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A COMMUNITY OF TRAILS: SPENCER'S VISION FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

The Town of Spencer prides itself

as Rowan County's Original Gateway. The planned Yadkin River Trailhead's proximity to the historic Trading Ford establishes Spencer as the only municipality in Rowan County with frontage on the Yadkin River. The Town seeks to leverage this unique qualification by capitalizing on the presence of the Stanback Educational Forest, future extensions of the Grants Creek Greenway from Salisbury, a proposed Town Park to be situated in the town's center, the existence of the largest contiguous historic district in North Carolina, and the approximately 160,000 annual visitors to the North Carolina Transportation Museum. The Town's proposed Greenway will create connections to all of these resources for both community members and visitors.

All of these elements make a strong case for a community that values outdoor recreation, preservation of cultural resources and the conservation of land and water, while acknowledging the importance of tourism as a regional economic development strategy. The development of the Yadkin River Trailhead is pivotal to efforts to solidify Spencer's role as a clean, green and welcoming community for citizens, visitors, and future residents. The Yadkin River Trailhead and Greenway Connector is a critical nexus between the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT), the Piedmont Legacy Trail, the Yadkin River State Trail and the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail. The trailhead establishes a primary destination and access point for the use of all of these trails. The trailhead is located adjacent to the Trading Ford Historic District, which is one of the most important cultural sites in North Carolina. Dr. Kevin Cherry, former NC Deputy Secretary of Cultural Resources, once described the river crossing's significance by saying, "centrally located, the Trading Ford is where eastern North Carolina meets western North Carolina."

The historical significance of the location, over millennia, cannot be overstated, serving as a pre-historic crossroads for Native American migration and the nearby village of Quora, a center of civilization and commerce visited by Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th Century, a pathway for the English explorer, John Lawson, who encamped briefly near the site in 1701, a strategic river crossing for European settlers to the Yadkin Valley, a tactical escape route for General Nathaniel Greene as he evaded Cornwallis on his race to Guilford Courthouse, and the site of Fort York, an important Civil War encampment where a battle was waged, just days after the surrender of the Confederacy at Appomattox.

The Yadkin River Trailhead will connect to the proposed "Third Street Greenway," which has been slated for $3.5M in funding from the NCDOT and is listed as project EB-5861. The proposed greenway will connect the Wil-Cox Bridge to downtown Spencer, with walking loops extending through the Spencer Historic District, a proposed access on Third Street at Grants Creek, routes to Library Park, a proposed downtown park, the NC Transportation Museum, and the Stanback Educational Forest. A link to the Salisbury Greenway will ultimately tie the communities together with an impressive trail network.

The Yadkin River Trailhead and Greenway Connector is an important connection to the Spencer Greenway and a larger trail network that links multiple neighborhoods and community landmarks. The compact geography of the town will facilitate short walks (5 to 10 minutes) to the greenway by most community residents. The trail system would be open and accessible by all residents at all times. The committed goal of the Town of Spencer is to build the trail network to promote healthy and affordable activities for community residents in a manner that is inclusive, accommodating and rewarding.

The Yadkin River Trailhead and Greenway Connector is scheduled to begin construction in the Spring of 2022. The surplus right of way has been secured and is owned by the Town of Spencer. Concept drawings have been created and construction drawings are underway. The overall budget for the project is $558,000. Efforts to secure funds from individual donors and philanthropic organizations (Friends of Rowan, Robertson Family Foundation, Carolina Thread Trail) have rendered over $420,000 in cash-on-hand. A Recreational Trail Program grant application requesting $100,000 has been submitted. The town will seek additional funding or phase the project to address any residual "gap" in project funding. Local philanthropic organizations have also been contacted for funding requests.

The Yadkin River Trailhead and Greenway Connector kicks off an immense opportunity for trail advocacy and development in Spencer, Rowan County, and the greater Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) Region. The timing is perfectly aligned with the efforts to raise brand awareness of the CTT. The connection to the Piedmont Legacy Trail, the Yadkin River State Trail and the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail is profoundly important in accomplishing the CTT's mission to create connections within our region and, in this very unique case, a greater geography. The buildout of the trailhead and trail system has the potential to establish a gateway to the CTT with an "order of magnitude" on par with the Virginia Creeper Trail, the New River State Trail and the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

FROM THE MAYOR

Getting Involved in Your Community

by Jonathan Williams

Citizen input is an essential part of shaping Spencer's future. This is one of the ways each of us as Spencer residents can get more involved in our community. There are many ways to let your voice be heard and help your elected and appointed boards and town staff identify community needs, concerns, preferences, and projects.

Attending meetings of your elected and appointed boards is a great way to become informed on the many things taking place in your community (please refer to the monthly meeting information on this page). Public comment is held at our Board of Aldermen regular meetings each month. Also, our appointed boards are frequently looking for new members. Applications for these boards can be found on our website: ***spencernc.gov/town-government-and-services/appointed-boards-and-commissions/***

Our Town website ***(spencernc.gov)*** is also a great way to get information and provide us with feedback. Through our website, you can report issues, file code complaints, access permit and development applications, and ask questions. We've also launched a new tool called TextMyGov, where you can use your mobile devices to text for information and report issues. See the Manager's Notes column inside this issue for more information on these features. If you are not quite finding what you are looking for on our website, please use our Contact Us form at ***spencernc.gov/***contact to submit your question or concern, or ***give our staff a call at 704-633-2231.***

In January, we held a series of community input sessions for our parks and recreation master plan and are now planning to follow up with a community input forum on Wednesday, March 30. Please visit spencernc.gov for details on this event.

Of course, our Town Manager and staff join the Board members and me in welcoming your input. We appreciate your involvement in continuing to make Spencer a great place to live, work, and play. Lately, I've been amazed by the number of individuals and groups stepping up in our community to get involved, start new initiatives, and make this town a better place. One example is the "Friends of 8th Street Ballpark" group organized by Rusty Miller. This volunteer group is working to refresh our beloved 8th Street Ballpark. You can find out how to get involved, or donate to the cause, by contacting ***friendsof8thstballpark@gmail.com or 704-313-1500.***

For those who have rallied together and gotten involved, thank you! For those who have yet to get involved, the time is now. This is our moment to shape our future, and we look forward to having you as a part of the Spencer team.

Mayor Jonathan Williams

Monthly Meetings at Town Hall

Board of Aldermen
(also available via livestream: bit.ly/spencernclive)

Pre-Agenda Meetings
5:30 pm on the Thursday the week before BOA regular meetings

Regular Meetings
6:00 pm on the second Tuesday of each month

Appointed Boards
(no meetings in July or December)

Planning Board / Zoning Board of Adjustment
7:00 pm on the second Monday of each month

Historic Preservation Commission
7:00 pm on the third Monday of each month

Community Appearance Commission
7:00 pm on the fourth Monday of each month

Mayor
Jonathan Williams

Board of Aldermen
Patti Secreast (Mayor Pro-Tem)
Andrew Howe
Steve Miller
Sam Morgan
Rashid Muhammad
Pat Sledge

Town Manager
Peter Franzese

Staff Leadership Team
Stacy Craven, Town Clerk
Steve Blount, Planning and Zoning
Mike File, Acting Police Chief
Kyle Harris, Planner
Christie Hutchinson; Act. Finance Officer
Michael Lanning, Fire Chief
Joe Morris, Special Projects Planner
Joel Taylor, Public Works Director

Contact Us
spencernc.gov
Text us: 704-870-0720
Town Hall: 704-633-2231
Fire: 704-637-6135
Library: 704-636-9072
Police 704-633-3574
Public Works: 704-633-5331
Call 911 for Emergencies
Rowan Co Public Safety
Non-Emergency line: 704-216-8500

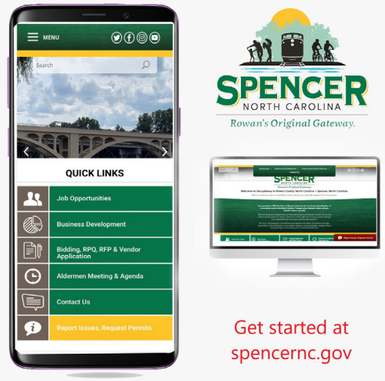
MANAGER'S NOTES

Help us Help You

by Peter Franzese

The Town's mission statement is a helpful, yet concise reminder of what we're all about: ***At the Town of Spencer, we serve with effective, responsive, and collaborative teamwork to be a model community.***

Recently, we launched a suite of helpful tools to carry out this mission statement in a better way. The first is our new portal at spencernc.gov, where you can report potential code enforcement violations, general concerns or issues, or request a variety of permits from our planning staff. On a desktop browser, look for a red button on the bottom right corner of our home page. On a mobile device, look for a button in our quick links menu. You can also access the portal directly at ***spencernc.gov/report-issues-request-permits.***



Get started at spencernc.gov

A second tool is called TextMyGov. By sending a text message to ***704-870-0720,*** you can report a variety of issues to us, or find the answer to many questions you may have.

To get started, you can ***text Hi to 704-870-0720*** and our system will walk you through the steps. We're committed improving the services we provide, and these tools enhance how we carry out our mission in a few ways.

Effective: these new platforms help us serve you better and direct our resources where they are needed.

Responsive: timely information received through these platforms helps us quickly address issues, and allows our customers (you!) to get feedback along the way.

Collaborative: you can partner with us to report information, ask questions, or provide other feedback through these enhancements. These tools are designed to be simple so you do not have to worry about finding the right person or department. We value hearing from you promptly so we can address community needs, repairs, or other issues.

Of course, we're still here to help you in-person at Town Hall and our other facilities, or on the phone at ***704-633-2231.*** Let us know what you think about these new tools, or if you have ideas we should incorporate into them.

SPENCER CARES - COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

Second annual event returning on May, date TBD

This year's focus will be on exterior de-cluttering, minor repairs, and other spruce ups.

Go to spencernc.gov for details on how to request assistance or how to volunteer.

CHECKING IN AT THE SPENCER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Fabulous Fifties and More

Spencer Public Library continues to have a variety of activities and events for all ages. In February, Destiny Stone performed at our library for a group of NRHS theatre arts students. The hour-long program was a combination of music, storytelling, and open discussion on a variety of themes in celebration of Black History Month. Destiny is a local musician who is originally from Mississippi, an alumna of Catawba College, and a current music teacher at Knox Middle School. On March 23 at 3:00 p.m., join our Dr. Seuss' Birthday Party for children with stories, crafts and the making of oobleck. Kim Sheeks, retired first-grade teacher will be our special guest. Space is limited so please contact the library for more info. The annual outdoor spring festival event will be hosted on May 7 from 3:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Our theme is the Fabulous Fifties, featuring Elvis impersonator Chris Ellis, and our local Salisbury Swing Band! Slice's Diggity Dogs owned by Scott Vanderslice, former NRHS coach, will sell hot dogs and all the fixings so bring a lawn chair or a blanket to eat while you enjoy the event. Plans are underway to partner with a local church to offer many more activities for children and adults. There will be puppet shows, face-painting, lawn games, and a bouncy house. The grand finale will be a hula hoop performer with LED lights at 7:00 p.m. Admission is FREE so please come out and enjoy the beautiful day with your friends and neighbors.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Have news to share for an upcoming issue? *Contact Town Clerk Stacy Craven at scraven@spencernc.gov or 704-633-2231.*

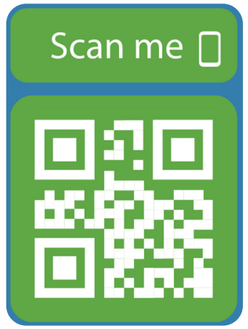
Port-A-Pit Fundraiser coming May 3

The Costa Rica Mission of Central Methodist Church will be sponsoring their Port-A-Pit fundraiser on Tuesday, May 3rd. Proceeds from this project funds the construction of churches and schools in rural Costa Rica. The cost of a complete meal is $12.00, which consist of: ½ chicken, slaw, baked beans, roll, and a dessert. Please support our mission. *Call 704-636-4101*. Thank you!

Spring Mulch give-away on May 7

On Saturday, May 7, Public Works staff will make free mulch available to Town residents. Pick up will be available at the Public Works Facility on Sowers Ferry Road, or for $10 it can be delivered to your property within Town limits. First come, first-served. *Call 704-633-5331 for more information.*

Rowan Moves: new county-wide wellness program



Rowan moves is a county-wide initiative that is focused on improving the health and lives of all Rowan County residents. Would you like to be a part of a county-wide initiative focused to improve the health and lives of all residents? There are two sides to Rowan Moves. There's the exercise side which focuses on promoting health and wellness through physical activity…then there's the Rowan side, which is about discovering a new routine and exploring a new part of the community. To register and get started, scan the QR code or log on to rowanmoves.com where you can track your steps and physical activity, and find a mapping feature to see what kind of activities your community offers. Join the initiative to try to log two billion steps for 2022!

Get ready for City Nature Challenge 2022

Down for a challenge?? Rowan County communities are once again joining the City Nature Challenge (CNC) which motivates people around the World to find and document wildlife in and around their cities, using biodiversity recording apps and platforms like iNaturalist. This is an annual 4-day global urban bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see not only what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal, but also which city can gather the most observations of nature, find the most species, & engage the most people in the event. Last year's event had over 1.2 million observations of nature in the four days of the challenge. The 2022 City Nature Challenge (April 29th- May 2nd) is gearing up to be the biggest one yet! Several training sessions are planned at local parks on Saturdays in March and April, so you can learn how to use the iNaturalist app, meet new people, and participate in the challenge. Just bring your phone or a camera. For more information contact Madison Kluge at *704-638-2098 or Madison.kluge@salisburync.gov.*

A LITTLE TOWN THAT HAS IT ALL

by Steve Blount, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Paris has its Eiffel Tower, Salisbury now has its beautiful Bell Tower Green, and Greenville, SC has its River Park. Most towns large and small have something they are known for. Spencer is thought by many only as a place that has a Transportation Museum, but we have so much more going on in our little town. The Stanback Educational Forest (also known as Spencer Woods) continues to grow. Our new Town Hall and Police Department is open for business in the Park Plaza. A new urban park in front of Town Hall is in the planning stages. Creation of an exciting new trailhead on the Rowan County side of the Wilcox Bridge is moving forward quickly. An urban greenway starting at Grants Creek, stretching up Third Street, and then running north on Salisbury Avenue is in the works. And planning for repaving and restriping of Salisbury Ave. from the Yadkin River through Spencer to 17th St., offering an opportunity to add bike lanes and pedestrian crossings, is underway. The Town is in the middle of updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan and will begin a Comprehensive Land Use Planning process soon. New homes are being built on infill sites in older neighborhoods and greenfield sites are being subdivided for new development. We receive calls daily from people looking to buy and develop property in and around Spencer for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Regional growth north from Charlotte and for the first time south from the now booming Piedmont-Triad area means new growth is coming to town soon. It's an exciting time to live in Spencer and an exciting time for me to serve you as the Town's new Planning, Zoning & Subdivision Administrator, a fancy name for the Town Planner. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. *You can reach me at 704-633-2231 ext. 28.*

Salisbury-Rowan Utilities updates bill payment options

The City of Salisbury is making a change to its Salisbury-Rowan Utilities' bill payment system that affects 1 percent of its customers. As the city moves towards reducing its carbon footprint and operating more efficiently, six utility-bill drop box locations in Rowan County – Salisbury (2), China Grove, Rockwell, Granite Quarry and Spencer -- will be removed on Friday, April 1. Some customers already have been alerted to the upcoming transition.

"We understand change can be scary for some of our customers, particularly when it comes to their finances and especially in the midst of the pandemic," said Wade Furches, Salisbury's finance director. "We can't stress enough the convenience of not having to leave the house to pay your utility bill by using our free, secure online bill pay portal. U.S. mail and the drop box at the Salisbury Customer Service Center will remain as additional options for bill pay. We are committed to helping every customer who needs assistance with the transition."

Removal of the drop boxes will save gas and staff member time from driving daily to check drop boxes used by an average of 20 customers, per location, per month.

The Customer Service Center remains open for in-person payments, but hours could vary depending on COVID protocols. Customer service representatives are available at (704) 638-5300 to assist customers with the transition. For more information on bill payment options, visit ***salisburync.gov/CustomerService.***