



# Town of Smithfield

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

### **March 14, 2018 MEETING MINUTES**

PRESENT: Robert Leach, Katie Law, Ben Caisse, Jennifer Blanchette and Travis Worthley  
ABSENT: None  
OTHERS: Michael Iannotti, Esquire and Gloria Nerney

The March 14, 2018 meeting of the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission opened at 6:26 p.m.

#### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND HEALTH NOTIFICATION**

Chairman, Robert Leach gave the Emergency Evacuation and Health Notification.

#### **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 21, 2018**

*Katie made a motion, seconded by Travis, to approve the amended February 21, 2018 meeting minutes. The vote on the motion was unanimous and the motion passed.*

#### **OLD BUSINESS – Consider, Discuss and Act upon the following matters:**

- Any needs SHPC member Ben Caisse may have for school programs involving mill history.

Ben updated the commission with the progress he has made, advising that the lesson plan is coming together. Ben stated that he spoke with Principal, Julie Dorsey at Laperche Elementary School to discuss his ideas. She advised that they have a fieldtrip planned to Smith Applebee House and Ben stated that he would try to do the lessons prior to the fieldtrip. Ms. Dorsey will send him contact information. Robert stated that he would contact the Observer when Ben is ready.

Ben stated that he would like to overlay the current map of Esmond and the Old Mill Village Map to show the changes as it would be a good way to connect with kids. Katie will look for old Village Maps and offered to work on this project for Ben. Ben advised that he picked up some shovels at a flea market and Katie stated she has one that says Esmond Mills that he can borrow. Ben stated he has an activity for students to make wool into thread and a weaving project that children would be able to do. Katie advised that she may have a mini loam. Katie stated that she contacted Jeff Booker regarding borrowing spinning wheels and he has a few that Ben can use. Katie advised that one spinning wheel is for flax and the other is for wool. Robert brought in a wool carding board which predates 1850 for Ben. Robert stated that he also has some Early American Life Magazines that may be helpful that he would bring in. Ben stated that he would continue to look for additional things that correspond with the lesson plan.

- Update on Bill H7425 to disband the Smithfield Land Trust and the 3/6/2018 Town Council Meeting with public hearing on the above mentioned Bill.

Robert stated that he and Katie attended the Town Council Meeting on March 06, 2018 to speak in favor of the Smithfield Land Trust. He advised that they elected not to write a letter, but to stand up and refute Bill H7425 submitted by Senators Greg Constantino and Thomas Winfield to disband the Smithfield Land Trust. Robert stated that by attending the meeting it would have a greater impact.

Katie stated that the Town did not support the bill and that Town Manager, Randy Rossi sent a letter on behalf of the Smithfield Town Council to the Honorable Nicholas A. Mattiello, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, stating the Town's opposition to the Bill "as they were introduced without the approval of, consultation with or input from the Smithfield Town Council." The letter further request that, "the Bill be either withdrawn or summarily rejected by the House of Representatives." The Town Council proposed a motion stating that it "hereby adopts a Resolution in opposition to proposed legislation."

***\*See attached supporting documentation.***

Katie stated that if the Land Trust is dissolved, all the properties acquired by them would transfer to the Town and Robert added that there is a specific procedure by Law that would need to be followed. Katie read the criteria to dissolve the Smithfield Land Trust. Robert advised that the land could be used in anyway the Town saw fit such as to be opened up for development. Katie stated it was concerning and Robert added that It would have a chilling effect for people who donated property. Robert advised that it is ironic that Senator Winfield proposed the Bill to establish the Smithfield Land Trust.

***\*See attached supporting documentation.***

Katie stated that she spoke in support of the Smithfield Land Trust and the Town Council's decision to oppose Bill H7425. Katie read some of the comments that she made at the Town Council meeting. "This issue is about preservation. It's about the history and character of Smithfield, and what kind of Smithfield our children will know in the future. This character affects us all in ways, it is why the old families have stayed, and the reason the new ones move in. The residents of Smithfield have consistently expressed their desire for conservation throughout the years and the Land Trust has achieved this mission admirably. The residents approved a \$1.4M open space bond in 1992 and one of the greatest success indicators of this investment of money and trust is the widespread use of the over 1,000 acres conserved since the Trust's formation. The Land Trust has always conducted its conservation in a strategic fashion. Two trustees over several months carefully scaled a wall map of every open space and parcel in the town and its potential linkage. It is apolitical. The Land Trust has performed its conservation of agricultural, woodland and historic parcels for nearly twenty years without issue, working closely with every Town Council along that timeline. It does not purchase property unilaterally or operate in a vacuum. Most notably, every proposed purchase is reviewed with the Town Council who approves each acquisition."

***\*See attached supporting documentation.***

Robert suggested that Katie transfer her comments onto Town letterhead and to send it as an email attachment to Senator Stephen Archambault, John Tassoni of the Smithfield Times, The Observer and Larry Sasso. Robert stated that it should be sent on behalf of the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission and Katie should sign it as the Vice Chairwoman.

*Katie made a motion, seconded by Jenn to distribute Katie's Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission's public comments from the Smithfield Town Council meeting on March 05, 2018, to all members of the Town Council, all State Representatives and all interested parties. The vote on the motion was all in favor and the motion passed.*

Katie stated that many other people spoke in favor of the Land Trust such as Larry Sasso. Gloria Nerney and Michael Iannotti, Esquire who shared their comments that were made at the Town Council Meeting with the Commission. Katie stated that it is not known where the Bill stands at this time.

To view the March 18, 2018 Town Council video, please go to the following link.

*\*<https://vimeopro.com/Smithfieldri/meetings/video/259018426>*

Ms. Nerney stated that she is currently researching a Bill regarding the property that was donated to the Audubon Society by Jackson Despres's father. Ms. Nerney advised that Jackson Despres has stated that the abutting Land Trust land is landlocked and the Land Trust should not have purchased the Development Rights. Ms. Nerney stated that her research has found that Senator Thomas Winfield had the word "easement including in perpetuity" removed from the original Bill. She advised that in 2001 Senator John Tassoni in legislation reinstated everything that was removed, but she was not able to find the Bill where it was corrected. Ms. Nerney will contact the SHPC Recording Secretary once her research is completed.

- *SHPC Ordinance Review: Review Ordinance, Charter, Comprehensive Plan, Update on meeting with Town Solicitor.*

Robert stated that this agenda item be tabled with Chairman's comments as we have been seeking to have a conference to resolve a few matters. Robert advised that it was requested that he provide an agenda for the Town's Administrator with the Town's Solicitor because it is considered as billable time. Katie stated that she believed it was to be an informal meeting, but Robert advised that he would like to notify other Boards and Departments regarding the nature of Chapter 46.

- *106 Reviews, RIDOT Tolling Stations, Adverse Impacts on Historic Properties.*

Remove this agenda item.

- Update on Cedar Forest archeological evaluation.

This agenda item was tabled as there was no new information.

- Nominations, Considerations, Designations, Notifications, and Maintenance Concerning the Smithfield Historical Inventory.

- *H.I. Designation Added to Town Properties*

Jenn stated that she is still reviewing the list. Jenn noted that it is not user friendly as the locations are not categorized together and Katie agreed that it is very confusing and it would be easier if the properties were listed together so that they could be researched together. Katie will forward her an excel program which is easier to use as the Town's website is a PDF format. Robert stated that some things are not cataloged, but he would also send her a list that she may find helpful. Robert advised that he would be available to answer any questions that she may have.

Jennifer is working on an historic home application for a plaque.

- Properties: (Consider, Discuss and Act upon the following).

*East Smithfield Neighborhood Center* – Items for discussion include: RGB Report, ESNC 2/16/18 meeting on site with Councilman LaGreca and Councilwoman Cavanagh, ESNC funding in upcoming proposed Town Budget, Roof leak, Code violation solutions and repairs necessary to open ESNC and efforts made regarding the above.

Robert stated that there he received notification from the Town's Building Official that the roofing contractor wasn't qualified to do the shingle repair for the ESNC roof leak. Robert advised that he researched this himself and it doesn't have to be a commercial roofer. Robert stated that Atlantic Contractor is a commercial contractor and would be qualified. Robert requested that the State of RI contact the Town Manager and Building Official regarding the qualifications. Robert states that he hopes it was resolved, but he and Katie were concerned that the leaks were not addressed properly. Katie stated that DPW maintenance patched the roof and noted that the shingles are a different color. Katie stated that at the February 16, 2018 meeting Al LaGreca stated that he wanted the roof repaired yesterday. Robert stated that the SHPC is the authority of historic preservation in our community and is disappointed that our opinion is not sought out. Katie stated that it was her opinion that this matter could be resolved more simply.

Robert stated that he needs to submit a budget proposal for the repairs and renovations needed to open the ESNC. Robert advised that an estimated amount should be submitted and that it can later be justified as this is a time sensitive matter. Katie advised that further meetings of the ESNC Sub-Committee are on hold pending comments on the second RGB Draft Report from other Committee, but only Robert and I have commented to date. Katie stated that she is concerned because she does not know when the deadline is to submit the budget, but will follow up on it.

Robert asked for a meeting with the Town Manager, Randy Rossi, but the response he received was a meeting is being scheduled with the Ad-Hoc Board. Robert advised that he wanted himself and Katie to meet specifically with Randy as Chair and Vice Chair of the SHPC and not as Committee Members of the Ad Hoc Board. Robert stated that he would continue to follow up on the matter.

**NEW BUSINESS – Consider and act upon the following matters:**

- *Community Report Card book by NHS for members to review:* Discuss the material and possible benefit for workshop with various Boards/Commissions.

This agenda item was tabled.

- Central Falls City Vault – determination of damage to Smithfield documents, evaluation of remedy performed by Vermont Restoration Company, uncatalogued items.

Robert advised that the Central Falls City Vault had a flood and many documents were either destroyed or unsalvageable. Robert stated that he was able to photograph some things before the flood. Katie advised that documents from 1700 - 1800 small pox epidemic were stored there as well as a lot of older Smithfield documents. Robert stated that damaged documents were sent to Vermont Restoration Company to be repaired.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Katie stated that there is a Bill sponsored by Justin Price & Raymond Wolf to demolish outhouse which are historic structures. Katie suggested that the Committee research the Bill and will send the committee the link to review the article. Katie questioned if the outhouses had to be in use or just in existence. Robert added that it should be proved scientifically and if it is a maintenance issue, to institute the proper use or a fine could be imposed for improper use. Katie will review the Bill before the commission sends a letter of opposition.

Katie stated that she is presenting on March 26, 2018 at the Center for Reconciliation at the Episcopal Diocese about the history of slavery in New England. Katie advised that she would be like to know more about slavery in Smithfield and to figure out where the slaves are buried. Ben stated that they are probably buried in unmarked graves. Robert advised that Richard Younkin from Narragansett wrote a book about slavery in Smithfield. Katie stated that she would like to research the history of slavery and the history of the Brown family.

Robert stated that he and Katie have come into possession of early Smithfield documents regarding the Brown Family. Robert stated that Jim Ignasher has been wonderful to work with and has been very helpful.

*Katie made a motion, seconded by Ben, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. The vote on the motion was unanimous and the motion carried.*

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Gilmore  
Recording Secretary

February \_\_\_, 2018

Hon. Nicholas A. Mattiello  
Speaker of the House  
Rhode Island House of Representatives  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Proposed Legislation, H-7240 and H-7425

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Enclosed please find two Resolutions from the Town of Smithfield Town Council stating the Town's opposition to the above-referenced bills relating only to the Town of Smithfield that were introduced without the approval of, consultation with or input from the Smithfield Town Council. The Council is requesting that the two bills be either withdrawn or summarily rejected by the House of Representatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

RANDY R. ROSSI  
Town Manager

Enclosures

cc: Smithfield Town Council  
Smithfield Town Clerk  
Members of the Town of Smithfield General Assembly Delegation  
All members of the Honorable Rhode Island House of Representatives

Proposed Motion:

That the Smithfield Town Council hereby adopts a Resolution in opposition to proposed legislation 2018 – H 7240 An Act Relating to Town and Cities – Town of Smithfield – Business Registration Fee.

**THE TOWN OF SMITHFIELD  
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

**IN OPPOSITION TO HOUSE BILL H-7425 RELATING TO  
THE SMITHFIELD LAND TRUST**

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF SMITHFIELD, RHODE ISLAND AS FOLLOWS:

**WHEREAS**, the Town Council of the Town of Smithfield has learned, after the fact, of the introduction of House Bill H-7425, Legislation Relating to the Smithfield Land Trust (Town of Smithfield) (a copy of which is appended hereto);and

**WHEREAS**, House Bill H-7425 seeks to disband and eliminate the Town of Smithfield Land Trust in its entirety; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town Council of the Town of Smithfield did not request the introduction of House Bill H-7425, was not consulted prior to its introduction and did not approve its introduction;

**WHEREAS**, the effects of eliminating the Smithfield Land Trust have NOT been the subject of any study or evaluation by the either the Town or the sponsors of the Bill who did not seek Town input prior to introducing it; and

**WHEREAS**, it is currently unknown what the effects on the Town of Smithfield will be if the Land Trust is eliminated or how the functions performed by the Land Trust will be handled because the sponsors of the Bill did not involve the Town of Smithfield in this matter or undertake to request Town input on it; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Smithfield **does not support H-7425** and wishes the Land Trust to continue operation and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Smithfield Town Council strongly **OPPOSES** H-7425 in its entirety;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Town Manager be instructed to forward a true copy of this **Resolution in opposition to House Bill H-7425** to Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello, Smithfield's General Assembly delegation and all

members of the House of Representatives with a request that House Bill H-7425 be either withdrawn or summarily rejected.

**PASSED:** February 20, 2018

**APPROVED:**

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Paul M. Santucci, President  
Smithfield Town Council

**ATTEST:**

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Carol A. Aquilante, CMC  
Town Clerk

2018 -- H 7425

LC003111

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2018

A N A C T

RELATING TO THE SMITHFIELD LAND TRUST

Introduced By: Representatives Winfield, and Costantino

Date Introduced: February 02, 2018

Referred To: House Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 174 of the Public Laws of 1999, entitled "An Act Establishing the  
2 Smithfield Land Trust," is repealed in its entirety.

3           ~~SECTION 1. The town council of the town of Smithfield (hereafter called the town) is~~  
4 ~~hereby authorized to establish the Smithfield land trust (hereafter called the trust), a body politic~~  
5 ~~and corporate and a public instrumentality. The trust shall have the authority to acquire, hold, and~~  
6 ~~manage real property and interests therein including development rights and easements situated in~~  
7 ~~the town consisting of open, residential, agricultural, recreational historical or littoral property,~~  
8 ~~including existing and future well fields and aquifer recharge areas, fresh water marshes, water~~  
9 ~~bodies, and adjoining uplands, wildlife habitats, land or buildings providing access to or views of~~  
10 ~~water bodies, or for bicycling and hiking paths, or for future public recreational use, and land for~~  
11 ~~agricultural use or air space thereof. With the exception of property acquired for public historical~~  
12 ~~preservation, research and/or educational, public access or recreational purposes, the trust shall~~  
13 ~~hold all property or development rights as open space or for agricultural uses or for water~~  
14 ~~protection purposes or for public access or to prevent the accelerated residential or commercial~~  
15 ~~development thereof in perpetuity, as the trustees may determine. However, whereas certain~~  
16 ~~properties may not have continuing value as open space or conservation lands, the trust may~~  
17 ~~dispose of these properties as it sees fit, providing that any restrictions on the property are taken~~  
18 ~~into account.~~

19           ~~SECTION 2. The purpose of the trust shall be to preserve open space, protect wetlands;~~

1 water bodies, ground and surface water resources, farm lands, historical or cultural places of  
2 interest, scenic views, unusual, exceptional or exemplary natural habitats, provide opportunities  
3 for research and education on natural resources on land trust held properties and to secure for the  
4 town the goals and objectives established in the comprehensive plan.

5 SECTION 3. The trust shall be administered by five (5) trustees to be appointed by the  
6 town council pursuant to chapter 35 of title 18 of the general laws. The trustees who are first  
7 appointed shall be designated to serve for terms of one (1) one year, one (1) two years, one (1)  
8 three years, one (1) four years and one (1) five years, respectfully. Thereafter, trustees shall be  
9 appointed as aforesaid for a term of office of five (5) years, except that all vacancies occurring  
10 during a term shall be filled for the unexpired term. The town council shall appoint persons to  
11 serve on the land trust, whom are resident electors, on a non-partisan basis. Said members shall  
12 serve without compensation and shall hold office until their successors have been named. All  
13 trustees shall be subject to the Rhode Island code of ethics, contained in chapter 14 of title 36 of  
14 the general laws.

15 SECTION 4. The trustees shall annually elect a chairman, vice chairman and treasurer  
16 from their members and shall appoint a secretary who may either be a member or a non-member.  
17 Copies of all meeting minutes shall be submitted to the town council for distribution and shall be  
18 filed with the town clerk and become a permanent record of the town. The term of office of the  
19 chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer and secretary, unless otherwise prescribed by the town  
20 council shall be for the calendar year.

21 SECTION 5. The trustees shall adopt rules and regulations governing the conduct of trust  
22 affairs, including the acquisition and management of its holdings, not inconsistent with the  
23 provisions of this act. All rules and regulations of the trust are subject to the approval of the town  
24 council. Decisions of the trustees shall be by majority of those present and voting, excepting in  
25 decisions of the acquisition of land, easements, rights of way and other uses referred to in section  
26 1 of this trust, which must be by majority vote of all trustees and no business shall be transacted  
27 without four (4) trustees present with three (3) voting. The trustees shall prepare an operating  
28 budget to be sent to the town manager to be incorporated into the town manager's budget for town  
29 council review and consideration. Upon adoption of the budget it will be presented to the  
30 financial town meeting for final approval. The funds authorized in this budget will be paid by the  
31 town treasurer in accordance with the accepted accounting procedures that are in place in the  
32 town at that time. All funds that are released for land acquisition referred to in section 1 of this  
33 trust, can only be released after approval by the town council. The trustees shall keep accurate  
34 records of their meetings and actions and shall file an annual report which shall be printed in the

1 annual town report. All meetings of the trusts shall be open to the public in accordance with the  
2 Rhode Island open meetings act, chapter 46 of title 42 of the general laws.

3 SECTION 6. The trust shall have the responsibility to recommend to the town council to:

4 (a) Purchase, receive by gift, or otherwise acquire fee simple or lesser interests in real  
5 property, including development rights as defined in section 42-82-2 of the general laws, or any  
6 interest in real property consistent with purposes of this act, including other development rights  
7 on easements of any kind whatsoever;

8 (b) Accept gifts, grants or loans of funds or resources or services from any source, public  
9 or private, and comply, subject to the provisions of this act, with any terms and conditions thereof  
10 within the limits of its available funds;

11 (c) Accept from state and/or federal agencies, loans or grants or resources for use in  
12 carrying out the trust's purposes and enter into agreements with such agencies respecting any such  
13 loans or grants within the limits of its available funds;

14 (d) Employ counsel, auditors, engineers, surveyors, appraisers, private consultants,  
15 advisers, secretaries or other personnel needed to perform its duties within the limits of its  
16 available funds;

17 (e) Administer and manage land and interests in land held by it in a manner which allows  
18 public use and enjoyment consistent with the natural and scenic resources thereof, including  
19 conveyance of any such land or interests in land to, and contracts with, nonprofit organizations,  
20 provided such land shall continue to be used in a manner consistent with the purposes of this act  
21 and with the terms of any grant or devise by which such land was acquired by the trust;

22 (f) Dispose of all or any portion of its real property or interests therein held by it,  
23 whenever in the opinion of the trustees said lands or properties have become unsuitable or have  
24 ceased to be used for the purpose set forth in this act. Such disposition shall be made only by a  
25 vote of the trustees in which at least four (4) members vote in favor of such a disposition and  
26 further only after having been approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote at an annual or special financial  
27 town meeting of the town. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize the sale,  
28 lease or conveyance of lands or improvements held by the trust as part of a charitable trust or  
29 acquired by gift or devise for the public use, whether or not such gift or devise is subject to a  
30 condition subsequent or reverter;

31 (g) Otherwise do all things necessary for the performance of its duties, the fulfillment of  
32 its obligation and the conduct of its business.

33 SECTION 7. All funds collected by virtue of the town's bonding authority for the purpose  
34 of financing the activities of the trust under this act shall be deposited in a reserve fund by the

1 town treasurer. Additional moneys or other liquid assets received as voluntary contributions;  
2 grants or loans, funds appropriated to the trust by vote of the annual town meeting or special  
3 appropriation process, or proceeds from disposal of real property or interests shall be deposited  
4 into said account. All operating expenses lawfully incurred by the trust in carrying out the  
5 provisions of this act shall be evidenced by proper vouchers and shall be paid by the treasurer of  
6 the town only upon submission of invoices approved by the trust and by the town manager. The  
7 treasurer of the town shall prudently invest available assets of the funds, and all income thereon  
8 shall accrue to the fund.

9 The decision to dissolve the trust shall only result after a vote of the trustees in which at  
10 least four (4) members vote to recommend dissolution of the trust to the town council. The town  
11 council shall then hold a public hearing on the recommendation to dissolve. At the conclusion of  
12 the public hearing the town council shall vote on the matter within forty five (45) days of said  
13 hearing. Dissolution shall require three (3) affirmative votes of the town council.

14 Upon termination or dissolution of the trust, the title of all funds and other properties  
15 owned by the trust which remain after payment or making provision for payment of all bonds,  
16 notes and other obligations of the trust shall vest in the town which shall manage the lands of the  
17 dissolved trust in the same manner for which such lands were donated or purchased in the best  
18 interest of the purposes of the dissolved trust. If in the opinion of the town council said land of the  
19 dissolved trust no longer meet the purposes set forth in this act, the town may dispose of said  
20 lands upon a two thirds (2/3) affirmative vote at an annual or special financial town meeting of  
21 the town.

22 SECTION 8. The trust and all its revenues, income, and real and personal property used  
23 by the trust for furtherance of its public purposes, shall be exempt from taxation and special  
24 assessments, and the trust shall not be required to pay any tax, excise or assessment to the state or  
25 any of its political subdivisions.

26 SECTION 9. Nothing in this act shall effect the eligibility of the town to receive funds  
27 under chapter 4 of title 32 of the general laws or any other applicable state land acquisition  
28 program.

29 SECTION 10. Severability. The provisions of this act and any ordinance thereunder are  
30 severable, and if any provision thereof shall be held invalid in any circumstances such invalidity  
31 shall not affect any other provisions or circumstances. This act and any ordinance thereunder  
32 shall be construed in all respects so as to meet all constitutional requirements. In carrying out the  
33 purposes and provisions of this act and any ordinance thereunder, all steps shall be taken which  
34 are necessary to meet constitutional requirements whether or not such steps are required by

1 ~~statute.~~

2 SECTION 2. There are hereby transferred to the town council of the town of Smithfield  
3 all functions formerly performed or administered by the Smithfield Land Trust and all grants or  
4 funds, received or held by the Smithfield Land Trust.

5 SECTION 3. Upon passage of this act, the Smithfield Land Trust shall transfer to the  
6 town of Smithfield any and all interest it may have in any real or personal property.

7 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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LC003111  
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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO THE SMITHFIELD LAND TRUST

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1           This act would disband the Smithfield Land Trust and would transfer all function and real  
2 estate held by the Smithfield Land Trust to the town of Smithfield and Smithfield town council.

3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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LC003111  
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Town Council Meeting 3/6/2018

Comments by Katie Law on the Land Trust bill H7425

I am here today to support the Town Council in its decision to send a letter to Speaker of the House, Nicholas Mattiello, requesting that proposed legislation ~~H-7440~~ and H-7425 be withdrawn or summarily rejected by the House of Representatives.

At the last meeting of the Town of Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission I made a motion, seconded by Travis Worthy that the SHPC supports the good works of the Land Trust and does not support any proposed bill that would dissolve the Land Trust. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor and the motion passed.

This issue is about preservation. It's about the history and character of Smithfield, and what kind of Smithfield our children will know in the future. If I have learned anything working on the SHPC, researching historic homes, places, old Smithfield families... it is that we are all temporary stewards here. Of the land, the houses, most of our possessions will even out live us. I have followed family lines through generations while researching the historic homes of Smithfield, learning what family changed the porch, who ripped out the old growth trees, who maybe tore down a barn. What this has given me is the perspective that not only are we stewards of this place, but that often we are temporary people, making permanent decisions that can not be undone. It has long been the popular opinion of Smithfield residents that they want to preserve open space, wet lands, our view shed.. They have voted literally, and with their wallets - and because of this Smithfield has become a wonderful community full of character and rich with heritage that has allowed a decent mix of progress to creep in to keep up with the changing times. And that is how progress should work, smart development in ways that can enhance the quality of life here, offer us new things, jobs, revenue, while protecting and preserving the pieces

that make us who we are. We are spoiled here in Smithfield, surrounded by beautiful places and things.. you don't have to drive far to hit a side road with a farm, beautiful historic houses, and stone walls dotting the landscape. This character affects us all in ways many people do not often realize or think of. It is why the old families have stayed, and the reason the new ones move in. With everything I have learned I am sad to say that there used to be so much more. I have never seen the Smithfield my parents knew, or my grandparents knew, but I have heard stories of what used to be where, and things that used to be, and my first thought has always been, "wow. I wish I could have seen that." Unfortunately sometimes the changes that occur can not be undone. Occasionally somebody will come along to try and correct or manage the damage, rectify it in some way, save whatever they can, people like me, a new generation working to find the Smithfield that was and keep the Smithfield I know. How many generations of Smithfield children are going to have to spend their time running uphill, trying to repair what others before them have done?

**The residents of Smithfield have consistently expressed their desire for conservation throughout the years and the Land Trust has achieved this mission admirably.** Examples include a \$1.4M open space bond in 1992 prior to the formation of the Land Trust, an Amendment to the Town Charter in 2000 to grant 1% of the town budget budget to the Land Trust after it's formation (approximately \$12M), and \$5.1M via bond referendum in 2004. One of the greatest success indicators of this investment of money and trust is the widespread use of the over 1,000 acres conserved since the Trust's formation.

- 1) **They follow, and often lead, in modern conservation best practice.** Over the past nearly 20 years, Smithfield Trustees have both learned from leading conservation professionals across the nation and taught programs on such topics as conservation leadership, agricultural easements and estate planning at the annual RI Land & Water Conservation Summit.



It should be no surprise to any of us that a small group of developers and pro-development individuals should attack the Land Trust and use misrepresentation to besmirch their successes. In fact, it SHOULD surprise us that it's taken 19 years for this moment to arrive. The Council should be commended for recently disallowing these parties from rampantly pursuing their personal agendas within their forum, as they had for several months.