

Smithfield 2020 Notes from Team meeting of January 3, 2018

Present

Jim Abicht	John Edwards	Kim Pugh
Mike Adams	Tom Elder	Peter Stephenson
Rick Bodson	Sheila Gwaltney	Judy Winslow
Christi Chatham	Mark Hall	Joseph McCain, guest
Andy Cripps	Randy Pack	

Admin

Current funds balance is \$12,679.85. There are no outstanding commitments of funds. A motion to re-appoint Rick Bodson as Project Manager for 2018 was adopted. The terms of two Historic District Business representatives, Jim Abicht and Randy Pack, expire February 2018. The Gang of 5 took for action presenting nominees at the February meeting.

Project and initiative updates

The Columbia Gas supply line replacement project is underway in the 300 block. 2020 will be on point for communications to merchants. Arrangements for parking in the lower lot of Bank of America have been confirmed.

Joseph McCain, co-owner of Fleur de Fou, opening at 338 Main Street on January 20th, was invited to review the business start-up process navigated in 2017. Key points noted:

- Converting (or re-adapting) a residential building, e.g., a 300 block Victorian, for dual commercial and residential use currently requires a Special Use Permit. The up-to three-month Planning staff / Planning Commission / Town Council public hearing process needs to be clearly communicated to applicants, who in turn face the challenge of negotiating a property purchase with the uncertainty of the SUP outcome.
- The BHAR process is clearly defined and not onerous.
- Kristi Sutphin as the primary point of contact to the County licensing and inspection staff and processes is an effective and appreciated resource. However, there were numerous and seemingly inconsistent, if not capricious, requirements and reviews on issues such as ADA compliance and requirement for sprinklers, that frustrate applicants to the point of arguing for a reasonable conclusion.
- The hand-off from the Town's SUP process to the County's licensing and inspection process needs review.

Several action items were identified:

- 2020 will present to Town Council a proposal for a "SUP by right" to permit an administrative (and shorter) review cycle for commercial / residential buildings.

- Tom Elder will arrange for 2020 representatives and Joseph to share lessons learned in a monthly pre-application meeting at which Town and County staff review business proposals.
- From that discussion, a proposal will be made and championed that a protocol be developed for situations that have common elements, e.g., the conversion of a Victorian, to a) set expectations and help prospective businesses navigate the process and b) firmly review and decide on the standards for licensing and inspection for the common-element proposals.

Organization updates

Historic District Businesses: Three new businesses, in addition to Fleur de Fou, are scheduled to open in the 300 block in the next few months: The Nelms House (308, across from Smithfield Family Dentistry, antiques shop (318, next to Painted Garden), French County Monkey (333, next to Finley's General Store). The Smithfield Inn has been sold to Carolyn Burke; specifics on the business plans are not yet known.

Tourism: Key events on the calendar: BOB Fest, January 13; Restaurant Week, January 26 - February 3; Sweet Tooth Soiree, a new event reprising Chocolate Lovers, February 24 at the Museum.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 7, 8:45 am, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.