisement; however, there is one

Appearance Commission seat (Monica Price), so that appointment does not require a ballot.

Pickett stated there was one Board of Adjustment vacancy and application for reappointment from Thomas Bell where no ballot was required.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens for reappointment to the Board of Adjustment. Unanimously approved

Pickett stated for the Appearance Commissions there were three positions available and one applicant, Monica Price.

Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens made a motion, seconded by Councilman Roger Wood to approve the appointment of Monica Price to the Appearance Commission. Unanimously approved.

Pickett continued stating that for the HPC, there are two positions and four applicants—Emery Ashley Jr. (reappointment), Michael Wagstaff, Janice Wagstaff, and Brian Scott Royster—and provided their application references in the packet. She reiterated these positions would need to be selected by ballot. Upon tallying the ballots for HPC, Town Clerk Elaine Andrews stated that the applicants receiving the two highest votes were Emery Ashley, Jr. and Brian Royster.

Councilman Travis Scott made a motion, seconded by Sloan Stevens to appoint Emery Ashley, Jr. and Brian Royster to the Historic Preservation Commission. Unanimously approved.

Pickett stated that for the Planning Board there was one in-town seat and five applicants—Thomas Bell, Kisha Fields, Monica Price, Brian “Scott” Royster and John Keeley.

Following the Planning Board ballot count, the Town Clerk reported a tie between Keisha Fields and John Keeley. Upon brief discussion it was noted that there could be a re-vote, or the mayor to break the tie; the mayor selected John Keeley, who was therefore winning the vote for appointment.

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. to appoint John Keeley to the Planning Board. The motion carried with a five to one vote, with Councilwoman Doris Wallace voting no to the appointment.

Pickett concluded by noting that the Appearance Commission still has open seats and the Recreation Advisory Commission still has two regular positions and one high school liaison vacancy, and she encouraged outreach to residents who may be interested in serving.

~~4. Consideration and Request for discussion to adopt a Loitering in the Parks Ordinance:~~ The Parks and Recreation Department is respectfully requesting adoption of a lingering and loitering ordinance within parks and town owned recreational spaces.

COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS:

- Councilman Travis Scott emphasized the need for clarity regarding the finances for the ballfield construction and stressed that related materials brought before the board be clear for understanding. The mayor concurred with Scott that he should receive all the clarification required to understand, including responses to his recent email requests to staff.
- Mayor Moore informed the Council and audience that Councilman Wood is facing significant health issues that will require extensive hospital and doctor visits over the coming year, and he offered prayers and support.
- Mayor Moore and Councilman Roger Wood announced/gave details for a barbecue fundraiser for Councilman Wood to be held on Saturday, April 11, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Town Hall parking lot, with barbecue plates priced at \$12, and encouraged the public to attend, purchase plates, and help meet a set goal for plate sales; deliveries were also offered.
- Councilman Roger Wood thanked everyone for their prayers and support, acknowledged this would be a challenging time for his family, and noted he may be absent for several months, given an expected recovery period of about six months, though he hopes to return sooner if possible.
- Councilman Travis Scott expressed appreciation for Councilman Wood’s openness, urged him to prioritize his health, and reiterated support; he also suggested the Fire Department bays could serve as a backup location for the fundraiser in case of rain.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT:

- In her report, Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett informed Council of several upcoming events and opportunities:
- The Johnston Regional Airport runway unveiling on Wednesday, April 1 at 10:00 a.m.

- The NCLM Town & State Dinner in Raleigh on April 15, asking members to notify her and the clerk if they plan to attend so they can be registered (noting that Councilmembers Cohen and Wallace are already confirmed).
- She reported that the previously planned downtown business meeting about operational and traffic changes related to the DOT changes had been postponed and rescheduled for Monday, the 23rd at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, and encouraged downtown business owners to attend and provide feedback on proposed one-way configurations for Second and Third Streets.
- Pickett also announced a ribbon cutting for the new Greytown sign at Highway 70 and Hill Street on Wednesday, April 1 at 3:30 p.m.,
- She noted that on April 22, from 12:30–1:30 p.m., Harbor House will hold a Sexual Assault Awareness walk around the courthouse, so additional pedestrian activity is expected in that area.
- Pickett concluded by recognizing the Police Department staff who recently achieved re-accreditation through ALETA, commending the chief and staff for their work, and referring Council to the written departmental reports in their packets.

Following her report and brief acknowledgment of attendees for announced events Mayor Moore entertained a motion to enter closed session pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-318.11(a)(3); and the Council went into closed session.

Added:
Closed Session Pursuant to NC G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens to go into closed session at approximately 10:13 p.m. Unanimously approved.

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilman John Dunn to come out of closed session at approximately 10:49 p.m. Unanimously approved.

Adjourn:

Councilman John Dunn made a motion, seconded by Councilman Travis Scott to adjourn the meeting at approximately 10:50 p.m. Unanimously approved.


 M. Andy Moore, Mayor

ATTEST:


 Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

