

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met on Tuesday, January 13, 2026 at 5:30 pm in the Town Hall Conference room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Carmen Zepp
Luke Stancil

Staff Present

Elaine Andrews – Town Clerk
Lawrence Davis – Public Works Director

Staff Absent

Also Present

Doris Wallace – Councilwoman District 4

Call to Order

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Review of Financials/Mural Project Update:

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley reviewed the Commission's finances, noting a beginning balance of approximately \$13,007.51 for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2025, and acknowledging recent or pending expenses for planters/DSTC support and the mural, while also recognizing uncertainty about which payments had actually posted due to the lack of current financial reports; later, a member clarified that roughly \$3,785 remains reserved in the mural fund, to be paid upon completion. The commission then discussed the mural's status at length, confirming it is unfinished and has been delayed by weather-related paint issues and the artist's health and upcoming surgery, and acknowledged that the contract referenced work in June and July without establishing a firm deadline; members reflected that, although this project was intended to support a local artist who is also a full-time teacher, future murals may require clearer contracts and possibly professional muralists if stricter timelines are desired.

Members expressed a strong desire to see the mural completed, noting that some have already volunteered on site, and they debated whether to organize additional volunteer help or hire assistance, while also questioning whether it is good business practice for volunteers to work on a contracted piece and how to protect the artist's vision; the consensus was that any assistance should occur only when the artist is present and directing the work, and Kaitlyn agreed to contact the artist to coordinate potential volunteer support and work dates.

Annual Report Presentation to Council:

Tarley reported that former Vice-Chairman, Emery Ashley, Jr. presented the annual report to the town council without any questions from council members and indicating she would compile a list of ongoing and proposed projects to align with that report.

Approval of Minutes

The Board discussed approval of minutes from the meeting of September 16, 2025. Upon review the following motion was made.

Donovan Radley made a motion, seconded by Pam Yelle to approve the minutes of September 16, 2025. Unanimously approved.

Donate-a-Tree Updates:

Members discussed the "Donate-a-Tree" program as a standing and future project focus. Public Works Director Lawrence Davis stated that placards for donated trees have been ordered and will be installed once received, and that a specific tree location will be selected and shared with the donor family. The group talked about how community members can dedicate trees in memory or in honor of loved ones, and several members noted that, despite being long-time residents, they were not aware of the program, highlighting a need for better marketing. They discussed using printed brochures, placing them at key locations (including the Visitors Bureau), keeping them stocked and updated by a designated committee member, and potentially involving the Visitor's Bureau's grant support and tourism promotion channels. The commission clarified that donated-tree funds are tracked in a separate account on the town's side (with Lawrence Davis managing plaques and related costs), while brochure printing and similar expenses come directly from the commission's budget. Members agreed it would be helpful to post an updated donated-tree flyer on the town/committee website to increase visibility.

The commission continued its discussion of the Donate-a-Tree program, shifting toward how it connects with broader beautification and community-engagement efforts. Councilwoman Doris Wallace highlighted the need to coordinate tree and planter initiatives with existing community spaces, especially the community garden on Fifth Street, which she said "needs to be beautified" and "perked up a little bit." She explained that the garden has historically relied on student volunteers who are now seniors and no longer available, leaving her largely on her own to maintain it. Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley offered to connect Councilwoman Wallace with contacts at the local college (including those tied to the arboretum and greenhouses) to recruit potential volunteers and program support.

Voting for Board Chair Positions:

Chairperson Kaitlyn Tarley asked for nominations or any discussion for which member would be the Board's next Chair and Vice-Chair person. The duties of the Chairperson were discussed with Tarley explaining that the positions are somewhat flexible and shaped by how the group chooses to operate, but that core responsibilities for the Chair include running the meetings, serving as a primary point of contact, coordinating projects and communication with other boards, also preparing and presenting the annual report to the town council. She noted that when she started, much of the work had fallen on a single chairperson, but emphasized that responsibilities can and should be shared among members. Tarley added that the Vice Chair's primary role is to lead meetings in the Chair's absence, and reassured the group that town staff Lawrence Davis could give advice and direction for handling most of the detailed administrative tasks.

Tarley also stated she would pass along a "cheat sheet" on running meetings and other documents and contacts to the new Chair to ease the transition. Following this explanation, Pamela Yelle volunteered to serve as Vice Chair if no one else wished to do so.

Pamela Yelle made a motion was made and seconded by Julia Narron to appoint Donovan Radley as Board Chairperson of the Appearance Commission. The motion carried without opposition.

Donovan Radley made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron to appoint Pamela Yelle as Vice-Chair of the Appearance Commission. Unanimously approved.

Potential Projects:

Members discussed potential future projects and priorities. Councilwoman Doris Wallace asked about the possibility of installing a park bench and maybe a pergola near the newly erected "Graytown" sign in West Smithfield.

Chair Kaitlyn Tarley outlined ideas such as additional plantings and signage along the Greenway, improved trail markers, and collaboration with Parks and Recreation on items like trash cans and benches, noting that Parks and Rec "always need trash cans" and that the commission has flexibility to commit funds where it sees fit. She also referenced a possible Third Street alleyway improvement (between the theater and the adjacent building) as a

follow-up to the recently improved library corner, describing it as a heavily used cut-through that staff would like to see made more attractive.

Tarley emphasized that many of these efforts are envisioned as collaborative projects with other boards and downtown partners, so the commission's financial contribution could be scaled based on priorities.

Other Discussion:

Members circled back to finance discussions with some members expressing confusion about the budget and asked what the commission actually has on hand. Tarley reiterated the starting carryover balance of about \$13,007.51 as of July 1, 2025, but stressed that since funds have been spent on items like the JP George endowment support and the mural, the commission needs updated financial reports to know the true current balance. It was suggested that the Board reach out to Assistant Town Manager Kim Pickett, who has a finance background and has taken over aspects of the financial reporting, to obtain more current numbers by the next meeting. There was also discussion about whether the tourism-related \$10,000 mural grant and an additional \$15,000 per year contribution from tourism had been received and how these amounts relate to the commission's operating funds, with the group agreeing they need the formal reports to see exactly how all of this is reflected in their budget.

The Board also discussed a "Welcome to Smithfield" brochure, with talks for how the tool could be used to highlight and promote Appearance Commission initiatives and shared more broadly among the public as an outreach resource.

In closing, Chairperson Tarley asked if there was anything else that needed to be added to the minutes, and members offered compliments and thanks to her for her service and leadership. The meeting concluded with appreciation expressed for outgoing leadership and support for the new Chair and Vice Chair.

Adjourn:

Pamela Yelle made a motion, seconded by Julia Narron to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:15 pm. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted:



Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk



