

Smithfield 2020 Notes from Team meeting of March 7th, 2018

Present

Jim Abicht	John Edwards	Randy Pack
Rick Bodson	Tom Elder	Judy Winslow
Christi Chatham	Sheila Gwaltney	Sydney Kever, guest
Andy Cripps	Trey Gwaltney	William Saunders,
Lee Duncan	Mark Hall	guest

Admin

Current funds balance is \$12,284.85; \$395 was spent in February from economic vitality funds for the one year Destination Development Association subscription. There are no outstanding commitments of funds.

Project updates

Town of Smithfield Director of Planning, Engineering and Public Works William Saunders reviewed zoning and Special Use Permits in the Historic District. Key points:

The D-Downtown zoning classification in the commercial area of the Historic District is primarily commercial, mixed use and single family.

Uses of a property are defined by right (inherent to the building's purpose; Town code defines 13 uses) or requested by Special Use Permit (28 uses are defined). The SUP process evaluates the impact of a change in the current use of a property on the health, safety and quality of life of the proximate area.

The SUP process can approve a requested use with reasonable conditions or restrictions. Example: A requirement that an event venue have an agreement with another property owner for access to its parking area.

Approval of a special use by the Town typically also requires a review by County building code staff. A building code requirement may in turn cycle back to the Town; example: a BHAR review of a code-mandated ADA ramp. The potential for iterative process steps and the process gap between a zoning / SUP-based business license and a building permit are acknowledged and Town staff are developing (target completion: late May) a process map to help building owners navigate the reviews and approvals.

Several scenarios were reviewed to illustrate the by-right, by individual, by location – and the inherent risk of unintended consequences. Example: Facilitating commercialization of 300 block homes on parking capacity.

Net take-away: multi-dimensional, multiple parameter process. 2020 will call on Mr. Saunders in future meetings to review and discuss specific situations.

An example of an evolving change in use of a property was reviewed by Lee Duncan, currently in the process of acquiring Hill Street Baptist Church for conversion to a performing arts venue. A zoning change from Residential to Downtown Multi-Use, a Special Use Permit for the intended use, interior and exterior changes for compliance to current building codes, BHAR review of exterior modifications and an evaluation of parking capacity in light of the property exceeding a 10,000 square foot threshold are anticipated.

The conversion will likely trigger a “spot zoning” review that evaluates if the proposed use solely satisfies the financial interest of the owner or contributes to the greater good of the community. 2020 will follow the project through the review and permitting process.

The first phase of the parking study was reviewed. [An inventory of on-street and off-street spaces](#) in the core business area available during a mid-week business day was tabulated and established that 27% of the capacity is “lost” to all-day users (typically, merchants or employees) and to reserved spaces. Separately, Tourism conducted an [informal online survey](#) to gauge resident and visitor perspective on parking downtown.

A discussion of proposed initiatives to improve the utilization of current parking capacity was deferred to a future meeting – an analysis of the collected data is requisite.

A first pass over initiatives was provided by Tourism intern Sydney Keever. Her research into other communities’ responses to parking management identified a broad range of approaches. The research results will be reviewed in a future Team meeting.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 4th, 8:45 am, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.