

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 5:37 pm in the Town Hall Conference room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Donovan Radley – Chairperson
Pam Yelle – Vice Chairperson
Julia Narron

Members Absent

Christina Arena
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 Donovan Radley called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

There was discussion among Board members regarding the absences of member Luke Stancil. By consensus, the Board agreed to direct Interim Manager Kim Pickett to address the matter in accordance with Town Ordinance provisions governing Board member attendance.

Approval of Minutes

The Board discussed approval of minutes from the meetings of February 10, 2026. Upon review the following motion was made.

Julia Narron made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Pam Yelle to approve the minutes of February 10, 2026. Unanimously approved.

Review of Financials:

Board Chair, Donovan Radley stated that there were no financials to review, but that they hoped to meet with the new Finance Director to be able to discuss finances at the next meeting.

Order of Meetings, agendas & reviewing minutes

Chairperson Donovan Radley stated that he and Pam Yelle discussed a plan to improve preparation and respect attendees' time for reviewing meeting minutes. Minutes will be sent one week before each Tuesday meeting for members to review and suggest edits (to be updated by the Clerk), and a draft agenda will be sent with the minutes so members can request additions or changes in advance, allowing minutes to be approved quickly and preserving time for discussion. Pam Yelle noted that she would also send out Google Calendar invites a week in advance if that worked for everyone. The Board concurred.

Old Business: Flood line Mural:

Chairperson Donovan Radley let the Board know that he had spoken to the artist Magen Pike, and relayed the deadline for completion of the mural as stated by Board members at the last meeting. Radley stated he extended an offer to help, but Pike did not take them up on having any assistance. Yelle stated she also extended Pike an offer of assistance, which was too declined. Radley stated he would continue to stay in touch with Pike regarding progress, with the hope to see more done in March. The Board noted challenges with temperatures and weather that may have slowed the progress, but also citing the good weather ahead in the coming months may help get the project done.

The contract proposal for the mural project was also discussed, noting that the artist does not want to apply an anti-graffiti coating, while members feel the location is highly susceptible to graffiti and should be protected. There was uncertainty about contract terms (e.g., whether the artist is obligated to maintain the mural for five or ten years). It was agreed to add a contract review to the April agenda to clarify obligations and establish guidance for how future mural projects will be addressed as well as their protection and maintenance.

Appearance Commission Items:

The Board discussed the following Appearance Commission items:

- **Rules & regulations / annual plan:** Developing rules and regulations is ongoing; no current update. The annual plan will be addressed at a future meeting when Commission member, Christina Arena is present.
- **Street tree species list:** Chairperson Donovan Radley plans to consult the Plant Society and colleagues for recommended species and bring additional photos and options next month. The list will guide both Town tree replacements and private developments, as applicants for new construction must select street trees from this approved list to avoid invasive species.
- **Current tree concerns:** Members noted problems with existing crape myrtles (mold/scale, poor performance) and discussed replacing them with better-suited species.

Town/Community Projects:

The Greytown sign area, as well as its connection point to the Smithfield Greenway was discussed by the Board:

- **Greenway connection:** The Board noted that the Greenway will soon extend into West Smithfield (Greytown area) in the coming spring, and they wanted to coordinate efforts for tree and landscape planning along that route. Public Works Director Lawrence Davis stated he would get the information for the route for where that connection would be from Planning Director, Brent Reck, and pass the information along to the Board.
- **Greytown sign:** Chairperson Radley stated he had a sketch planned design for plantings around the new Greytown sign that he would share with the board within the next couple of weeks. There was also discussion for adding a trellis, bench and an awning to further beautify the area.

The Commission discussed plans for the 5th Street Community Garden. Items discussed were as follows:

- Public Works will help move the raised beds, benches and other items at the garden.
- Trimming of tall grasses and vegetation around the stormwater channels; where Lawrence Davis explained that maintenance is restricted by the grant that funded the project, so they cannot cut back the vegetation beyond the already-allowed area.
- Members discussed adding appropriate wetland/beneficial plants where possible, and being precautionous of snakes that may be attracted to the area.
- Members discussed replacing a lost three-shelf stand used to set out harvested vegetables and reaffirmed the "Take what you need" principle for produce sharing. Davis agreed to work with the Commission to either make or find a replacement harvest stand.
- Volunteers to help plant seeds.
- Discussion a timeline of dates and times to meet up and discuss the community garden

The Board Discussed the Greenway Signs Update:

Pam Yelle reported walking the Greenway trail, finding interpretive/informational signs badly weathered and unreadable; she recommended they be removed rather than replaced because their angled design causes rapid deterioration. Yelle also identified Greenway rules signs (green metal) with a serious typographical error that makes

the message unclear or contradictory regarding alcohol possession on the Greenway. She noted that she has already sent photos of the signs to Gary Johnson (Parks & Rec), who agreed to:

- Remove the damaged/worn out/incorrect informational panels
- Replace the rules signs with corrected versions, reusing existing metal posts/frames where possible to save costs. It was stated that this would be done from the Parks and Rec budget.

There was discussion regarding the Greenway trash cans:

Pam Yelle noted that the Board approved Parks and Rec to receive trash cans from the Appearance budget, but the financials were unclear. Lawrence Davis stated he would speak with the Finance Department to clarify cashflow and carry-over from the prior year, and verify plantings that have been paid.

Julia Narron made the observation that the current vendor for the planters charged the Town a fee for coming here. The Board discussed possibly finding a local landscape vendor who may not charge an extra fee.

The Board further discussed Greenway trash cans:

It was noted that upon determining finances, five trash cans could be allocated now, with five coming out of the next year's budget so as not to impact the budget all at once. Yelle also noted that some cans lack inner liners. She described hazardous conditions where old metal bases and anchors remain exposed. Lawrence Davis stated he has not heard complaints from his crew but will speak with staff to learn how the cans are currently being serviced and look into the situation further.

The Board discussed graffiti on the Greenway, with Yelle noted it is growing worse—even spreading to the pavement. Davis stated there is a chemical that will remove the graffiti, however the members discussed prevention may be stepped up by policing and keeping an eye out to clean up as “tagging” incidents happen.

Donate-A-Tree Program:

Members discussed the Donate-A-Tree program, with the following highlights for the process:

Lawrence Davis explained that when a tree is donated, Public Works plants it in appropriate locations, often replacing dead street trees, and installs a separate plaque on a small post, rather than attaching it directly to the tree.

- Requests typically go through Planning to Public Works; the Town then selects a suitable species and site, taking into account utilities and ultimate tree size.
- The Board reviewed donation levels: approximately \$100 for a tree, with lesser amounts (e.g., \$25) associated with plaques or honorary recognition.
- Davis noted the high shipping cost for individual plaques (about \$40 each time), suggesting a need to explore ordering in batches or less frequently to reduce expenses.
- Members emphasized wanting a clear process so donors know where trees are planted and how plaques are handled, and to ensure the program continues in a cost-effective way.

95 to 95 Project:

Members discussed the 95 on 95 Project:

Chairperson Donovan Radley asked if the train truss could be power washed. Public Works Director, Lawrence Davis noted that CSX Railroad personnel are not lenient to allowing this—noting a time they were given a cease and desist when attempting once prior to beautify this area. The Board members expressed frustration that it has looked dirty for many years and is highly visible to visitors. Davis explained that the structure is owned and controlled by CSX, which has strictly prohibited the Town from cleaning or pressure-washing it due to liability concerns. Public

Works will continue to maintain the surrounding landscaping, but cannot perform any cleaning or work on the bridge area itself, as that remains CSX's responsibility.

Gertrude B. Johnson Park Easter Egg Hunt:

Members discussed the Gertrude B. Johnson Park Easter egg hunt. Councilwoman Doris Wallace stated that this is the first Easter egg event at this park, located in West Smithfield. Wallace, the organizer, explained that the Town will not fund this inaugural year, so the event will rely on donations of plastic eggs, candy, decorations, snacks, and juice, with a target of about 100 children (roughly three eggs per child). Board members expressed support, suggested purchasing supplies in bulk from warehouse stores, and offered to commit to personal donations while noting committee funds cannot be committed until the budget is clarified. Wallace stated she hopes to make this an annual event. There was also discussion to beautify the park through partnerships with other organizations jointly with the Commission's efforts. There was some discussion for whether the park was owned outright by the town, or leased, which could limit beautification efforts.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, it was the consensus of the Commission to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

