The Smithfield Town Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, December 2, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Members present:

Michael Smith - Mayor
Bill Harris - Vice Mayor
Steve Bowman
Mary Ellen Bebermeyer
Valerie Bulter
Darren Cutler
Jeff Brooks

Members absent:

None

Staff present:

Michael Stallings – Town Manager
Lesley King – Town Clerk
Tammie Clary – Community Development & Planning Director
Ed Heide – Director of Public Works
Judy Winslow – Director of Tourism
Laura Ross – Treasurer
Alonzo Howell – Chief, Smithfield Police Department
Chris Meier – Deputy Chief, Smithfield Police Department
Ashley Rogers – Director of Human Resources
Amy Novak – Director of Parks and Recreation
Steve Clark - Grounds Attendant

Legal Representation:

Chris McKenzie - Interim Town Attorney of Sands Anderson (via video)

Press:
Stephen Faleski - The Smithfield Times

Citizens:
30

Mayor Smith welcomed all attendees to the meeting and asked all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Scouts Troop 3.

1. **Call To Order**

2. **Pledge Of Allegiance**

   a. Scout Troop 3 will lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance

3. **Informational Reports**

   a. Town Manager's Report

   b. Committee Summary Reports

4. **Upcoming Meetings And Activities**

December 2 -	6:30 p.m. - Town Council Meeting
December 9 -	6:30 p.m. - Planning Commission Meeting
December 10 -	6:00 p.m. - Public Information Meeting - Grace Street Projects
December 15 -	3:00 p.m. - Town Council Committee Meetings
December 16 -	6:30 p.m. - Board of Historic and Architectural Review

December 16 -	7:30 p.m. - Board of Zoning Appeals
December 24 - 26	Town Office Closed for the Christmas Holiday
January 1 -	Town Offices Closed in Observance of New Year's Day

NOTE: All of the above public meetings will be held at the Smithfield Center, unless otherwise noted.

5. Presentation

a. Update from Branch Manager, April Watkins, of the Smithfield Branch of the Blackwater Regional Library

April Watkins, Branch Manager for the Smithfield Branch of the Blackwater Regional Library, reported she had been promoted to the position in August and had been working as a librarian for about 15 years. She reported that she was present to give an update on where the funds donated by the Town were going to be utilized in the next fiscal year. She said that in November 2025 the library had 2,437 people come visit the branch. She detailed that they had opened 43 new library accounts, had 14 outside groups use their meeting room for free, had 14 people utilize their free notary services, and had 9 volunteers active in the library. Mrs. Watkins reported that Smithfield was the busiest of all the Blackwater Library branches, which included the highest number of attendance for programs and the highest circulation of materials. She related that some of the programs that were funded in part by the Smithfield Town Council included: Book Bites for 3rd through 5th graders, Teen Tuesday, Story Trails, and Craftsy adult crafting program. Mrs. Watkins reported that the library had made some low-cost updates, including the creation of a quiet study room, moving furniture for a more open feel, and the purchase of shelf markers by the Friends of the Library. She listed the following proposed projects: updated juvenile and teen section shelving on casters to enable flexibility in the library space; applying for grants to fund new furniture for the entire library; new carpeting contingent on County approval and funding; and refreshing the Little Kids Room with a space theme utilizing funding from the Smithfield Town Council. Mrs. Watkins stated that the Library would be celebrating its 100th anniversary on January 10th, 2026, from 10 am to 1 pm, and invited all in attendance to come. She shared her contact information so that they may ask any questions or in the event they needed to contact her.

b. Update from Western Tidewater Free Clinic by Rob Estes

Rob Estes, Board Member with the Western Tidewater Free Clinic, thanked the Town Council for their recent support of the clinic and their service to high-risk patients. He reported that through June 2025, the clinic had served 38 Town of Smithfield residents through 250 visits and 24 dental patients through 62 visits. He observed that the number represented 3% of the clinic's current population, which to date was 8,200 unduplicated patients with more than 234,000 visits going back to their founding in 2007. He added that they had also provided 326,000 free medications valued at more than $64 million. Mr. Estes related the story of one of their patients, Tony, and the assistance that the clinic was able to give him over the duration of his care. He stated that the continued support from others, including the Town of Smithfield, enabled them to keep serving those in dire need within their 220 square mile service area. He reiterated his appreciation for the Town's support of their organization and mission. He invited the members of the Town Council to tour the clinic and witness firsthand how the Town's investment was making an impact.

Mayor Smith acknowledged the growth of the clinic through the years and expressed appreciation of their work.

c. Jersey Park Rehabilitation Project Update from Green Street Housing

Chase Powell, Director of Development and partner at Green Street Housing, reported that he was in attendance to give a presentation regarding the renovation of Jersey Park and Woods Edge apartments. He began with a history of their organization, noting that they had completed 2 other affordable housing projects in Virginia within the last 5 years, with 3 projects currently under construction, and 3 others in the pipeline. He recapped that the project was divided into two sides, Jersey Park and Woods Edge, with Jersey Park under construction first. He related that due to the configuration of the two sides, they would need to revisit how much Jersey Park would cover versus what Woods Edge would cover in regard to the shared road improvement and maintenance. Mr. Powell reported that they had closed on the construction financing for

Jersey Park in August 2025, with construction having begun in September. He noted that they would be under construction for 12–15 months and detailed the construction plan. He added that since the last time he was before the Council, Green Street Housing had acquired both properties, and both properties were now under a new management company. Mr. Powell stated that conversations between Smithfield Police Department and the Town of Smithfield and Green Street Housing had been regarding on-site security. He updated that since they were actively in the construction phase, they were working on the actual implementation of the new camera security system. Mr. Powell gave a progress update on the status of the Woods Edge portion of the project, saying that they had begun repairs and maintenance upgrades. He noted that the project would be funded through the Suffolk redevelopment housing authority, and they would be using bonds through the Economic Development Authority (EDA) process. He stated that the plan was to complete the construction at Jersey Park and then roll right into Woods Edge in the third quarter of 2026. He showed pictures of a recent food bank event that they held at the site for Thanksgiving, adding that they would partner with the food bank for future events in the community.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer recalled that there had been previous plans to rebrand or rename the properties and asked for a status update.

Mr. Powell reported that the rebranding would go into effect with the completion of Jersey Park's renovations, but would apply to both portions of the project.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer asked if there were community meetings that had been held for the residents about the project and the planned renovations.

Mr. Powell stated that there had been a meeting held about a month before they began construction as dictated through the URAA, or Uniform Relation Assistance Act, process. He said that they had outlined what would happen in the first phase of construction and what the residents could expect. He confirmed that the residents did not pay for anything as it related to moving expenses, including if they had to be relocated off-site. He said that the next meeting would likely occur before Christmas, if not early January, to give the residents a "refresher" of all the information.

Councilman Brooks asked if Green Street Housing had a previous relationship with Gateway Management Services, the organization that would manage the property.

Mr. Powell reported that Gateway was currently managing 3 of their properties in Maryland. He related that they had a long working relationship with the management of Gateway, even when they operated out of a different company.

Mayor Smith thanked Mr. Powell for the update and added that the Town was very excited about the planned renovations.

Mr. Powell stated that they would come back to give another update in the upcoming New Year, and thanked the Town for their support.

6. Public Comments

Tommy Gehring of 215 Cary Street in Smithfield reported that as of December 15th he will have lived in the Town for 40 years. He related that he had spoken many times to the Town Council about his concerns about the speed of drivers on Cary Street. He suggested that the speed limit signs in the Historic District could read 25 mph with the addition of the statement "or less" below it. He noted that there was unresolved business that the Town was considering for the use of Joyner Field, and said that it would be nice if they constructed a double-story parking deck at the site. He specified that the entrance/exit to the parking structure could be placed on Cedar Street and then have the permanent Farmer's Market site on the top of the structure. He related that the Farmer's Market had remained stagnant in its plans for years. Mr. Gehring stated that the construction of such a structure would solve three problems with one solution. He noted that another question that had been raised about the idea of a permanent site for the Farmer's Market was what the visitors would do there. He shared the idea of constructing a tower as tall as some of the water towers in the area, with an observation area at the top to be able to view different areas of the Town. He detailed that with such a structure they could charge for parking, charge for admission, and have associated buildings around it. Mr. Gehring said that it was just an idea for the Council to consider since the issue seemed to be cycling through for a while.

Mayor Smith asked if there were any other members of the public who wished to speak. Seeing and hearing none, he closed the public comment section.

7. Council Comments

Mayor Smith confirmed that there were no Council member comments.

8. Consent Agenda Items

Councilman Brooks made a motion to approve the consent agenda items C(a) through C(c) as presented.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer seconded the motion.

Mayor Smith called for the vote, with seven members present. Councilwoman Butler voted aye, Councilwoman Bebermeyer voted aye, Councilman Brooks voted aye, Councilman Cutler voted aye, Councilman Bowman voted aye, Vice Mayor Harris voted aye, and Mayor Smith voted aye. The motion passed unanimously.

a. Invoices Over $20,000 Requiring Council Authorization:
Finance Committee Chair, Jeff Brooks

i.	Virginia Control & Electrical Services, LLC - Street Light Lenses	$26,810.00
ii.	Dell, Inc. - Equipment Replacement	$ 40,273.82
iii.	SHI International Corp - IT Software	$ 28,205.43

b. Motion to Adopt 2026 Meeting Schedule

c. Motion to Approve the Town Council Summary Minutes from November 5th and November 12th, 2025

9. Action Items

a. Motion to Adopt the Luter Sports Complex Master Plan by Kimley Horn and Associates
Parks and Recreation Committee Chair, Mary Ellen Bebermeyer

Councilwoman Bebermeyer reported that a presentation had been made at the previous Town Council Committee Meetings, with that information included in the Council's informational packet. She made a motion to adopt the Luter Sports Complex Master Plan by Kimley Horn and Associates as presented.

Vice Mayor Harris asked what the phrasing "adopt" committed the Town Council to.

The Town Manager reported that the phrasing of "adopt" committed the Town Council to nothing. He clarified that the action would show that the Town Council endorsed the Master Plan as shown, which would then give them clear direction as to how they would proceed if one day funding should be given by an entity or grant.

Vice Mayor Harris confirmed that the action would still allow the Town Council, or future Town Councils, the flexibility to readjust if necessary.

Councilwoman Butler asked what Vice Mayor Harris meant when he said "readjusted."

Vice Mayor Harris gave the hypothetical example of in the future, the football field demand in the area growing faster than the baseball field demand, would they have the flexibility to adjust the plan that they were approving currently.

The Town Manager stated that if a future Council wanted to adjust the plan or go in a different direction, then that ability would be available.

Vice Mayor Harris confirmed that the Town Manager felt that, in that case, "endorse" was as good as "adopt."

Councilwoman Butler questioned why they were adopting the plan if it was not something etched in stone. She questioned why they then did not ask for what they wanted or the maximum that Luter Sports Complex could develop into.

The Town Manager explained that the Master Plan in question represented what could fit at the site.

Councilwoman Butler said that explanation did not sound like what Vice Mayor Harris had asked.

The Town Manager interpreted Vice Mayor Harris's question as if, in the future, before they reached construction, there was a change where they decided that they wanted to do something different than what was included in the Master Plan, could Council then adopt a different plan. He said that by all means, they could do that. He continued that what they were saying was what was before them was the current Master Plan for the facility, and there was nothing that would prevent the Council from adopting a different Master Plan in the future. The Town Manager noted that the plan had been based off of the evaluation of what would fit and was the highest use in that facility to date.

Mayor Smith questioned if there was a second to the motion made by Councilwoman Bebermeyer.

Councilman Bowman seconded the motion made by Councilwoman Bebermeyer.

Councilman Cutler acknowledged that during the Committee Meeting they had more discussion on the evolution of the plan. He asked if there had been any citizen feedback regarding the plan and questioned what the makeup was of the committee that provided input to Kimley Horn.

The Town Manager reported that the committee consisted of the Town Manager, the Parks and Recreation Department, Smithfield Recreation Association (SRA), and Smithfield Packers Youth Sports, with all entities having input into the development of the plan.

Councilman Cutler confirmed that there were no appointed citizens present nor were there any Town Hall-style meetings to get input from citizens. He observed that a motion to adopt sounded like a formality and did nothing other than say that they agreed with the Master Plan. He continued that it had not been made clear that they had explored all the options that could be available at the site. He stated that the expansion of the football and baseball facilities was certainly discussed at length at the meeting, but not discussion about alternatives. He speculated that, in order to adopt something, they would have been presented a variety of options. He noted that they were not creating an opportunity to have any other choice other than what was presented. Councilman Cutler related that he was not prepared to make a substitute motion, but it seemed like the Council was taking action by making a motion with no effectiveness for only one option presented with no consideration of broad citizen input or citizen impact. He observed that they had current active leases on the existing fields, but questioned if they had considered how things would progress at the end of those leases or what the fiscal impact associated with the action would be. He said he was open to further discussion or tabling the issue and investigating further.

Councilman Bowman explained that he had seconded the motion and would vote on the issue because it was just a plan. He referenced Vice Mayor Harris's earlier inquiry, and noted that the plan was a starting point as far as the facility's footprint was concerned. He clarified that by endorsing the plan he was in no way saying that it was etched in stone. He stated that they did need to have a starting point outlining what the site could potentially look like. He continued that before they committed funding, etc., he agreed that a public hearing and things of that nature should be completed. Councilman Bowman explained that the Master Plan was a conceptual plan of what the facility could look like, though use of the title "Master Plan" may be where they were getting stuck.

Councilman Cutler stated that he understood, and agreed to a certain extent. He stated that Councilman Bowman had just mentioned fiscal matters, when none of that information had been involved in the analysis of the plan. He reiterated that there was no citizen feedback, nor any presentation of alternative options. He related that it seemed that their current discussion was the only opportunity for the Town Council to provide feedback on the presentation.

Councilman Cutler made a substitute motion to table the Luter Sports Complex Master Plan by Kimley Horn and Associates to allow for input from citizens to be gathered.

Vice Mayor Harris seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Butler told Councilman Cutler that she was in agreement with his statements. She said that the Town Manager had explained that the Council had been presented with the plan because it seemed that it represented what the Town was skilled at. She stated that when she was elected to the Town Council she had not been aware of the agreement with the SRA, and had questioned why they entered an agreement with them that gave them first right of refusal to the baseball fields. She continued that she had been told that they had entered into that agreement because the Town had no experience with arranging games and tournaments and, as a result, utilized their expertise. She noted that if they had contracted someone to provide that service to start off, they may have been in a position where they could do it themselves. Councilwoman Butler said that maybe now they were in a position to provide services for a different sport and manage it the way that it should be managed. She said that she had no issues with delaying the matter, adding that she had asked Councilwoman Bebermeyer and the Town Manager to pull the matter because, as it was presented, she was not in a position to vote on it.

Member of council Cutler expressed appreciation for Councilwoman Butler's comments, adding that they likely agreed on more than she thought. He noted that part of the difficulty stemmed from the fact that they were in the midst of a 20-year lease with SRA that had no accounting for increased cost or inflation over that time. He cautioned that a symbolic gesture would have weight in the future.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer reiterated that she was in favor of adopting the Master Plan. She observed that the plan grew out of the number of requests the Parks and Recreation Department received for hosting baseball tournaments. She added that flag football was another sport that was growing in the area. She noted that there was an entire section of sports tourism that they were not tapping into. She related that football and baseball were popular here in Town, while soccer was provided for in the County. She said that there was no way that the town currently had enough staff to run the baseball scheduling. Councilwoman Bebermeyer reported that there were two people who ran Luter Sports Complex currently, and they worked very hard on its upkeep. She pointed out that the new plan included a field for flag football, which was for both girls and boys. She countered that the statement that there was no citizen involvement was not correct as it was all run by citizens. She acknowledged that they did not widen outreach to the broader citizenry, but the information was made available, and they could comment at any time.

Councilman Cutler said that Councilwoman Bebermeyer was spot-on with her fiscal concerns. He observed that they had one competition ball field that could host large events. He pointed out that they were currently in a situation where they could not host large events because of the first right of refusal lease that they gave to the SRA. He said that as a result, the Town had given away their autonomy to be able to hold those events. He asked what the harm was in tabling the matter and tasking the staff to present empirical evidence on what was being requested of the Town from the outside entities, such as calculating what funding they were missing out on by turning away requests. He stated that the action was contrary to the motion that they had made to forgive debt from the SRA earlier in the year. He recalled that at that time they had discussed the need to poll the citizens to see if they wanted to use those extra funds to support the SRA, or if they wanted to use them to support other youth groups or sports. He questioned why they would not do homework now for use in their decision-making currently or for the future.

Councilman Bowman stated that the Town hired Kimley Horn and paid them to provide them with a Master Plan at the site. He said that the plan was just that, and could be adopted or modified when the time came. He added that the plan provided the Town with a first step on how to utilize the site. He questioned why the Town would have gone as far as hiring Kimley Horn to complete the plan if they weren't going to do what they suggested.

Councilwoman Butler said that she disagreed with Councilman Bowman's statement. She recalled that when Kimley Horn and Amy Novak, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented the information to the Council, they had been told that the Town had reported that they had only wanted baseball and football included. She added that it sounded like there were other options available but only that one option was presented to the Council.

The Town Manager reported that there were not other options, and reiterated that baseball and football were what the facility was focused on. He said that focusing on other sports would dilute what the facility was, emphasizing that it was a sports complex that served baseball and football. He added that it did not make sense to try to include other things that were already available throughout the County. He noted that the requests received were for baseball tournaments, and that was what they had to turn away.

Councilwoman Butler recognized what the Town Manager had said, but added that the Town had put themselves in the position not to have the capacity to offer tournaments to outside entities. She referenced Councilwoman Bebermeyers' earlier point and said that if they were looking at Luter Sports Complex as a way to encourage tourism by bringing outside teams in, then to her that was a different focus. She related that she was looking at Luter Sports Complex to serve the youth locally, not as a for-profit enterprise.

Mayor Smith called for the vote for the substitute motion made by Councilman Cutler to table the matter in order to gather citizen input. Councilman Brooks voted nay, Councilwoman Butler voted aye, Councilwoman Bebermeyer voted nay, Councilman Cutler voted aye, Councilman Bowman voted nay, Vice Mayor Harris voted aye, and Mayor Smith voted nay.

The substitute motion failed by a vote of 3/4. As a result, the Council returned to the original motion to adopt the Mater Plan as presented.

Mayor Smith called for a vote on the original motion made by Councilwoman Bebermeyer to adopt the Luter Sports Complex Master Plan by Kimley Horn and Associates as presented. Vice Mayor Harris voted nay, Councilman Cutler voted nay, Councilman Bowman voted aye, Councilman Brooks voted aye, Councilwoman Bebermeyer voted aye, Councilwoman Butler voted nay, and Mayor Smith voted aye. The original motion passed with a vote of 4/3.

10. New Business

Mayor Smith confirmed that there was no New Business to discuss.

11. Old Business

Mayor Smith confirmed that there was no Old Business to discuss.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Michael Smith - Mayor

Lesley King - Town Clerk