

Smithfield 2020 Notes from Team meeting of February 6, 2019

Present

Jim Abicht	Sheila Gwaltney	Randy Pack
Rick Bodson	Trey Gwaltney	Kim Pugh
Christi Chatham	Mark Hall	Brian Thrower
Lee Duncan	Joseph McCain	Judy Winslow
John Edwards	Chris Morello	

Follow-up and Admin

A meeting with Jericho Road residents Judy and Brian Lally and Denise and Shane Hamilton on their concerns about vehicular traffic on the brick roadway concluded with a suggested three-step follow-up. The Lallys and Hamiltons will identify several options for traffic control, will then involve the five residents at the WCP boundary, and then liaise with Jericho Estates residents to arrive at a consensus set of options. At that point, 2020 will request and facilitate a meeting with Town staff to validate and pursue viable options.

Current funds balance is \$11,972.55. There are no outstanding commitments of funds.

A façade improvement matching grant application submitted by Joseph McCain, co-owner of Fleur de Fou, 338 Main Street, was presented and reviewed. The project restores the façade of the Victorian house by removing a screened porch and metal awnings, and then detailing and repainting the house to period-appropriate styling. The project received BHAR approval on 10/19/18; the cost estimate is \$11,300. A motion to award a \$2,500 matching grant at the conclusion of the work and submission of copies of contractor invoices to 2020 was adopted.

Organizations' 2019 priorities

The priorities for 2019 of the represented organizations were briefly reviewed.

County Economic Development: Drawing large businesses to Shirley T. Holland Intermodal Park remains the top strategic focus but a review of the permitting work-flow is a 2019 initiative. The effort may involve an outside consultant for comparative analysis and identification of best practices. The key parameters are the “immovable” (regulatory or code compliance), system execution (the actual permitting process steps) and customer service. Other specific initiatives being validated include a small business revolving loan program.

Historic District Businesses: The 300 block's commercial growth picked up momentum in 2018 and is anticipated to sustain in 2018, the recent turn-over or closure of three businesses notwithstanding. Aesthetics to draw shoppers up from the 200 block is an initiative to pursue. At the Smithfield Station, activity-based tourism is a driving strategy. The potential to create access to the riverfront at the bottom of Wharf Hill was identified. Overarching specific initiatives is the Sanford-Holshouser study's call to maximize the “experience economy” for residents and visitors.

Genuine merchants of downtown Smithfield (Gmods): Improving the momentum of participation in the Gmods networking effort is a realistic goal after the successful launch of the group in mid-2018. Being in synch with Tourism's larger events and complementing them with merchant-coordinated small promotional programs has had good early traction and is a focus for 2019. Several examples of low-key but high return for participating merchants were cited; the upcoming extended hours "Sip and Shop" where businesses host local wineries and merchants for a pre-Valentine's Day event is an example.

2019 initiatives for Smithfield 2020

Presentations in January by the Arts League, Historic Smithfield, Chamber of Commerce, Historic Smithfield and the Town and at this month's meeting highlighted several common and complementing priorities: connecting resources between organizations for education, cultural and economic vitality events (large and small); and improving the aesthetics of the District while several infrastructure projects wrap up.

Carrying over from 2018 are the parking capacity project, a nascent aesthetics improvement initiative, an unlaunched review of the permitting processes for new Historic District retail businesses and support of the Genuine merchants of downtown Smithfield network.

Individual and cross-organization initiatives will be budgeted into 2019 Team agendas.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 6th, 8:45 am, Smithfield Center.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.