

Smithfield 2020 Notes from Team meeting of October 7, 2015

Present

Mike Adams	John Edwards	Randy Pack
Priscilla Barbour	Jenn Gangemi	Judy Winslow
Rick Bodson	Sheila Gwaltney	Diana McFarland, guest
Andy Cripps	Trey Gwaltney	
Lee Duncan	Mark Hall	

Admin

Current funds balance is \$15,165.79, reflecting the payment of the \$450 façade improvement matching grant to Vintage Potential. There are no outstanding commitment of funds.

By general consensus, it was agreed that Team meetings will be scheduled bi-monthly unless an agenda item or project requires a more frequent review.

Project and initiative updates

The proposed Pierceville development has been reviewed by BHAR, which commented on several design issues that need to be addressed by the developer. If rezoning is granted by Town Council, a review of the final designs will be required by BHAR. The next step in the process is Town Council's formal review and public hearing on the developer's application at its November 3rd meeting.

Whether the façade improvement matching grant program is more aggressively pursued with targeted businesses or held in reserve until an application is submitted was discussed. (The current specified-use fund balance is \$5,962.) It was agreed by general consensus that a push strategy will be implemented using the Carlton Abbott report to identify potential sites. Rick will extract content from the report and recruit Team members to reach out to property owners with the suggested improvements and the matching grant program's guidelines.

A replacement for the Visitor Trends report was discussed in light of the changes in how visitor count are collected by several venues, making comparisons to prior years of less value. There was agreement that valid and consistent data to gauge the economic vitality is of value for sharing with existing businesses and in recruiting new businesses.

Sales taxes were agreed to be the most objective measure of financial activity; to be resolved is the feasibility of aggregating the data specifically for the Historic District. Meals taxes, which unlike sales tax, are collected by the Town vs. the state could provide ancillary trending data. The collection of data specifically related to individual businesses, in whatever form or method to ensure confidentiality, was judged to have little feasibility. Rick took for action tracking down sources of tax and other data from the Town Treasurer and from the County Economic Development team.

Options other than sculptures or three-dimensional art in public areas of the Historic District were reviewed. Murals on a few Historic District commercial building could artistically transform large blank walls. There was not unanimous agreement on the proposal; a task team will be formed to further validate target buildings, project cost and source of funding. The public art sculpture initiative will also continue to be evaluated, but likely at a lower priority.

Lamppost banners in the 200 block currently overhang the curbside parking and several have repeatedly been damaged by commercial vehicles. A motion to budget \$250 from economic vitality funds to repair and realign the banners to overhang the sidewalk was adopted.

New initiatives

The revival of the “Christmas in Smithfield” program – a fundraising effort for the 1750 Courthouse – is well underway. One additional option to the multi-faceted program is to add holiday lights in the Historic District; a modest first step mentioned was lights in the trees of Hayden’s Lane. There was general consensus that as the proposal is developed for implementation in 2016, details should be shared with 2020 for evaluation as a supported project.

Organization updates / announcements

Historic District Businesses: Relics, currently located in the 1939 Firehouse shops, will be moving at year-end to 237 Main, currently Olive’s. A back-fill tenant for the Firehouse shops has been identified.

The owners of the Smithfield Winery have closed on the purchase of the two adjacent properties at 119 and 121 N. Church Street. Specific plans for building use and specifics on the opening of the Winery remain unknown or uncertain.

County: Economic Development has developed a new Website at www.insidetheisle.com. Through it, ED is updating its business directory. The Team will be sent the link to access and populate the new database.

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 2nd, 8:45 am, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.
If agenda warrants an earlier meeting, Wednesday, November 4th.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.