

The Town of Smithfield Appearance Commission met on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5:30 pm in the Town Hall Conference room located at 350 East Market Street, Smithfield, North Carolina.

Members Present

Pam Yelle – Vice Chairperson
Christina Arena
Monica Price
Kelsey Stevens
Boo Carver
Barbara Meyer

Members Absent

Julia Narron

Staff Present

Elaine Andrews – Town Clerk
Lawrence Davis – Public Works Director

Staff Absent

Also, Present

Call to Order

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Introduction of Newly Appointed Board Members

New members were welcomed, and introductions were conducted around the room. The newly appointed Appearance Commission members were Kelsey Stevens, Boo Carver and Barbara Meyer. The resignation of former Chairperson, Donovan Radley was acknowledged by the Board, and they discussed the need for new Chair and Chairperson appointments.

Approval of Minutes

The Board discussed approval of minutes from the meetings of April 14, 2026. Upon review the following motion was made:

Pam Yelle made a motion, seconded by Christina Arena to approve the minutes of April 14, 2026. Unanimously approved.

Review of Financials:

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle reported that following the resolution of a transition in the town's accounting department, a confirmed balance of \$8,163 remains after all mural-related obligations are satisfied. The Commission's annual budget allocation of \$15,000 is expected to renew on July 1, 2026.

Flood line Mural:

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle reported that the mural under the Highway 70 bridge near the amphitheater is nearly complete. The artist intends to add a separate informational sign depicting historical flood stage dates. A key outstanding question concerned whether to apply a protective sealant.

The board discussed the sealant's limited three-year warranty and the requirement for immediate graffiti removal to be effective. Despite these limitations, the board consensus was that, given the significant investment in the project, the added protection was worthwhile.

Yelle stated the sealant is a one-time expenditure of approximately \$800, to be drawn from the commission's current operating balance of \$8,163 (reducing the effective available balance to approximately \$7,363). The Commission discussed the rationale for acting now is to apply the sealant at the conclusion of the project, as its protective effectiveness diminishes significantly if applied after curing. The direct benefit to residents is the preservation of a publicly funded, \$18,000 piece of community artwork.

No formal oversight metrics were established, however Public Works Director Lawrence Davis noted that staff walk the Greenway daily and would monitor for vandalism.

Motion to approve funding for the application of a protective sealant to the flood line mural was made by Board Member Boo Carver and seconded by Board Member Kelsey Stevens. The motion carried unanimously.

Developing an Official Tree List

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle noted that a preliminary street tree species list had been drafted by former Chairperson Donovan Radley, but was incomplete. Public Works Director Lawrence Davis confirmed that replacement plantings are needed on North Street following recent tree removals. The commission agreed to circulate the existing draft list for review. No formal action was taken; the item will continue at the next meeting.

Greytown Sign Update:

Discussion of improvements to the Greytown area was tabled pending confirmation of the Greenway extension route. Public Works Director Lawrence Davis later confirmed that per conversation with former Planning Director, Stephen Wensmen, the Greenway extension will travel through the Greytown side of the corridor. Given the construction disruption this will entail, it was the consensus of the Commission that all aesthetic improvements to that area are on hold until the Greenway project is complete.

Greenway Signs:

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle reported that Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson has agreed to fund the replacement of three deteriorated Greenway informational signs. The printer, *231 Market Printing*, will produce the signs on aluminum rather than the original plexiglass, at approximately \$250 per sign. *Sound Rivers*, a local riverkeeper nonprofit, has agreed to provide updated content at no cost. Board Member Christina Arena's suggestion to include a QR code linking to Sound Rivers' resources and relevant flood stage data was well-received and could be incorporated in the signage. The board agreed to review the content before finalizing the order.

Greenway Trash Cans:

The board discussed the urgent need for additional trash receptacles along the Greenway. Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle noted that in the prior fiscal year, the Commission allocated \$9,000 for the purchase of trash cans on the Greenway. Prior to acting on that approval, it was suggested that they wait for a true statement of the Commission's finances. Yelle stated that individual units are estimated at \$700–\$900 each, plus shipping. The direct benefit to residents is the reduction of litter along the Greenway corridor, with installation and ongoing maintenance managed by Parks and Recreation staff. The commission voted to allocate \$5,000 to Parks and Recreation Director Gary Johnson to purchase approximately five new trash cans and address existing cans with missing lids.

Motion to allocate \$5,000 to Parks and Recreation for the purchase and installation of Greenway trash cans was made by Board Member Boo Carver and seconded by Board Member Christina Arena. The motion carried unanimously.

Greenway Graffiti:

Public Works Director Lawrence Davis agreed to inspect the graffiti located between the boat ramp and the water plant, which appears on both pavement and signs. A proposal to designate a free-expression wall was discussed but deemed unlikely to reduce graffiti in a general public setting. No formal action was taken; Public Works Director Lawrence Davis will report back on remediation options.

Historic Signs/Sign on Freedman's Schoolhouse

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle noted that several historic marker signs throughout town are in a state of significant disrepair. Yelle stated the price of \$179 per sign (plus \$75–\$95 for formatting) was obtained as a benchmark.

Board Member Christina Arena reported that, following a conversation with Heritage Center representative Todd Johnson about a sign to commemorate the newly renovated Freedman's Schoolhouse. Arena stated that Johnson indicated the Historic Properties Commission (HPC) may have dedicated funds for this purpose. The Commission discussed that a small metal identification plaque for the Freedman's Schoolhouse is desired. Board member Christina Arena agreed to reach out to HPC Chair Emery Ashley, Jr. to inquire about funding and execution. They also agreed to ask the HPC about the historic marker signs that now have wear and tear damage in Downtown Smithfield, and giving them a count of damaged signs of concern. No Appearance Commission funds were committed at this time.

Train Truss Update:

Board Member Monica Price reported on her investigation of the CSX railroad bridge (Crossing No. 629-960S) on Market Street. Upon inspection, she observed visible concrete cracking and deterioration on the underside of the bridge, which she identified as a public safety concern given pedestrian and vehicle traffic below. Price stated that she contacted CSX's railroad emergency line and submitted a request to their property management division. Board Member Monica Price will follow up with Town Manager Kim Pickett to initiate a formal town communication. Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle also noted a recent news report indicating DOT may pursue a railroad overpass in the coming years, which may ultimately resolve the matter.

Trash Pickup/Community Litter Sweep Efforts:

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle briefly noted that volunteers picked up trash under the bridge, conducted in conjunction with the community. She stated the event was successful, with a significant volume of debris removed.

Downtown Development:

Vice Chairperson Pam Yelle reported that Town Manager Kim Pickett mentioned the commission's potential involvement in downtown streetscape improvements planned in conjunction with a DOT paving project expected in August. The project contemplates making Second, Third, and Fourth Streets more pedestrian-friendly, potentially including a one-way conversion on Second and Third Streets. The specific role of the Appearance Commission has not yet been defined. No formal action was taken.

Selection of a Chairperson

Board member Boo Carver made a motion, seconded by Board member Kelsey Stevens to nominate Pam Yelle for Chairperson of the Appearance Commission. Unanimously approved.

Chairperson Pam Yelle made a motion, seconded by Board member Kelsey Stevens to nominate Christina Arena for Vice Chairperson of the Appearance Commission. Unanimously approved.

Adjourn:

There being no further business, Pam Yelle made a motion, seconded by Monica Price to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:30 pm. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted:


Elaine Andrews, Town Clerk

