

February 3, 2023

TO: SMITHFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: LESLEY G. KING
TOWN CLERK

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL REPORT FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 23RD, 2023

The Parks and Recreation Committee held a meeting on Monday, January 23rd, 2023, at 3:50 p.m. at the Smithfield Center located at 220 North Church Street, Smithfield Virginia. Committee members attending were Mrs. Renee Rountree, Chair; Mr. Jeffrey Brooks, and Ms. Valerie Butler, Vice Mayor. Other Council members present were Mr. Randy Pack, Mr. Wayne Hall, Mr. Michael Smith, and Mr. Steven G. Bowman, Mayor. Staff members present were Mr. Michael R. Stallings, Jr., Town Manager; Mr. William H. Riddick, III, Town Attorney; Ms. Lesley King, Town Clerk; Ms. Ellen Minga, Town Treasurer; Ms. Ashley Rogers, Director of Human Resources; Mrs. Tammie Clary, Director of Community Development and Planning; Mr. Jack Reed, Director of Engineering and Public Works; and Mr. Wayne Griffin, Town Engineer; Ms. Amy Novak, Director of Parks and Recreation; Mr. Alonzo Howell, Chief of Police; Mr. Chris Meier, Deputy Chief of Police; and Ms. Judy Winslow, Director of Tourism. Also in attendance were Mr. Bill Davidson, Mr. Rick Bodson, Ms. Martha Russ, and Mr. Henry McBurney. No media was represented.

Parks and Recreation Committee Chair, Mrs. Renee Rountree, called the meeting to order.

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

1. Windsor Castle Park Long Leaf Pine Project Update – Mr. McBurney explained that in August of last year the Town decided to convert an additional area south of the dog bark to the Long Leaf Pine project. The Department of Forestry provided all the trees, and the Town expressed a desire to have a plan put together for the added trails around the trees and parking lot. Mr. McBurney stated they contacted the Community

Design and Assistance Center at Virginia Tech to see if they would help with designs for the added trails and parking. The Virginia Department of Forestry gave the Town a \$3,600 grant. Today we have a presentation of what the plantings will look like in the future. One of the things that excited the Department of Forestry was that once this area develops it will be the only long leaf pine forest in an urban setting in Virginia. There are several long leaf pines plantings, but they are in such remote areas people cannot get to them. Windsor Castle Park will be very accessible. In 2017 the first long leaf pines were planted on the three and a half acres on the southernmost end of the park. Of these three and a half acres there were over 600 seedlings planted and 104 potted trees. Last August Town Council made the decision to expand the acreage of the long leaf pines. On December 8th with over 60 volunteers, they planted 2,300 trees in two and a half hours. Over the next few weeks, they planted over 3,100 seedlings and 60 potted trees. All of these trees and seedlings were presented to the Town at no cost. Mr. McBurney also mentioned that the planned design of additional trails and parking to accommodate two buses and 81 parking spaces was on display for anyone interested. One day this project will develop into a real eco-system. Mr. Pack asked what the plan is for getting started with the additional trails and parking. Ms. Novak stated that the Windsor Castle Foundation Board is in a reorganization phase; however, they hope to have their first meeting in February. They will be working on a campaign to raise funds for the additional trails and parking. Committee thanked Mr. McBurney for the update.

2. Moving to Self Service Kayak Rentals – Ms. Novak stated that the Town has provided kayak rentals for the last 10 years at Windsor Castle Park. Each year it becomes increasingly difficult to hire the summer staff needed to run this operation. The staff that is hired is working in a building that has no power, no AC, and no fans. This staff works in the hottest part of the year. Ms. Novak explained that she was approached by the company RentFun, which does bike and scooter rentals as well as self-service kayak rentals. It would be a great solution to providing rentals at Windsor Castle Park, which have been extremely popular since they were opened. The self service kiosk would be available 7 days a week from dawn to dusk and for a longer season than we can currently offer. The kiosk where the kayaks are stored looks like lockers and you would use an app on your phone to unlock the locker. This would be great for weekend tourists who would like to rent on a Friday or Monday. RentFun uses local technicians to maintain the fleet and ensures the boats, life jackets and paddles are always in great condition. Revenue from rentals would be split 50/50 with the Town. The Town would no longer have to hire summer staff for this position. Ms. Novak explained that there is a onetime only investment cost of \$16,000 and that is what pays for the locker and initial equipment to set up the kiosk. Mrs. Rountree asked about doing a one-year pilot for

\$6,000. She asked if we could use the kayaks that the Town already has. Ms. Novak explained that they would provide their own kayaks through the program; however, she would keep the kayaks that the Town has for future park programming. The first couple of years the kayaks were used to do water tours. Also, the YMCA using the Town's kayaks for a kayak camp during the summer. Mrs. Rountree asked if Town staff has talked with any organizations that uses these self-service kayak rentals. Ms. Novak stated that she has not talk to anyone yet. Mrs. Rountree made a recommendation to check the references provided and to consider the one-year pilot program to see how it works before jumping into a five-year agreement. Mr. Pack stated that this is an interesting program that is much like the scooter program but on water. On water causes him some concern because if a renter goes out and never comes back, how do we know that he is not out there needing help. At least with staff manning the rentals we know when someone has not come back and know that we need to notify the appropriate authorities. Ms. Novak stated that she assumes that the software would detect that a boat has not been returned; however, she would check with the rental company to find out. Mayor Bowman stated that he is on the same track as Mr. Pack and worries about the safety of the program. Mr. Pack mentioned that the Town has a pretty successful kayak program now and wondered why the Town would only start with four lockers rather than the eight lockers. Ms. Novak explained that she asked that question and the company explained that the Town is very busy but the hours the kayak rentals are open are condensed. Being open longer will spread the usage of the kayaks out. She also mentioned that the Town will be able to set the rate on the rentals. Mrs. Rountree asked for staff to go back and get a few more answers to the questions that were brought up today and bring back to committee for further consideration.

Meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.