

The Smithfield Town Council reconvened their May 5, 2026, meeting on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 6:30 pm to continue budget discussions. The meeting was held at Fire Station One located at 111 S 4th St., Smithfield, NC. 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
Stephen Rabil, At-Large
Roger Wood, At-Large

Council Members Absent:

John Dunn, 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
Jeremey Daughtry, Fire Chief
Ted Credle Public Utilities Director
Lawrence Davis, Public Works Dir.

Also Present:

Administrative Staff Absent:

Reconvened May 5, 2026 Meeting for FY 2026-27 Town of Smithfield Budget Discussions:

Mayor M. Andy Moore reconvened the meeting at approximately 6:30 pm.

Adjustments:

Interim Town Manager Kim Pickett explained that, following adjustments since the last budget meeting, the overall budget now reflects a 1% decrease from the prior year, with the total general fund budget at \$24,298,099 after removing the previously discussed loan. She noted that the Public Works – General budget has a 7% decrease, and outlined the primary revenues for that fund as cemetery lot sales (\$45,000), from the Riverside cemetery (\$4,500), and grave openings (\$40,000), with a slight upcoming fee schedule increase for those items to be detailed later by Lawrence Davis. For capital across Davis's departments, she stated that the town is adding a new vehicle tracking system, including cameras that record both inside and outside the vehicles and track speed and location, replacing a system that had failed and was previously discussed in relation to the police department. She also noted that funds are included to replace downtown trees that were removed last year. She then asked Director Davis to provide further detail on those general fund items.

Public Works – General

Public Works Director Lawrence Davis expressed appreciation for recent equipment investments, noting the department had no vehicle accidents this year as a result. He highlighted two capital requests: a vehicle tracking and camera system (Samsara), and replacement of downtown trees removed as part of the Bradford pear eradication effort.

On tree replacement, Director Davis reported that 186 Bradford pear trees had been removed pursuant to a state mandate, and the department seeks to replace 82 trees along the Second Street corridor. Davis stated Warren Marshall, an arborist from the Johnston County Agriculture Center provided a list of recommended tree species. Director Davis asked whether the Council wished to select the species or delegate that to staff. The Board indicated they preferred to review the options and weigh in, potentially involving the town's Appearance Commission. Council also pointed out that a particular cleared tree area on South Second Street currently appeared unkempt and Director Davis committed to dispatching crews to address the overgrowth in that area. Davis stated he and staff would coordinate weed abatement along the Second Street corridor down to Davis Street.

Regarding the tracking system, Director Davis explained that the prior vendor relationship had deteriorated and a new system was needed. The Samsara system provides GPS tracking, driver monitoring cameras, interior and exterior recording, and integration with the town's work order and GIS systems. The Board discussed the benefits of the tracking and camera systems. Interim Manager Pickett clarified that a PowerPoint error showed an incorrect cost figure; and corrected allocation as \$14,976 annually for four devices, with a total 36-month contract, covering 24 cameras with the funding split across all three Public Works departments. Director Davis noted that Johnston County Schools uses a comparable system. The Board concurred the pricing was agreeable, with Pickett reiterating the contract cost of \$14,976 in year one and \$14,757 in years two and three for 24 cameras.

Pickett also stated the department is requesting to increase the cost for grave openings in its fee schedule due to a rise in contractor costs.

Mayor Andy Moore asked for clarification as to why the capital outlay line, originally budgeted at \$60,620, is projected at \$274,364, noting that while his operating line items are under budget, the department appears over budget overall due to capital outlay. Pickett explained it was because of the previously discussed knuckle boom and street sweeper purchase issue, which she will get fixed through year-end clean up budget amendments. Pickett explained that the prior Finance Director had budgeted items in capital outlay but often processed the actual purchases through operating and then intended to transfer funds back from capital, resulting in numerous transfers in and out that were never fully completed. She noted that the purchases were correctly charged to capital outlay, but the offsetting transfers were not done, partly because he had anticipated using a loan that was never finalized.

Pickett reported that she and Finance Director Tracy Stubblefield have now received the audit and financial statements, and their next step is to prepare a cleanup budget to straighten out these entries and eliminate unnecessary transfers going forward. She stated that beginning with the new fiscal year on July 1, the practice of frequent transfers in and out would stop, and that a budget amendment would be prepared before June, likely for the June 2 meeting, with the previously proposed loan now effectively scrapped from the budget. Pickett also stated that the auditor would present the Town's audit at the May 19th Council meeting. Interim Manager Pickett stated the Public Works budget was an overall decrease, with a slight increase in service contracts—which had to be re-bid this year.

Streets

Interim Town Manager Pickett presented the Streets budget, which included a request for vehicles, a new salt tank and for two semi-paving projects.

Regarding paving projects, Pickett stated First Baptist Church submitted a formal request in January for the town to fund one-third of the repaving of their parking lot, which is used as public parking during the week. The town and Johnson County would each contribute a third.

Pickett stated in light of the proposed NCDOT changes for parking on Market Street, the second semi paving project is a proposed placeholder for an allocation of \$20,000 toward paving a gravel lot owned by the Johnston County Builders Association. The parking lot is located at Bridge and Second Streets. Pickett stated it would be offered to county employees for parking, thereby freeing up the existing county utility parking lot for public use. An estimate received for the lot came in at \$56,000, and a formal bidding process would be required.

Regarding the salt tank purchase, Director Davis explained that NCDOT has cut back on providing salt to the town—giving priority to their maintained streets. It was recommended municipalities obtain their own supply, as other communities such as Clayton have done. The tank — a 5,000-gallon brine storage unit — will allow the department to mix and deploy brine in-house for winter street treatment.

Interim Town Manager Pickett presented the Streets budget at \$565,688, a 78% decrease from the prior year, primarily because major paving costs are funded separately in the Powell Bill.

The council engaged in a broad discussion about downtown parking. Several members expressed concern about the loss of Market Street parking and the need for a more comprehensive strategy of addressing the Town's own lots and other shared lots that could be upgraded or re-configured for more space. Suggestions included converting the town's own deteriorated lots (including one near the Indian restaurant), upgrading the gravel lot near the Greenway.

The Council also discussed possibly and implementing a paid parking program, possibly using metered system QR code-based vendor technology at no upfront cost to the town. Police Chief Pete Hedrick confirmed that enforcement of time-limited parking downtown had already begun and acknowledged the potential benefit of metered or fee-based parking to encourage turnover at premium spots.

Councilman Gettys Cohen, Jr. asked why the Town would pave someone else's parking lot. Interim Manager Pickett noted that it was her understanding that the First Baptist Street parking lot pavement was done in the past. Cohen stated this lot wasn't as much of his concern as the Bridge Street location. Pickett stated this is thought to help open up an alternative parking lot in favor of downtown businesses and reiterated that the County would also assist with the paving costs.

In discussing the proposal to pave the Builders Association parking lot, councilmembers expressed concern that the town would effectively be paving a lot primarily used by county vehicles, noting that the county already receives sales and property tax revenue and should therefore share more of the cost. They suggested that, before committing funds, the town should survey the entire downtown area to identify key parking locations, consider a broader parking management strategy (including QR-code-based paid parking), and potentially designate employee-only lots so that the most convenient spaces remain available for visitors and customers. They also emphasized the importance of getting input from the downtown business association, and pointed out that a structured, paid-parking program could generate dedicated revenue to reinvest in upgrading and maintaining these "premium" parking areas.

The council discussed the idea of retaining the \$20,000 placeholder as a contingency for parking improvements generally rather than earmarking it for the Builders Association lot and suggested re-engaging the Market Street stakeholder group to inform a parking strategy. No final decision was made, but consensus leaned toward a broader parking review before committing funds to any specific project.

Regarding metered parking, Councilman Travis Scott asked of Police Chief Hedrick if he would use staff or engage a third party. Hedrick stated that he would likely use a third party, who would also be more aggressive with collections and use a more automated process for ticketing. The Council reiterated that they were not advocating paid parking but would continue to examine its feasibility as downtown parking changes progress.

Councilman Travis Scott also raised concerns about non-functioning tree lights downtown, inconsistent bulb colors in the streetlight fixtures, and a previously discussed concept for overhead decorative lighting along the 2nd Street and Market Street corridor. Director Davis was asked to investigate the lighting issues and report back.

Garage

Interim Manager Pickett presented the Garage budget at \$185,682, a 1% increase from the prior year. One Samsara tracking device at \$2,460 was also added for the single garage vehicle driven by the full-time employee. Pickett stated that the only notable change was an increase in supplies and operations — specifically oil, filters, and equipment maintenance — from \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Councilman Roger Wood raised the question of why police and fire vehicles are not serviced by the town's in-house mechanic. Public Works Director Lawrence Davis acknowledged this has historically not been the practice. Councilman Travis Scott iterated that under previous management of the department, it was found that some specialized service maintenance items were missed by staff. Police Chief Hedrick echoed that specialized maintenance needs of emergency vehicles led police to use outside vendors, though he expressed openness to routing routine maintenance — such as oil changes, tire rotations, and brake jobs — to the in-house garage as a cost-saving measure. Interim Town Manager Pickett noted police repair and maintenance is currently budgeted at \$115,200. The council directed staff to explore scheduling a portion of routine police vehicle maintenance through the town garage.

Powell Bill

Interim Town Manager Pickett noted that the Powell Bill fund receives \$440,000 in state Powell Bill funds, which are allocated as \$400,000 for resurfacing and \$40,000 for sidewalk curbing and replacement. The council discussed whether to supplement paving from fund balance, as had been done previously. Councilman Roger Wood asked Davis to provide the Council with an update streets list, as the prior list was given in 2017. Davis agreed.

Councilwoman Doris Wallace asked what sidewalks were proposed in the budget, with Davis answering these were proposed repairs for holes and cracks in downtown sidewalks, and some on Fifth Street—not for anything new.

Councilman Stephen Rabil asked how much \$40,000 would accomplish for repairs; Davis answered he would need to get the list together, as well as contractors and get back to him with actual numbers. Rabil noted that some were dangerous, with Lawrence stating they have repaired a lot of sidewalks. Mayor Andy Moore concurred and added that these types of repairs need to be documented on our social media to show the Town is actively addressing these issues. Davis stated he would start trying to note and record these things for the Town's social media manager.

Councilman Gettys Cohen Jr. asked if \$40,000 was an adequate amount to address the Town's sidewalk issues, citing today's cost for materials. Davis stated the number was adequate for his department to stay in front of and address situations.

There was also discussion regarding staffing for the street sweeper as well as their schedule of operation.

Finance Director Tracy Stubblefield reported, based on the draft FY25 audit, that the Town's general fund unassigned fund balance is approximately \$20,108,346, up from about \$17,629,320 in the prior year. She explained that, while the figures are still in draft form and the numbers are technically unofficial, she does not anticipate significant changes. Tracy noted that the Town's available fund balance is equal to 136.43% of total general fund expenditures, and the total fund balance is 157.87% of total general fund expenditures, indicating a strong fiscal position. When asked about the water fund, she stated that she had not yet had time to fully break out those numbers, but that staff had reviewed the audit at a high level given the ongoing budget discussion.

Given the newly available audit data showing a healthy fund balance, several members expressed support for possibly committing approximately \$1,000,000 towards paving in fiscal year 2027 — roughly doubling the Powell Bill contribution. Councilman Scott stated this would avoid the Town falling further behind on the paving schedule. He also sought further clarity for the Town's maintaining a healthy unrestricted fund balance. Interim Town Manager Pickett stated she needed this direction from the council on their paving ambitions for the upcoming year so the budget could be adjusted accordingly.

Sanitation

Interim Town Manager Pickett presented the Sanitation budget at \$2,222,676, a 3% decrease from the prior year. The only capital item requested was the Samsara tracking system for 13 vehicles at \$7,995. Overtime was recalculated at 3% of salary, now set at \$26,973, and maintenance costs increased by 25%. Interim

Pickett also reported that the Johnson County Landfill tipping fee is increasing from \$48 to \$50 per ton, but after running the numbers, staff determined no increase to the residential garbage collection fee is necessary at this time. When asked by Mayor Moore, Davis stated the Spain dumping facility rate remains unchanged.

When asked by Councilman Travis Scott, Davis briefed the Council on the downtown business trash collection program, which Director Davis described as working well despite early challenges with account compliance. Scott expressed general satisfaction with the program's effect on downtown cleanliness.

There was some discussion for a suggestion raised for a trash can washing service, potentially offered as a fee-based program through a third-party vendor. Director Davis agreed to research costs and present options to the council.

Interim Town Manager Pickett raised the question of whether to pursue outsourcing recycling pickup to a third-party vendor, as had been explored under prior management. After brief discussion, the council determined that doing so would add complexity and cost for residents without a clear benefit, particularly given the county's existing convenience recycling sites and the town's recent investment in a new recycling truck. The consensus was to maintain the current in-house recycling program.

Stormwater

Interim Town Manager Pickett presented the Stormwater budget at \$239,709, a 54% decrease from the prior year. The only capital item was two Samsara tracking devices at \$2,460. Director Davis thanked the council for prior equipment investments, noting the department is well-equipped and did not request any new employees or major capital items. Interim Town Manager Pickett noted that the department operates under Director Davis's umbrella for now, with a potential future transition to a standalone structure.

Councilman Travis Scott stated he observed that across the Board in each department it appeared that fuel prices were budgeted lower, however that fuel prices are currently high. Pickett stated previously fuel prices were budgeted high when they were low. She added fuel prices are up, but not to the extent that they were previously budgeted.

Mayor Andy Moore asked Davis if he felt his budget contained enough money for mulching around town, because some areas were looking bad. Pickett stated this fell under the supplies and operations portion of the budget. Lawrences stated what is budgeted gets the Town mulch once per year. Staff noted they would consider more funds for mulch as the budget process progresses. Mayor Moore also asked about the new mowing equipment being used by part time help at least once per week in the high problem areas. Davis stated he would address this issue as new part time summer staff comes on board this month.

Recess Date Discussion

Interim Town Manager Pickett noted that the remaining budget topics — Parks and Recreation, fireworks, and the fee schedule — had not yet been covered. She proposed an additional work session to complete the budget review, with a target of presenting the full budget to the council on May 19th and holding the public hearing on June 3rd. The council agreed to reconvene on Wednesday at 6:30 PM at Town Hall.

Councilman Roger Wood made a motion, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Sloan Stevens to recess the meeting for the next budget session date of Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 6:30pm at the Town Hall location. The motion was unanimously approved at approximately 8:31 pm.


M. Andy Moore, Mayor

ATTEST:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

