

The Smithfield Town Council held its regular meeting on Tuesday, May 5, 2026. 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  
Stephanie Kinsicki — Assistant Director of Tourism  
Laura Ross – Treasurer  
Alonzo Howell – Chief, Smithfield Police Department  
Chris Meier – Deputy Chief, Smithfield Police Department  
Steve Clark - Grounds Attendant  
Kyle Warren - Grounds Attendant

**Legal Representation:**

Chris MacKenzie - Interim Town Attorney, Sands Anderson

**Press:**

Stephen Faleski - The Smithfield Times

**Citizens:**

5

Mayor Smith welcomed all attendees to the meeting and asked all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Call To Order**

**2. Pledge Of Allegiance**

**3. Informational Reports**

- a. Town Manager's Activity Reports
- b. Committee Summary Reports

**4. Upcoming Meetings And Activities**

May 5	6:30 p.m. - Town Council Meeting
May 12	6:30 p.m. - Planning Commission Meeting
May 18	3:00 p.m. Town Council Committee Meetings
May 18	6:30 p.m. Special Town Council Meeting - Public Hearing on FY 2026/2027 Budget

May 19            6:30 p.m. - Board of Historic and Architectural Review  
May 19            7:30 p.m. - Board of Zoning Appeals

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

## 5. Public Comments

Ginny Soule of 104 Richmond Avenue in Smithfield observed that Isle of Wight County completed their portion of the Park to Park Trail from Nike Park to the intersection of Battery Park Road and South Church Street in June 2021. She reported that the County's portion contained 4 miles of 8 to 10 foot wide asphalt paths designed for pedestrians and bicyclists. She related that the residents of Smithfield, specifically those who resided on South Church Street, had been waiting for Smithfield to finish their portion that extended to Windsor Castle Park.

Mrs. Soule reported that she lived in the Church Square neighborhood and would love to be able to walk to the Farmers Market or other places in Smithfield. She continued that to do so she would be taking her life in her own hands because there was no sidewalk or breakdown lane on South Church Street. She said that she had kept hearing that Smithfield was trying to find the funding necessary to complete their portion, but now she had understood that the Town had purchased the property previously known as the Grange for over \$6 million without consulting taxpayers. She stated that she had attempted to email a Town Council member almost a month prior, but had never received a response. Mrs. Soule reported that she had written a Letter to the Editor which had run in the previous week's Smithfield Times. She said that if phone numbers were not provided for Council members, then the citizens had to contact them by email. She noted that she had not been pleased that her concerns had been disregarded. She asked the Council what would be done about the Park to Park Trail, and when the work would be done. Mrs. Soule additionally asked if she could receive an update on the project at their current meeting, or at the very least add the item to the next month's meeting agenda. Mayor Smith stated that he had spoken with the Town Manager on the subject and asked him to address the matter.

The Town Manager reported that the Town had been pursuing a Federal Grant through the Federal Highway Administration. He updated that the Town had just received the funding to complete the study portion of that project, and in the next couple of months they would see work happening off of the Community Action Plan for that specific corridor, as well as all the Town, in regard to pedestrian mobility. He related that once the study was done, it would be the starting point for when the town could apply for the construction funds necessary. The Town Manager added that the Director of Public Works was also working on a different avenue of securing funding through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the project. He reviewed that he had started the Federal Highway Administration funding process in 2021, and they were only now getting the green light to move forward with the study.

Mrs. Soule questioned how far that put them into the process and would it be done in her lifetime.

The Town Manager estimated that the study would take 6 months to 1 year to complete, and its completion would give the Town the ability to apply for funding. He speculated that within the next 2 years the Town should have an idea if they qualify for Federal Highway funding.

Mrs. Soule asked what would happen if they did not receive approval.

The Town Manager reported that since the Director of Public Works had started working on possible VDOT funding for the project, then they would continue with that plan. He noted that VDOT had notified the Town that they could not just build the trail, and they would have to reconstruct part of the road for stormwater reasons. He explained that the Town was looking into how they could complete the trail without having to do that reconstruction as that would make the process significantly cheaper and allow the Town to move faster.

Mrs. Soule stated that the information given sounded like the exact same information given 5 years ago. She asked if anything had been done in the last 5 years.

The Town Manager reiterated that they had been working the Federal Highway Administration's timeline for funding consideration.

Mrs. Soule asked how she was supposed to contact Town Council members. She additionally asked if the Council members normally responded to the emails they received.

Mayor Smith reported that he did respond. Councilman Cutler said that he tried to.

Mrs. Soule asked if there were phone numbers that she had been aware of where she could contact someone.

Councilwoman Butler gave Mrs. Soule her personal card.

Mayor Smith asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak who had not signed up. Hearing and seeing none, he moved to the next agenda item.

## **6. Council Comments**

Councilwoman Butler officially announced her decision to not run for a third term on the Town Council. She stated that serving the community had been an honor and a responsibility she had not taken lightly. She related that she had run to be a voice for all people, especially those who felt unheard, and to advocate for transparency, trust, and thoughtful decision-making. She said that she was proud of the work that they had done and the conversations that they had started. Councilwoman Butler reported that it had not been an easy decision for her to make, but she believed that leadership also meant knowing when it was time to step aside and allow space for new or younger voices and perspectives. She stated that she remained committed to the community and would continue to support efforts that moved Smithfield forward in a way that reflected fairness, inclusion, and accountability. She said that she was also committed to being an advocate for the Town Staff, the community, and those who felt unheard of. Councilwoman Butler offered special thanks to all the citizens who had elected her, that had encouraged her, and that had supported her on her journey. She thanked Mayor Smith and the rest of the Town Council for allowing her to serve alongside them. She thanked the Town Manager, Michael Stallings, and his staff, notably the following: Lesley, Laura, Tammie, Jeff, Jesse, Ed, Amy, Judy, Stephanie, and Chief Howell. She additionally thanked Chase Powell from Greenstreet Housing for allowing her to be in contact with the Jersey Park and Woods Edge Community Renovations. She expressed appreciation for their trust, support, conversations, and the opportunity to serve.

Mayor Smith said that Councilwoman Butler had done a great job, but understood that there were other important personal issues for her to focus on. He stated that Councilwoman Butler had been a great asset to the Town, and he appreciated her work.

Councilman Cutler thanked Councilwoman Butler for serving on the Town Council. He reported that he would not be able to attend the next Committee Meetings, and he had requested a discussion of staff-related efforts. He requested that the matter be moved to June for discussion, and the addition of a discussion item for speed limit reduction efforts. He reviewed that they had the Joint Meeting with the Planning Commission. He stated that he had wanted to follow up on the brief discussion they had at the meeting that if there was a system in place with no rules, or everything had a Special Use Permit (SUP) so-to-speak, then it could open the doors to exertion of influence. He said that he would like to hear the citizens' and Town Council members' opinion on the subject as they moved forward. Councilman Cutler stated that he had only been on the Council for a short period of time and felt that they had dealt with flimsy rules in their work with 3 different developers. He noted that he knew that there had been efforts made to exert influence, which would continue if they decided to get rid of rules.

## **7. Consent Agenda Items**

Councilman Cutler requested an investigation into changing the current action of charging an individual and a developer of a large site the same \$400 fee to apply for a SUP. He asked if they could look into a distinction of acreage requirements attached at the site or a change to the fee schedule in regard to having more than one SUP at a site.

Councilman Bowman made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Councilman Brooks seconded the motion.

Mayor Smith called for the vote, with seven members present. Councilman Bowman voted aye, Councilwoman Butler voted aye, Councilman Brooks voted aye, Councilwoman Bebermeyer voted aye, Councilman Cutler 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. Sands Anderson \$36,492.80
  - ii. Lewis Construction of Virginia - Water connection  
@ Hearn's Mobile Home Park \$63,350.00
- b. Motion to Approve Subdivision Agreement for Modwash  
*Public Buildings and Welfare Committee Chair, Valerie Butler*
- c. Motion to Approve Subdivision Agreement - Cypress Crossing Pump Station  
*Public Buildings and Welfare Committee Chair, Valerie Butler*
- d. Motion to Approve the Subdivision Agreement for the Cottages at Battery  
*Public Buildings and Welfare Committee Chair, Valerie Butler*
- e. Motion to Adopt Fee Schedule for Infrastructure Plan Review  
*Public Buildings and Welfare Committee Chair, Valerie Butler*
- f. Motion to Approve the Town Council Summary Minutes from April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
*Michael G. Smith, Mayor*

## 8. Action Items

- a. PUBLIC HEARING - Issuance of \$6.7 Million Dollar Bond  
*Michael Stallings, Town Manager*

The Town Manager reported that the public hearing was in regard to the ordinance that would authorize the \$6.7 million general obligation bond. He observed that there was a representative from Davenport and Company present should they have any questions.

Roland Cooch with Davenport and Company stated that he was present to discuss the public hearing for the \$6.7 million general obligation bond anticipation note. He reviewed that his colleague had explained the process as a whole at the previous month's meeting. He reviewed that their company had gone through a process on behalf of the Town to solicit potential financing interests from banks and lenders throughout, and beyond, the Commonwealth in order to provide funding in the amount of \$6.7 million for the land acquisition and closing costs on the note. He summarized that the note in question would be a 5-year note with an interest rate of 3.9% which was fixed for the life of the loan, and had the ability to be prepaid very flexibly. He stated that the action would effectively allow the Town to obtain the funding to acquire the land purchase being considered.

Mayor Smith asked if the Council members had questions. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing. He confirmed that there were no members of the public who had signed up to speak on the matter. He asked if there were any members of the public who had not signed up who wished to speak. Hearing and seeing none, he closed the public hearing.

Councilman Bowman recalled that there had been a discussion at the previous meeting in regard to the amount of money that they were spending on the parcel of 57 acres. He reviewed that at that meeting, he had said that with the way things were going in the area, he had believed that \$6.7 million was likely a good deal. He pointed out that it was announced earlier that day that Isle of Wight County, in the process of replacing Westside Elementary School, had acquired 14 acres behind Riverside Smithfield Hospital for \$6 million.

Councilman Brooks made a motion to approve the issuance of the \$6.7 million bond relating to the purchase of the Pierceville property.

Councilman Cutler seconded the motion.

Mr. MacKenzie confirmed that the motion included the adoption of the ordinance that was included in the informational packet.

Councilman Cutler stated that he believed that the property would serve Smithfield and its citizens for centuries.

Mayor Smith called for the vote, with seven members present. Vice Mayor Harris voted aye, Councilwoman Bebermeyer voted aye, Councilman Brooks voted aye, Councilman Cutler voted aye, Councilwoman Butler voted nay, Councilman Bowman voted aye, and Mayor Smith voted aye. The motion passed by a majority of 6/1.

## **9. New Business**

Mayor Smith confirmed that there was no new business to discuss.

## **10. Old Business**

### **a. Further Discussion on FY 2026 - 2027 Proposed Budget**

The Town Manager pointed out that the Council members had been provided with electronic as well as hard copies of the Budget Proposal that was reviewed at the recent Committee Meetings. He reviewed that it was given to them on May 1st, and it was posted for public review on the website that same day. He highlighted that there were no proposed tax increases in the budget, and the only fee increase was a 25¢ per thousand gallon to the water rate. He explained that the increase was in-keeping with the water and sewer rate study that was done to ensure that their funds remained solvent. He continued that there was a 4% salary increase for employees, with no planned new positions but 2 part-time positions that would be converted to full-time. He stated that there was a 10% health insurance increase which was shared through the normal funding formula between the staff and the Town. He reiterated that the budget anticipated funding the contribution requests at the rates that were asked for. The Town Manager reported that the Budget Proposal would be on the agenda for the May Committee Meetings and had been advertised for public hearing at 6:30 that evening. He said that they anticipated adoption at the June Town Council meeting.

Councilman Cutler asked if anything had been changed at the museum, such as an increase in volume or change in hours, that prompted the need for a full-time position.

The Town Manager reported that it had been difficult to fill the part-time position, and the Museum Director needed assistance. He related that currently there were only 2 full-time employees at the museum, and there was a lot for them to manage on their own. He observed that their function was more than just at the museum, as they supported the Town and the County with other projects, for example, maintaining exhibits at all the Parks and Recreation sites.

Councilman Cutler reported that he had a discussion with the Treasurer about the Town's investments after the Committee Meetings. He stated that, though he supported the purchase of the Pierceville property, it seemed that they were justifying the financing method with the Town's returns on their investments. He noted that they were applying the returns on their investments into the budget. He added that they were planning to take funds from their surplus and place it into the General Fund. He expressed concern that they were not planning appropriately. Councilman Cutler stated that it seemed that they were viewing it as it was able to feed two pots, but it did not seem like that was possible. He asked for clarification about what the intention was.

The Town Manager explained that the banknote would be paid from the General Fund Revenue. He continued that there were funds included in the budget dedicated from the reserves to balance the budget. He stated that when they got to the end of the year, they would only pull those funds from the reserves if they needed them. He noted that he did not typically budget reserves except for one-time expenses, using the Parks and Recreation maintenance building as an example. He detailed that they had about \$150,000 dollars coming from reserves to assist in balancing the budget. The Town Manager reported that using reserves was not planned for next year, and they always started the year anticipating that they would not touch the reserves. He stated that they would not be funding the banknote with interest income.

Councilman Cutler pointed out that, per the information provided, revenues went up nearly across the board. He asked what the percentage increase in revenue was that they had seen for the current year and if they had forecasted that percentage into the next year. He reported that he

found it challenging to believe that they could not get closer to the budget, as revenues had increased, without going into reserves.

The Town Manager acknowledged that the revenues did increase, but added that the increase was not substantial. He observed that the town's costs were also rising at a pace that was faster than the revenue growth. He stated that the Sales Tax Revenue was an example of a decrease, and it had gone down 4%, which was significant. He added that they reviewed the information yearly and got an analysis from the Commissioner of Revenue, who reviewed Isle of Wight County as a whole, and then gave their projections for the town to apply to their numbers. He said that the town's Treasurer provided them with the same information from her point of view.

Councilman Cutler recognized that the Tourism Department quantified the Tax Revenue that came from tourism and marketing, and asked if there was a forecast for that. He noted that there was no revenue line for tourism included in the budget.

The Town Manager reported that those revenues would be reflected in the Meals Tax, Sales Tax, and Occupancy Taxes. He said that they had seen a trend in those aspects, and they impacted the forecast. He noted that if the trend turned upward then their forecast would also increase, but currently they were not seeing an upward trend. He added that the forecast could be adjusted throughout the year.

Councilwoman Butler noted that in the budget there were hard expenses for the Museum and Tourism. She said that since the Museum was shared by the Town and the County, she felt that it was important for them to know how much each entity was giving. She additionally observed that one of the requested contributions was to the Friends of the Library of the Blackwater Regional Library in Smithfield. She noted that the County gave to the Blackwater Regional Library System in its entirety and questioned how much of that filtered down to the Smithfield branch. She stated that last year the town gave the Smithfield Branch \$3,200 and this year they were giving \$10,000, which looked like it was funding the whole program.

The Town Manager recognized that Town citizens were also County citizens, which meant that when the town donated to those organizations it meant that the citizens were technically donating more than once. He stated that it would not be a bad idea to coordinate with the County on what they were giving versus what the Town was giving.

Councilwoman Butler reported that she was agreeable to giving them what they had requested this year, but felt that they needed to pay closer attention in the future. She related that she felt that the Western Tidewater Free Clinic fell under the same umbrella. She felt that it made it more challenging when the agency they were giving contributions to was owned by Isle of Wight County.

Mayor Smith confirmed that they reviewed the contributions based on the percentage of usage by the town's residents.

Councilwoman Butler stated that the Western Tidewater Free Clinic and the Genieve Shelter presented their requests in that way, but it did not make sense if they had asked the County for less money in contributions this year. She questioned why, since the County as a whole was larger, they would ask for less money from the County this year and more money from the Town.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer agreed that they should closely review the differences between the two entities. She recalled that in the Library's presentation they had requested funds for specific programs at that branch where the County contributed to the Blackwater Library System as a whole. She related that the Smithfield branch had the highest circulation and patrons in the system.

Councilwoman Butler reiterated that as the County budgeted for the Blackwater Regional Library system as a whole, some of their funding would go to the Smithfield branch.

Councilwoman Bebermeyer acknowledged that she did not know exactly how the funding was parsed out, and repeated that the contributions would go to the Smithfield branch's specific programming.

Councilman Cutler suggested that the Council could ask the library to return and answer their additional questions.

Councilwoman Butler recalled that in the library's presentation they had listed out the different programs, but there had been a large jump in funding from the year prior.

Councilman Cutler stated that the longer he reviewed the budget, the more it seemed not to be a balanced budget. He specified that they were balancing the budget with reserve funds to avoid a tax increase. He stated that it behooved them to temper their charitable spending when they were not balancing their own budget.

Councilwoman Butler stated that would be a hard decision to make unless the economy changed. She asked the Town Manager for confirmation that they would not see the real estate assessments for the current budget year.

The Town Manager stated that any change in the real estate assessments would not affect the budget that they were currently discussing.

Councilman Cutler asked if it would be true to say that if all the expenditures remained the same that they would face the same shortfall next year, and if they did not make up the difference with the reassessments, then they would have to either make the decision to again utilize reserve funds or have a tax increase of some sort.

The Town Manager stated that if the economy stayed at the same pace or even slowed down, then the answer was yes. He related that they would have to see what happened over the next eight months.

Councilman Cutler reported that he saw a \$500,000 expense in water and sewer was resolved from the budget. He noted the 25¢ increase in the water rate, which he felt was sound, but related that there were funds that had not been budgeted appropriately, and asked if the rate increase could be staved off by using those funds.

The Town Manager explained that the budget had been balanced using that additional income. He stated that the rate study looked at all the town's capital needs and infrastructure needs. He stated that if they did not complete that rate increase, then they would have to delay addressing those needs, and they would also be further in the hole for when they had to start addressing those necessary improvements. He summarized that in the long run it would not help to delay the rate increase.

Councilman Cutler acknowledged that he did not know what the total amount of revenue would be received from the 25¢ increase, but questioned that if it was less than \$500,000, then couldn't the increase be paused.

The Town Manager said it could, in theory, but they would be prolonging the inevitable. He stated that small increases were easier for citizens to absorb.

Councilman Cutler stated that it would be easier if they understood what the 25¢ increase amounted to.

The Town Manager reported that the budget anticipated an additional \$60,000 in revenue. He noted that if he cut that out, then it could potentially mean cuts elsewhere, such as maintenance.

Councilman Cutler asked the Town Manager where the \$500,000 from the removed line item went into the budget.

The Town Manager stated that the line item was erroneously included in the budget, but they were not included in the total. He explained that its removal had therefore not affected the total. He reported that there was not an extra \$500,000 in the budget.

Councilman Cutler asked if that had just been a glitch.

The Town Manager said that was correct, and it had been fixed.

Councilman Cutler asked for confirmation that there had been an error on the Excel spreadsheet.

The Town Manager stated that was correct.

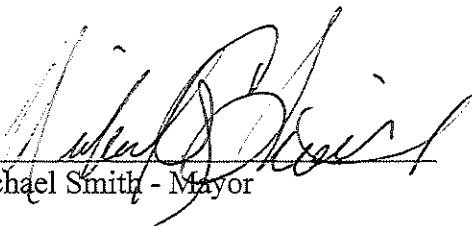
Councilman Cutler stated that the explanation did not make sense. He said that it sounded like there had been \$500,000 on a budget line item that was accounted for, and then was later removed, but it still existed.

The Town Manager said that it had been an error in the spreadsheet calculation, and when taken out, it did not affect the total at the bottom. He detailed that it had been an error in the cell on the spreadsheet, and related that the two could be compared to see that there was no change. He explained that the town was moving away from using Excel spreadsheets for budgeting and implementing new budgeting software.

Councilman Cutler acknowledged that mistakes happen, but stated that they could discuss further offline.

## 11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.

  
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Michael Smith - Mayor

  
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Lesley King - Town Clerk