

December 30, 2022

TO: SMITHFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: LESLEY G. KING
TOWN CLERK

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT FOR THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS & WELFARE
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27TH, 2022

The Public Buildings and Welfare Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, December 27th, 2022 at 3:49 p.m. at the Smithfield Center located at 220 North Church Street, Smithfield Virginia. Committee members in attendance were Ms. Valerie Butler, Chair, and Mr. Randy Pack. Other Council members present were Mr. Michael Smith, Vice Mayor, Ms. Beth Haywood, and Mrs. Renee Rountree. Also in attendance were Council Elect Steve Bowman and Jeffrey Brooks. Staff members present were Mr. Michael Stallings, Town Manager; Ms. Lesley King, Town Clerk; Ms. Ellen Minga, Town Treasurer; 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. Judy Winslow, Director of Tourism. There was no media represented.

Public Buildings and Welfare Committee Chair, Ms. Valerie Butler, called the meeting to order.

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

1. Abatement Plan for 202 West Street as a Blighted Property – Ms. Clary explained that the staff report outlines the timeline of events. As an update on Wednesday, December 7th, 2022 a certified letter was mailed to the owners of record informing them the Plan to cure the blight must be completed prior to January 3rd, 2023. To date Town staff has not seen any progress on the abatement plan. Chief Howell provided staff with a phone number as a potential point of contact; however, they have left numerous messages and have had no contact with them. Mrs. Rountree clarified that if nothing has been done by January 3rd, 2023 deadline the Town will approve their own abatement plan to secure the structure. Mr. Pack stated that was correct. Ms. Clary stated that the letter that was sent certified has not been returned to the Town so staff is assuming that it was received. The Town Manager explained that the intent is that if nothing has happened on

the property by the Town Council meeting on January 3rd, 2023 Town Council will adopt their own abatement plan that staff would start implementing on January 4th, 2023. This item will be on Town Council's agenda January 3rd 2023.

2. Policy for Electronic Participation in Meetings – The Town Manager stated that this is a policy that Town Council can put in place that would allow Councilmembers to participate remotely if they are out of town when a meeting occurs. There will be at least one Town Council member that will be out for the January Town Council meeting. If Town Council chooses to move forward with this it would be placed upfront on Council's agenda so she will be able to participate in the organizational meeting that will take place January 3rd, 2023. When a meeting with electronic communication is conducted, the Town Council must comply with the following guidelines: A quorum of the Town Council must be physically present; and all votes must be taken by roll call. Mr. Pack explained this is a change in state law that give us the ability to allow electronic participation if a policy is adopted to put it in place. Vice Mayor Smith asked if there was a limit to how many times electronic participation can occur. The Town Manager stated that a Council member can only participate by electronic participation for no more than two meetings per calendar year. This item will be placed on Town Council's agenda for consideration at the January 3rd, 2023 meeting.

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

1. Additional Items Discussed: Discussion was held on what it would take for Town Council's meetings to be live streamed. The Town Manager stated that this has been looked into some and the hurdles that the Town has is the equipment and a dedicated staff member. Mrs. Rountree stated that she thinks the IT staff from Isle of Wight County would be willing to live stream our meetings. Mr. Pack mentioned that he was recently in Surry County and their Council meetings are live streamed. The Town Manager stated that he would reach out to Mr. Gray to get some clarification of what the Town might need to live steam our meetings.

Mrs. Rountree also reminded everyone that she had asked about doing some research on moving the Committee meetings to a later start time so that citizens can come if they choose too. She stated that live streaming the meetings may mitigate this, and Committee could remain at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Ms. Butler stated that she knows that work sessions are more informal and asked the Town Manager if there is a point during the committee meetings that allows for citizen participation. The Town Manager replied there is typically not as they are essentially work sessions between Town Council and staff. Ms. Butler stated that if they are not able to participate then the meetings can just be recorded for citizens to watch at their convenience. Vice Mayor Smith stated that he is in favor of keeping the meetings at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Pack agreed that he did not think having our meetings later would increase participation from the public because our Town Council meeting are typically not well attended unless there is a contentious subject.

With that in mind if we know that we have a subject that is potentially contentious we could agree as a Council to move the meeting to a later time. Our goal is to improve our communication with the public and live streaming our meetings would be an attempt to do that to be more transparent. Committee also talked about adding work sessions throughout the year if the need should arise. Mr. Pack suggested making the Town Council meetings and Committee meetings livestream a goal for this upcoming year.

Mrs. Rountree mentioned that she had reached out to Ms. Winslow and was hoping that during the January orientation session it can be a discussion about ways the Town Council members can be more involved in the different events such as the Christmas parade, Christmas Tree lighting, and ceremonial events throughout the year. She feels that this will give Council members some positive attention rather than the only way people know Town Council is because they raise taxes or vote on a new project for more homes in Smithfield.

Mrs. Rountree also mentioned that the Town Manager had sent her the information on the process to get golf carts downtown from the Cypress Creek neighborhood. The Town Manager explained that the access from Fairway Drive to Cedar Street requires a limited access break in the Route 10 bypass corridor which must be approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. He has received the check list of everything that has to be done to get in front of the Board. One of these items is a resolution from Town Council saying the Town Council wants this. Then the Town would have to go through the engineering, traffic study, and environmental study. Mrs. Rountree stated that she knows engineers in Cypress Creek that would be willing to do this work at little to no cost. The town Manager stated if there is no interest in doing all these things that are required to go before the Transportation Board then there is not a need to continue down this path. Discussion was held on the path golf carts would take to get to Cedar Street utilizing the on and off ramps at Fairway Drive. Mr. Pack stated that he would be in favor of doing a resolution from Town Council to look into getting golf carts from Cypress Creek to the downtown area. If Mrs. Rountree knows someone that will do some of the required studies at little to no cost, it makes since to move forward. Vice Mayor Smith stated that he personally thinks it is very dangerous. This item will be placed on Town Council's agenda for consideration at their January 3rd, 2023 meeting.

Mrs. Rountree stated that she and Ms. Butler had communicated about the \$3 million donation that was approved a couple of meetings ago to help with adding to the Luter Sports Complex. She explained that the intent from her motion was that we study what was needed in the Town and then we would look at what the best use of resources and money would be needed for our citizens and children at the Luter Sports Complex. Every time the donation is mentioned it is said that the money will be used for more baseball fields. This is not the case and there will be a study done to determine what the additional amenities will be. The Town Manager stated that staff had Kimley Horn ready to do the study; however, staff had conflicting information on what the donated money was to provide. Staff asked for clarification in writing on what direction they were to go with the money donated. Town staff was told at that time from the donor that everything was on hold for four to six months. Ms. Butler expressed concern that when the

presentation was made it came to Town Council as if it was an urgent request. The Town Manager stated that Ms. Butler was correct that it was conveyed to the Town as an urgent request. Ms. Butler stated that she would like to see the Town follow through with our own research on what the Town needs at the Luter Sports Complex. The Town Manager stated that we have a master plan that was done previously, and he will share that information. If Town Council chooses to move forward with Kimley Horn doing this work, we can do that; however, we will not be one hundred percent sure that there won't be strings tied to the approved donation. Ms. Butler stated that if there are strings and they do not fit in the towns plans then we can say no to the donation. Mr. Pack stated that we know that we want Luter Sports Complex to grow into additional sports and it maybe baseball or it maybe something totally different. Why would we take the time right now to plan for it if we do not have funding and do not intend to find funding to expand it at this time. It makes more sense to him that if the Town decides to expand Luter Sports Complex to do this study; however, the only reason to expand Luter Sports at this time is because of the potential donation. Until the town is ready to make expanding the sports complex a priority, he does not think we need to do a study. What may be desired doing the study now may not be what is desired a few years from now. Mrs. Rountree stated she thinks we do have some interest now to add on to the Luter Sports Complex. The Town Manager stated that he will share the existing masterplan that he has and then we can have discussion around that plan before doing a new study. Mr. Pack stated that no donation to the Town will be contingent upon any developments in town. Vice Mayor Smith stated that he likes having a plan that can be presented to the public and feels that a plan allows the public to see a vision and get behind the plan with support it.

The meeting adjourned at 4:29 p.m.