Re: Community Park Contract

Travis Scott
Andy Moore , Sloan Stevens
, Roger Wood , Stephen Rabil
, John Dunn , Doris Wallace
, Gettys Cohen ,
Kimberly Pickett , Elaine Andrews

[redacted].com
Tue, Mar 10, 2026, 11:30 AM

Members of the Town Council and Town Attorney,

I am writing to memorialize and respond to a phone conversation I had yesterday with Town Manager Kimberly Pickett after learning that heavy equipment had been delivered to Community Park and that demolition activity was being initiated in connection with the proposed Tobs stadium project.

During that conversation, I was told that this project is simply "recreation." I strongly disagree with that characterization. A $6 million baseball stadium tied to a long-term agreement for a private baseball operation is not the same as the youth soccer field and the disabled veterans' and children's area that have historically existed at this site. This is a substantially different project in both scale and function, and it should not be casually classified in a way that avoids the normal public review and development process.

During that same conversation, I was told that council had already approved the project. That statement ignores the larger issue. Approval of a contract does not eliminate the Town's obligation to address the public land-use, fiscal, and policy consequences of this project. The fact remains that this stadium project, with all of its associated impacts, has not yet been brought through a full public hearing process so that the public can be heard and the facts can be openly examined.

When I asked about the recently acquired adjacent residential property, I was told there were no plans to change the development of that property. That statement is inconsistent with the site rendering previously emailed to council, which depicts additional commercial structures associated with this project. If those renderings remain accurate, then the response I was given was

incomplete at best, and council deserves a direct explanation as to what is actually planned for that parcel.

When I raised concern about the activity beginning at the site, I was told, in substance, that money had been found within Parks and Recreation, along with other unused dollars from different line items, in order to move forward. That response raises serious concern. Council has not had a full public discussion about using town funds for demolition of previously developed park land, relocation of existing facilities, or other early project expenses tied to this commercial-style venue. If staff is relying on internal budget lines to advance this project, then council should immediately receive a written accounting of the expenditures, the authority relied upon, and whether all reporting requirements have been followed. We have an itemized budget for a reason, and this is exactly the kind of thing that got the Town into financial strain in years past that had to be addressed when I was first elected to this board, at a time when the LGC threatened to take over our finances.

The conversation also underscored a much larger issue: staff appears to be pushing this project forward before the public and council have fully confronted the true cost of what is being displaced. This is not vacant land. This is already developed public park property. The public deserves a full accounting of the costs associated with demolition of existing improvements, the estimated cost to relocate soccer fields, the cost to relocate or replace lighting infrastructure, the impact of removing other existing recreational features, and the additional public expense that will follow from operating a stadium and mass-gathering venue at this location. More specifically, the public deserves a full explanation of the grant obligations that may require repayment if certain structures are removed and whether those facilities would have to be rebuilt elsewhere using today's dollars.

During that same conversation, I was given no meaningful explanation for how staff intends to deal with the long-term obligations attached to the grant-funded facilities already constructed at Community Park, including the Miracle Inclusive Playground, the DAV Fitness Trail, and the related outdoor recreation improvements. Council accepted Connect NC Bond funding for those facilities and formally agreed that the Town would comply with the grant terms and conditions. The project record also shows these were not temporary installations, but long-term public improvements with a 20–25 year expected life span and a 20-year maintenance commitment for the inclusion park. If the Town is now preparing to disturb, relocate, or repurpose that area for a stadium project, then council and the public are entitled to know, before any further work occurs, whether the Town will

be required to repay grant funds, rebuild equivalent facilities elsewhere, or absorb replacement costs at today's prices. We must uphold the commitment already made to the local donors and tax dollars spent.

In other words, each response I received yesterday only heightened my concern that this project is being advanced without the level of transparency, due process, and full disclosure that the public deserves. If a private developer proposed a project of this scale, involving adjacent residential property, additional structures, site alteration, and substantial neighborhood impact, that developer would be expected to go through the proper board review process and public hearing requirements. The Town should not twist its own ordinances or terminology in order to avoid the same scrutiny.

For those reasons, I am requesting the following immediately: first, that all demolition, site work, and related expenditures associated with the stadium project be paused; second, that this matter be brought before the public through a full public hearing; third, that the appropriate board or boards be allowed to review the matter and make formal recommendations, as would be required of any comparable private development; fourth, that council receive a written report identifying all grant-funded improvements and all restrictions, repayment risks, maintenance obligations, and replacement obligations tied to those funds; and fifth, that council receive a full written accounting of all expenditures and proposed expenditures already committed toward demolition, relocation, and site preparation.

I want to be clear that this email is not based on rumor or speculation. It is a direct response to what I was told yesterday by the Town Manager, combined with the obvious inconsistencies and unanswered questions that remain. It also includes the research I have done on my own. There is still much more to be determined about the grant funding and the requirements already tied to the project that exists today. The last thing the Town should do is compromise its ability to qualify for future grants. I hope we can work through this as a team. The citizens of Smithfield, especially those directly affected by this project, deserve a lawful and transparent process before any further damage is done to already developed public land.

Travis Scott
Council Member, District 3
Town of Smithfield

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Tue, Mar 10, 2026, 1:40 PM
2025 Meeting Minutes 09-16.pdf
2025 Meeting Minutes 10-07.pdf
2025 Meeting Minutes 11-18.pdf
Public Hearing Requirements.pdf

Good afternoon, Mayor, Council and Town Attorney,

For the purposes of clarity and accuracy, I would like to provide additional context for Council regarding how the conversation occurred, as I am somewhat concerned about how the situation has been characterized.

1. Councilman Scott started off the conversation telling me that he saw a bulldozer at the site of the American Legion building on his way home; to which I corrected and said, "the DAV house", and he said Yes. I informed him, "Yes, that the DAV house was set to be demolished tomorrow (Tuesday)". He then asked if that was coming out of the funds for the stadium and I informed him it wasn't. There were funds being utilized in the condemnation funds and there was money in Parks budget that were not being utilized that it would be coming out of. He said okay.
    a. *That was discussed when Manager Scott was here as to how that how would be taken down.*
    b. *I was informed today that the gas was not turned off, so it is set to be done tomorrow, Wednesday*
2. Councilman Scott then asked me if there needed to be any rezoning done for the project. My response to him was "No, it's a recreation project, that property is already properly zoned"
3. Councilman Scott then asked me about the brick house and did it need to be torn down. My response to that was "at this time, all that has been approved is the purchase of the house, which closed on Thursday, but there has been no approval of tearing it down and that is not in the plan at this time."

a. For further clarification, to reference his email, there are two indoor practice facilities on the conceptual drawings, but these are conceptual and not something that the Town is looking at doing. The Tobs have discussed building a practice facility for themselves and that was a proposed site for those facilities

4. Councilman Scott then asked about rezoning on the brick house, and I said we likely were going to have to rezone those sites, but again, there is no build-out on there at the time.
5. Councilman Scott then only asked me about the walking trail and the need to be moved and I informed him that it would have to be moved. He furthered questioned if that had been discussed with council and I said that it had.
   a. Yes, the fit field also has to be moved, which has also been previously discussed. We have had this conversation with the Connect NC team and there are no issues with us moving the trail or the equipment. There is also no issue with future funding from them. I have added Gary to this email if you need confirmation from him.
   b. The inclusion playground is not being moved or hindered by this project at all. I'm not sure where that information was obtained, but the only thing showing on the rendering is the use of the existing parking.
6. At that point, Councilman Scott said thank you and hung up.

I hope this email does not come across as abrasive or misconstrued; however, I want to ensure that the correct narrative is being communicated. At no time have I been anything other than transparent with Council. When I am asked a question, I provide the information available to me. However, I am not a mind reader and can only respond to the questions that are presented.

If there is a concern or something that is being indirectly referenced, I would encourage you to address it directly with me. I will always provide a direct and honest response in return. If I don't have the information at that time, I have always said that and have gotten that information back to any of you in a prompt manner.

To further address Councilman Scott's comments, the Council approved a contract with Muter Construction on November 18, 2025, authorizing entry into construction for an amount not to exceed $6,000,000. At this time, no construction activity has begun on the property.

The discussion regarding removal of the DAV house originated during earlier planning stages when the baseball stadium was being considered for placement at the Community Park. At that time, it was also discussed that we would work to avoid including that cost as part of the stadium project funding.

Until approximately two weeks ago, staff and Muter were still working through the final renderings and associated pricing for the stadium. That is the reason Council has not yet seen the final proposal presented in an open meeting. However, the item has been placed on the March 17 agenda so that the final product can be presented to Council, along with what can be delivered within the $6,000,000 that has already been appropriated for the project. Our goal has been to ensure that we present a complete and accurate plan, while also moving as efficiently as possible to provide a playable surface for the Tobs. This has also been my statement every time I have been asked about it by council.

In reference to the suggestion of a public hearing, I am not aware of a requirement that would necessitate one at this time. I have attached a list of statutory public hearing requirements, and this project does not appear to fall under any of those provisions. The construction contract has already been approved by Council, and a public hearing was not required prior to that approval. Of course, I serve at the pleasure of the Council, and if the Council chooses to hold a public hearing, staff will ensure it is properly noticed and scheduled. At this time, however, there is no General Statute that mandates such a hearing.

As always, if anyone has questions or would like to discuss this further, I am happy to make myself available.

Thank You,

Kimberly T. Pickett, MPA
Interim Town Manager
Town of Smithfield
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O – [redacted]
F – [redacted]

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Travis Scott

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[redacted]com , Gary Johnson , Kimberly Pickett

Tue, Mar 10, 2026, 5:06 PM

Are you calling me a liar ? You can please stop with the computer generated emails. I will not get into a debate via email never have never will. However the questions I presented are valid I know this council does not understand the "real" cost this is going to be no one has ever mentioned the grant refunds or a true cost to "move" said items perhaps you can answer those questions. We also have never approved funds to take this house down? Are we going to allow alcohol to be consumed in all our parks ?
We need transparency as I realize this is not your fault, but I am a bit taken back at your bias .
Let please come to the table to truly understand our option after all this was the last place selected or third pick for said entertainment venue But a tractor shows up trees are painted I will ask questions and continue .

Sincerely
Travis Scott

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3 Emails