

September 30, 2022

TO: SMITHFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: LESLEY G. KING  
TOWN CLERK

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT FOR THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2022

The Public Safety Committee met Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. at the Smithfield Center located at 220 North Church Street, Smithfield Virginia. Committee members attending were Mrs. Rountree, Chair, and Ms. Beth Haywood. Other Council members present were Mr. Randy Pack, Ms. Valerie Butler, Mr. Michael Smith, Vice Mayor and T. Carter Williams, Mayor. Staff members present were Mr. Michael R. Stallings, Jr., Town Manager; Ms. Lesley King, Town Clerk; Mr. Eric Phillips, Lieutenant Police Department; Ms. Ashley Rogers, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jack Reed, Director of Engineering and Public Works; Mr. Wayne Griffin, Town Engineer; Mrs. Tammie Clary, Director of Community Development and Planning; Ms. Amy Novak, Director of Parks and Recreation; and Ms. Deb Frank of Tourism. Also in attendance were Mr. Steve Bowman, Mr. Jeffrey Brooks, Bill Davidson and Mr. Randy Adams of Wavy 10/Fox 43. There was no media represented.

Public Safety Committee Chair, Mrs. Renee Rountree called the meeting to order.

**A. MATTERS DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE WHICH WILL BE ON THE COUNCIL'S AGENDA**

1. Street Closure Request for Downtown Halloween Safe Trick or Treat on Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. – Ms. Novak reported that this request to formally close Main Street and Grace Street allows for a safe environment for the trick or treaters downtown. Many of the businesses along Main Street participate in handing out candy to the kids. There will also be a costume contest held at Times Square during this time. The streets will be reopened when the police officers feel it is safe to do so, which is typically around 8 p.m. This street closure request will be sent to Town Council for consideration at their October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting.
2. Street Closure Request for Mistletoe Evening Market on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 12 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. – Ms. Novak stated that this is the Town's only

evening market of the year and will take place the weekend before Thanksgiving. The request closes Main Street from Underwood Lane to Church Street and Mason Street from Grace Street to Cedar Street during the hours of 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Ms. Novak mentioned for information purposes only the Christmas Tree Lighting will take place the night before on November 18<sup>th</sup> at Time Square. This street closure request will be sent to Town Council for consideration at their October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 meeting.

**B. MATTERS DISCUSSED BY COMMITTEE WHICH WILL NOT BE ON THE COUNCIL'S AGENDA**

1. Operational Update – August Activity Report – The Town Manager stated that he had spoken with Chief Howell and the main thing to note was that there have been a string of car burglaries recently. Some the vehicles were locked, and some were not. Lt. Eric Phillips reported that the Hampton Inn was hit on two separate occasions. The first time it was hit was around the beginning of August. The Econo Lodge in the County was also hit. This was out of the norm because in the past most of the time when there has been tampering with vehicles the vehicles have been left unlocked. This time the suspect(s) actually broke windows to get in some of the vehicles. They were able to recover some evidence from one of the vehicles and are working with the state lab to get the results of this evidence. The Town's investigative department has been working with the County and has developed a couple different leads. Mayor Williams asked if they have been able to determine if it is a certain age group that is committing these break-ins. Lt. Phillips stated that typically it is juveniles, and the break-ins occur more over the summer months. He continued to explain that a couple of individuals that were being investigated by the County Sheriff's Office have recently been arrested. They are now trying to determine if their suspects are our suspects. Ms. Butler asked if the Town has had any communities that have had vehicle break-ins since August. Lt. Phillips reported that approximately a week after the Hampton Inn was hit the first time the Bradford Mews neighborhood was also hit. When the Hampton Inn was hit a second time there was an individual that was seen walking around the parking lot and looking into vehicles during the day. The gentleman that called the police department stated that before they got there the guy took off through the woods towards Bradford Mews Apartments. Unfortunately, the Hampton Inn does not have exterior cameras. Mrs. Rountree asked the Town Manager what was going well with the Police Department and the status on the number of vacancies within the Department. The Town Manager stated now that the hiring process has been opened up to uncertified officers due to the timing of the next police academy, they are seeing a lot more applications. The biggest problem here is getting folks that will follow through with the process and come out clean on their background report. Mrs. Rountree asked how many positions remain vacant. The Town Manager stated that there are six vacancies. Mr. Pack mentioned that he had read an article that New York City is also having a difficult time getting officers and they have come up with a unique strategy where they have started hiring civilians to fill vacancies within the police department. These civilians are trained to do things such as accidents that may occur on private property or other minor incidents. This allows the Police Officers that are certified to be out in the community doing the things they are trained to

do. He stated that he found the article interesting and was not suggesting we do this but thought it was a unique way to utilize civilians where there is a lack of officers.

2. Additional Items Discussed: – Mrs. Rountree asked if a street closure was needed for the Smithfield High School Homecoming Parade. Ms. Novak explained that this parade is typically a rolling closure where there is traffic assistance from the police department rather than a complete closure because it is short and a very quick event. Ms. Rountree asked if Hayden's Lane was going to be decorated by GMODs again this year for the holidays. Ms. Novak stated that GMODs was not decorating Hayden's Lane this year; however, she thought it was going to be used for a story walk this year and then it will be decorated after that for the holidays by Tourism staff. Ms. Haywood gave a brief update of where they are with planning National Night Out to be held next Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Luter Sports Complex. She stated that they will meet tomorrow to discuss the forecast situation with tropical storm Ian coming up the coast this weekend. They have a number of vendors participating and the hope is to continue to grow bigger each year. Mrs. Rountree thanked Smithfield Foods for the donation of the hot dogs for the event.

The meeting adjourned at 3:14 p.m.