

Smithfield Planning Board Minutes
Thursday, January 8th, 2026
6:00 P.M., Town Hall, Council Chambers

Members Present:

Chairman Mark Lane
Vice-Chairman Ashley Spain
Nariman Jaminia
Jaime Beasley
Luke Stancil (Arrived at 6:06 pm)

Members Absent:

Alisa Bizzell

Staff Present:

Stephen Wensman, Planning Director
Micah Woodard, Planner I
Julie Edmonds, Administrative Support Specialist

Staff Absent:

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IDENTIFY VOTING MEMBERS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Chairman Mark Lane amended the agenda to remove case number 6 (a) ZA-25-05 Board Composition and TC Notice. Unanimously approved. Ashley Spain approved the agenda; seconded by Jaime Beasley. Unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES December 4th, 2025

Jaime Beasley made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Ashley Spain. Unanimously approved.

New Business

CZ-25-06 Bellamy: Rock Tower Partners, LLC is requesting approval of a revised Bellamy R-8 conditional rezoning master plan consisting of 1,076 units of residential: 885 detached single-family residential lots and 191-townhouse lots over +/-500-acres of land. The development area is concurrently seeking annexation into the Town of Smithfield.

Planning Director Stephen Wensman stated Rock Tower Partners, LLC is requesting approval of a revised master plan for Bellamy, an R-8 conditional rezoning. The proposed development consists of 1,076 units of residential: 885 detached single-family residential lots and 191-townhouse lots over +/-500-acres of land. Bellamy is seeking annexation into the Town of Smithfield. He continued by pointing out the Bellamy Conditional Zoning CZ-25-05 was denied by the Town Council on October 7, 2025 and this application is similar to the previous with the following changes:

1. The total lot count for Bellamy has been reduced from 1147 to 1076 (a 71-unit reduction resulting in a new overall proposed density of 2.15 DU/AC).
2. The northern townhome POD has been removed and replaced with detached SFD lots, resulting in an 86-unit reduction of the densest product type (from 277 to 191 total Townhomes).
3. Average lot sizes have been increased. The percentage of 60' and 70' wide detached SFD lots was nearly doubled (from ~22.5% to ~40% of SFD lots).
4. All lots within 500' of the existing hog farm lagoon and its associated 4 structures have been removed, resulting in significant separation between the existing hog farm and proposed residential units.
5. Bellamy's layout is no longer proposing to abandon/realign the northern section of Lee Youngblood Rd, leaving this northern access point accessible to support the existing hog farm. No proposed lots will have driveway access off Lee Youngblood Road.
6. The proposed minimum side setback for 60' and 70' wide lots have been increased to 7' minimum (was 5' minimum previously).

7. Due to the reduction in density, the proposed recreation area dedication now represents approximately 50% more land than required by code (~147 acres shown on concept plan; a minimum of 135 acres to be provided per our application; only 93 acres required by code).
8. A 20' Type B perimeter buffer has been added to the shared property boundary with NC PIN # 169600-30-1019 to the north. This parcel represents the only adjacent property with an existing home within 300' of proposed lots.
9. A proposed zoning condition has been added requiring 2 guest parking spaces per townhome building, requiring a minimum of 90 guest parking spaces to support the Townhome POD. The required guest parking spaces are now shown on the Master Plan.
10. A roadway stub has been added to NC PIN # 168600-90-9600 on the Master Plan, to support connection to a potential future phase of the Tralee Subdivision.
11. To support the future needs of a growing region, the applicant has offered ~7 acres of land along Lee Youngblood Road for donation to the Town to serve a potential future EMS/Fire facility (location identified on the Master Plan).
12. The developer has agreed to adjust the phasing plan to make the phase by the hog farm the last phase of the development.

Stephen Wensman pointed out construction is expected to begin in 2028 and last approximately ten years and consist of 5 phases. Phasing is subject to change and sub-phasing may occur. The revised phasing now shows the area by the hog farm to be the last phase of the development. He went on to explain other changes in the plan such as the 4 different lots sizes for both the townhomes and the detached single-family lots. He stated the developer is proposing to donate +/- 7.18 acres for a future Fire/EMS Facility.

David Bergmark an urban planner from McAdams came forward to answer any questions. He stated his team took all of the suggestions and concerns from the Town and the public and tried to come back with a better plan. He presented a visual presentation to the Planning Board showing the improvements made since the previous plan was presented. He stated they wouldn't have a problem providing a berm, such as fencing to buffer the homes. He did want to point out that DOT does have sight distance standards along curbs so he wanted to caveat that any berms would need to stay out of the sight distance triangles to be compliant with DOT. Mr. Bergmark stated they pulled the lots back from the previous 200' to currently 500' giving a significant separation between the existing hog farm and proposed residential units. He went on to say Bellamy's layout is no longer proposing to realign the northern section of Lee Youngblood Rd, leaving this northern access point accessible to support the existing hog farm. No proposed lots will have driveway access off Lee Youngblood Road.

Nate Bouquin, a traffic engineer with McAdams came forward to answer traffic related questions. They are anticipating turn lanes at Wilson's Mills and Lee-Youngblood Road. DOT typically wants to see 12' lanes so in this case for a center turn lane they would be 6'.

Vice Chairman Ashley Spain expressed this is a rural multi-generational farming community whether it be row crops, livestock or hay. The Youngbloods have tight rules and regulations they must abide by daily. They use fertilizer, natural waste such as chicken waste for example and they emit strong odors. When it's hot and you spray chicken waste on a field; the odor is very strong and it lingers for days. If someone with a chronic illness were to purchase one of these homes, how would they adjust to this?

Ben Mathis of Rock Tower Partners, LLC came forward. He stated they added into the restrictive covenants for the HOA that everyone has to acknowledge they're buying next to an active farming operation and will be recorded at the Register of Deeds. Mr. Mathis stated within a mile of this site there's 10 to 15 subdivisions.

Luke Stancil asked if the developers had ever developed this close to a hog farm in the past?

David Bergmark stated they have for farm operations but he isn't aware of any development beside a hog farm specifically. But they have beside active farms because that's the nature of expanding in an urban area.

Vice-Chairman Ashley Spain stated that hog farms are unique. They're a 24-hr operation, you may have feed trucks arriving at 1:00 am. There's loading and unloading and beating and banging going on all hours of the day and night.

Luke Stancil asked the reasoning behind annexing this property?

David Bergmark said mainly to gain access to municipal water and sewer.

Luke Stancil wanted it stated for the record he doesn't know any of the parties involved here. He thanked the developers for the changes they've made. He stated eventually the NC Supreme Court will flip. He said one day they will overturn the NC Farm Act 2018 that will allow these nuisance lawsuits to happen. From a Planning Board member perspective, he doesn't feel this is fair to the property owners across the street.

Chairman Mark Lane stated there's a natural gas line going through this property. Has anyone contacted the company in charge of that line to inform them of this development? Also, how about the colonel pipeline?

David Bergmark answered yes and stated they're designing their project around the lines.

Mark Lane asked whether parallel parking would be permitted on a 27-foot-wide street.

David Bergmark explained that on the 27-foot-wide street sections that are back-to-back, there will be no parallel parking, so the curb will remain in its current position. In sections where parallel parking is allowed, the curb will bump out, making the street slightly wider at those points.

Mark Lane asked if on street parking would be permitted?

Stephen Wensman stated that, unless "No Parking" signs are posted, street parking is allowed. Enforcement is difficult for an HOA, but it can discourage parking and include a prohibition in its covenants.

Mark Lane requested Fire Chief Jeremy Daughtry come forward. He asked Mr. Daughtry if, with a 27-foot-wide street and cars parked on both sides, he would be concerned about his apparatus being able to access the street.

Mr. Daughtry said it can be difficult to maneuver larger apparatus in that situation.

Ben Youngblood, the hog farm owner affected by the proposed development, came forward to express his concerns. Mr. Youngblood asked how many times the rules could change if the final phase of the project takes 8 to 10 years. He noted that both the board and town staff will change over that period and asked how such changes might affect the rules being established today. Mr. Youngblood stated that he is the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Town of Wilson's Mills, which recently spent \$4.5 million constructing a new fire department. He noted that the 7-acre land donation by the applicant may not represent a true benefit, as the Town of Smithfield would still need to staff the station, construct facilities, and provide firefighting vehicles, apparatus, and rescue equipment. Mr. Youngblood noted a few changes in the newly proposed plan but stated that they were not significant enough to have a major impact.

Mark Lane asked Stephen Wensman to address Mr. Youngblood's concerns regarding potential changes to the plan 8 to 10 years in the future and inquired how such changes would be handled.

Stephen Wensman explained that once a property is preliminary platted, any modifications would require repeating the full approval process.

Mr. Youngblood asked whether it would be possible, if phases 1, 2, and 3 have been completed and phase 4 is ready for development, for zoning or regulation changes to allow the developer to double the number of houses.

Stephen Wensman stated that the same process would apply if a subdivision were approved but not developed, and a new developer came in years later. The new developer would need to start the approval process from the beginning and follow the regulations in place at that time.

Will Stephenson, son-in-law of Mr. Youngblood, came forward. He resides on Wilson's Mills Road and owns a farm adjacent to the subject property. He referenced NCGS §106-700, the Right to Farm Act, and explained that it provides certain legal protections while also allowing for nuisance actions under specific conditions. He stated that a plaintiff may file a nuisance action if they are the legal possessor of the affected real property and if the property is located within one-half mile (2,640 feet) of the agricultural operation. He further noted that such actions may be filed within one year of the operation being established or within one year of the operation undergoing a fundamental change.

Mr. Stephenson stated that the previously discussed HOA restrictive covenants would not provide meaningful protection for their farms and added that his attorney could elaborate further. He expressed concern that approval of the development could negatively impact the viability of a multi-generational farming community. He also noted that under old business, the board will be discussing the Comprehensive Growth Plan, which proposes placing the area in a medium-density designation.

Charles Brewer of Wilson's Mills Road stated that he would be directly impacted by the proposed development. He noted that a project of this size would affect Wilson's Mills as a whole, including the loss of wildlife habitat and a significant increase in traffic. Although he does not personally farm, he stated that much of his land is farmed by Ben Youngblood, and that the development would also impact other nearby farms. Mr. Brewer stated that if he chooses to exercise his rights to discharge firearms on his property, he intends to do so. He noted that during hunting season, future residents may hear gunfire and could contact the Johnston County Sheriff's Department with complaints, which could place additional strain on emergency services. In closing, Mr. Brewer expressed concern for the Youngblood family and the potential impacts the development may have on both their hog and non-hog farming operations.

Marvin Dodd of Gordon Road came forward. He stated that he has served with the Wilson's Mills Fire Department for 39 years. He expressed concern that residents of the proposed development could file repeated complaints with companies that partner with the Youngblood family or other nearby farms. He stated that, in an effort to avoid negative publicity, those companies could end their partnerships with the farmers, potentially putting them out of business. Mr. Dodd noted that Johnston County recently started construction on a new high school in Wilson's Mills, scheduled to begin operation in the fall, and that a new elementary school has also been discussed. He expressed concern regarding increased traffic from student drop-off and pick-up and how that traffic would be accommodated. He stated that the proposed development could significantly increase call volume for the Wilson's Mills Fire Department. Mr. Dodd also stated that he serves as Vice Chair of the Wilson's Mills Planning Board, which he said does not support additional subdivisions and instead favors industrial development and job creation. He further stated his belief that many of the proposed 1,076 residences could become rental properties in the future.

Brett Renfrow of Smithfield came forward to express his concerns. He stated that although he does not live near the proposed development, he has family ties to the area. He asked the board to explain the purpose of the Unified Development Ordinances (UDOs). Stephen Wensman responded that the purpose of the UDOs is to regulate land use. Mr. Renfrow then questioned why the UDOs were being adjusted to accommodate the request. Mr. Wensman explained that the UDO includes standards that allow flexibility through conditional zoning, which is intended to permit negotiated agreements under certain circumstances.

Mr. Renfrow stated that placing approximately three vehicles per household for 1,076 residences, based on a ten-trip-per-day ratio, onto Lee-Youngblood Road and Wilson's Mills Road would create significant traffic congestion and make it difficult for residents to exit the subdivision.

Mr. Renfrow noted that he is retired from the Smithfield Fire Department and formerly served as Director of Johnston County 911 Communications. He expressed concern that approval of the development would increase demand on fire, emergency, and law enforcement services, potentially stretching resources too thin to provide adequate response and protection. In closing, Mr. Renfrow stated that the town has three options: deny the annexation, deny the project, or move forward with the development.

Vice-Chairman Ashley Spain stated that this project is upsetting the harmony of the neighborhood. While growth is inevitable throughout the county, he emphasized that when there is a long-standing farming operation in a farming community, it should be protected. Areas like this are becoming obsolete, and they deserve to be preserved. He noted that this community is deeply rooted in heritage

and that placing a large number of houses in the area would not benefit the neighborhood. While the project might be a good fit in another community, he stated it is not appropriate for this one.

Mark Lane asked Stephen Wensman to explain how the Bellamy development would be in harmony with the surrounding areas.

Mr. Wensman responded that there are established rules governing how developments treat their edges, and he stated that the developers have gone above and beyond in providing buffers. He explained that conditional zoning offers the opportunity to address issues such as buffers and transportation, and that additional conditions can be added to ensure the development works more harmoniously with adjacent properties.

Vice-Chairman Spain stated that the board members are appointed, not elected, and that his role is to do what is right for the community as a whole—not to assist the Town of Smithfield in generating revenue. He concluded by stating that this development is not in the general welfare of the community, nor is it in the interest of public health and safety. He warned that placing a subdivision in an established farming area poses significant risks to the health of others.

Nate Bouquin stated that a conditional rezoning would give the Town of Smithfield some level of control over the parcel. Under the property's current zoning, development could proceed through Johnston County with an estimated 600 to 800 homes without annexation into Smithfield, resulting in no tax benefit to the town. He emphasized that this was not meant as a threat, but rather a reality based on discussions with the seller, noting that development of the parcel is inevitable. If Smithfield wants both tax revenue and regulatory control, he said this represents the town's opportunity; otherwise, other development paths remain available.

Bouquin added that the request is not about prioritizing one landowner's rights over another's, but about balancing property rights equitably. He said the developer is attempting to put conditions in place in good faith and acknowledged the concerns raised by the Youngblood family. He noted that efforts have been made to meet with the Youngbloods and that the offer to do so remains open.

He stated that design changes were made to reduce the impact on the neighboring property, including pulling development farther away from the Youngblood parcel. He also pointed out challenges associated with the existing hog lagoon, which he said is located approximately 65 feet from the property boundary, despite a typical 500-foot setback requirement, making development on the adjoining parcel more difficult.

Bouquin addressed comments regarding potential commercial use of the property, explaining that in his experience with large-scale developments some exceeding 10,000 lots and three million square feet of commercial space developers evaluate communities based on existing population, household count, and median income, not future or approved developments. He concluded by stating his belief that the proposed development would benefit the town and acknowledged the area's rural character, while noting that the property's location between two major interstates makes future development unavoidable.

Mark Lane stated that he has reviewed this project from every possible angle in an effort to make it viable. Although he generally avoids meetings with developers, he chose to proceed against his better judgment and met with Mr. Nate Bouquin yesterday. Mr. Lane indicated that he perceived Mr. Nate Bouquin's comments as a threat.

Mark Lane requested a ten-minute recess and stated that the board would reconvene at 8:55 p.m. Nariman Jaminia made a motion for a ten-minute break. The meeting resumed at 8:53 p.m.

Ashley Spain made a motion to deny CZ-25-06, which was seconded by Jaime Beasley. Mark Lane requested a reason for the denial. Ashley Spain stated that the project is not in harmony with the existing neighborhood. When asked by Mark Lane whether the project meets the Comprehensive Plan, Ashley Spain responded that it does.

Nariman Jaminia opposed the motion and requested that the vote be tabled. Mark Lane then asked Administrative Support Specialist Julie Edmonds to call each board member's name for a final vote.

Luke Stancil voted to deny the request. Nariman Jaminia voted to table the item. Ashley Spain voted to deny the request. Mark Lane voted to deny the request, and Jaime Beasley voted to deny the request.

Vote Tally: 4-1 in favor of denial.

Mark Lane stated that the board has denied the project; however, the Town Council will have the final decision at its meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

CZ-25-07 West Smithfield Amazon Commercial: Applicant, Real Zeal Property Group, LLC. requests the rezoning of +/- 3 acres of land in the Light Industrial District to B-3 Conditional with a site plan for a convenience store. The convenience store is planned to have direct access to the highway with a right-in and right-out driveway and a secondary access to the future industrial road.

Micah Woodard stated applicant, Real Zeal Property Group, LLC requests the rezoning of +/- 3 acres of land in the Light Industrial District to B-3 Conditional with a site plan for a convenience store. The convenience store is planned to have direct access to the highway with a right-in and right-out driveway and a secondary access to the future industrial road. The convenience store will be approximately 6,139 square feet in size with 40 parking stalls for employees and customers. The site plans show 7 gas pumps with an overhead canopy. The convenience store includes a restaurant with drive-through service and adequate stacking space. The proposed convenience store site will require a minor subdivision from the parent parcel. The existing industrial lots were configured as part of a recombination plat, so a minor subdivision is appropriate. If approved, the zoning district will be a spot commercial zone, however, Staff considers the land use to be an accessory to the light industrial zoning that surrounds, and an appropriate land use as a result.

Staff recommends the planning board recommend approval of the rezoning, CZ-25-07, with the following conditions:

1. A minor subdivision be prepared by the applicant to separate the lot from the parent parcel.

Jaime Beasley asked whether staff believed there should be accommodations for short-term parking for semi-tractor trailers and inquired if the applicant would be open to providing such accommodations. Micah Woodard responded that the Planning Board could make this a condition of approval.

John Featherston of Real Zeal Property Group, LLC, came forward to address questions from the board. He stated that the tenant has decided not to provide high-speed diesel at this location. As a result, there would not be the same rationale or incentive for tractor-trailer operators to find it convenient to park there.

Nariman Jaminia made a motion to approve CZ-25-07; seconded by Ashley Spain. Unanimously approved

CZ-25-08 Grace Homemade Flex Commercial: Dalton Engineering is requesting the rezoning of a 1.15 acres property located on the north side of East Market Street between 6th and 7th Street from B-2 to B-2 Conditional with a master plan for a flex commercial building and site development.

Micah Woodard stated that the proposed development site consists of the former Pontiac dealership building and garage, along with an adjacent residential home, totaling approximately 1.15 acres. The applicant intends to demolish the existing buildings, with the exception of the garage fronting on 7th Street, and construct a new flex commercial building fronting on East Market Street.

The request to rezone the property from B-2 to B-2 Conditional Zoning is primarily driven by the applicant's desire to develop the site in a manner that mimics the traditional downtown form, with reduced or zero front setbacks and parking located to the rear or side of the building. Additionally, the applicant is seeking relief from the parking requirements and height restrictions of the B-2 Zoning District.

The proposed parking lot will be accessible from both 6th Street and 7th Street. The applicant also intends to construct a wider sidewalk along East Market Street that reflects traditional downtown sidewalks and includes street trees.

The applicant proposes a mix of retail, restaurant/bar, and flex assembly uses totaling 13,980 square feet per floor, or 41,940 square feet in total. The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) allows for remote parking within 400 feet of a business entrance, subject to approval by the property owner, to satisfy parking requirements. The shopping center located to the east contains a large, underutilized parking lot, and the insurance business across East Market Street also has underutilized parking. While no formal parking agreements are currently in place, there is potential for such arrangements in the future.

Conditional zoning allows for variances, or deviations from UDO requirements in exchange for other improvements that may exceed UDO standards. The developer is requesting the following deviations from the UDO:

Code /Item	Requirement	Proposed	Deviation
10.3 Parking	+/-170 spaces	60	+/- 110
8.8 Building height	40' maximum	+/- 51'	+/-11'
10.13.1.7.3 Landscape island requirement	15 spaces in a row	19	+3
10.13.1.8.1 Street Yard	10' (1/2 front setback)	4'-8' in the front, 8' corner side	2-6' in front, 2' corner side

Enhancements:

Street yard planters with irrigation Enlarged sidewalk on E. Market Street

Brick building materials with architectural features (see plans) Outdoor lighting of building/trees

In addition to the enhancements listed, the development will result in the removal of a

Owner/operator Kelly Griffin came forward to explain her project to the Planning Board. Mark Lane asked which floor the proposed wedding venue would occupy. Ms. Griffin responded that it would be located on the third floor. Micah Woodard stated that the building code would determine the maximum occupancy for the wedding venue/ballroom at any given time. Ms. Griffin proposes 200-250 people at a given time in a ballroom type setting.

Heidi Gilmond, Director of Downtown Smithfield Development Corporation, came forward. She stated that there have been discussions between Ms. Griffin and the adjacent property owner regarding the creation of overflow parking for special events, though not for daily use. She noted that Johnston County currently lacks corporate event space, particularly venues with on-site catering.

Ms. Griffin added that she is seeking to bring a brewery into the space, as well as a butcher shop, seafood market, bakery, and a restaurant with outdoor seating.

Ashley Spain recommended approval the rezoning, CZ-25-08 with a statement declaring the request consistent with the Town of Smithfield Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and other adopted plans and that the request is reasonable and in the public interest; seconded by Luke Stancil. Nariman Jaminia opted not to vote.

Roll Call Vote:

- **Ashley Spain** — Made Motion
- **Luke Stancil** — Seconded Motion
- **Mark Lane** - Approved
- **Jaime Beasley** -Approved
- **Nariman Jaminia** — Abstained

Old Business

Continued discussion of CA-25-01 Comp Plan Amendment: After the December 4th, 2025 Planning Board Meeting Chairman Lane requested the Planning Board and Staff re-review the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan amendments before a final recommendation is made to the Town Council.

Motion by Nariman Jaminia:

- **Proposal:** Change everything north of Poplar Creek in Area 2 to **Low Density**.
- **Seconded by:** Jaime Beasley
- **Outcome:** Unanimously approved

Motion by Nariman Jaminia:

- **Proposal:** Change Area 1 from **Medium Density** to **Low Density**.
- **Seconded by:** Jaime Beasley
- **Outcome:** Unanimously approved

Mark Lane requested that the Planning Board consider an amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to base density calculations on net acres. **On February 5, 2026, Jaime Beasley requested that this item be amended for discussion at the March 5, 2026 Planning Board meeting.**

Adjournment

Nariman Jaminia made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Jaime Beasley. Unanimously approved.

Next Planning Board meeting is February 5th, 2026, at 6pm.
Respectfully Submitted,



Julie Edmonds
Administrative Support Specialist