

Smithfield 2020 Notes from project team meeting of July 6, 2011

Present:

Jim Abicht
Rick Bodson
Bill Davidson

John Edwards
Sheila Gwaltney
Trey Gwaltney

Mark Hall
Russell Parrish
Judy Winslow

Project updates

Public art / porcine statuary (Concept defined) – The project plan and timeline have been recast. Briefings at the July BHAR and Town Council Public Buildings and Welfare Committee have been requested. One community group is considering underwriting one of the six statues and preliminary discussions for a corporate sponsorship have been initiated. The project plan is not date-definite for unveiling, but anticipates synchronizing it with the completion of the Church Street beautification project.

Golf cart initiative (In Devt) – With the Town’s agreement to implement an enabling ordinance, this project is promoted to Complete. The Town will be publishing via its Website detailed guidance to cart owners on rules, regulations and inspection requirements.

Façades improvement (In Devt) – A new grant request is anticipated from Mark Hall for landscaping of the east wall of 319 Main Street; Mark has requested a July BHAR review. After a discussion, it was agreed by general consensus that the matching grant guidelines and application form will be updated to specify that improvement work must be affected within six months of the matching grant award unless extended at the discretion of Smithfield 2020.

17 East Main Street demolition by neglect (Issue) – Although notification of the building owner by the Town Attorney was committed as a result of 2020’s presentation to Town Council’s Public Buildings and Welfare Committee, history indicates that a response by the owner is unlikely. Mark Hall took for action drafting a letter to the Mayor, Town staff and Committee chair reiterating 2020’s concern about preserving one of the last examples of commercial properties from the early 20th century and requesting affirmative action to ensure the property is given an opportunity to return to positive economic use. Mark will also request an agenda slot on the July BHAR meeting to request preservation action from BHAR.

America in Bloom (Leadership Isle of Wight project) – The Leadership Class is to review with the Chamber of Commerce Board in July its findings, recommendations and proposed plan of action for the project; a fall presentation to the Town Council is planned. Russell Parrish took for action reviewing the Leadership Class’ report at the August 2020 project team meeting.

Ben Franklin property (Issue) – The state of the empty Ben Franklin lot, having been raised as an issue by the SHDBA, was discussed. Rick took for action communicating the concerns to Lawrence Pitt, requesting some amelioration of the situation with modest cosmetic improvements.

Second-half 2011 priorities

A discussion assessed 2020 accomplishments to date, the several in-flight projects, the current commercial building occupancy rate, the value of engaging a commercial real estate broker or Town Economic Development staff, the issue of having shops open seven days per week, the challenges of the Church Street beautification project – and the potential presented by the “re-opening of the Historic District” at the conclusion of the Church Street project. By general consensus, it was agreed that 2020 project team members will facilitate a two-way exchange of ideas and recommendations with their respective represented entities about the “re-opening”, that 2020 will coalesce the input into an organized and prioritized set of initiatives and activities in support of the “re-opening”, and that 2020 will champion them back to owning and implementing organizations. Project team meetings in the next several months will focus on a triage of those initiatives with the highest potential of contributing to economic and cultural vitality while balancing attracting tourist dollars with satisfying the needs and wants of the County and Town residents; the latter was noted as critical to differentiating the Historic District’s unique character.

Next meeting: Wednesday, August 3rd, 8:30 am, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.