

July 16, 2025

# LEE GRANT AVENUE PROJECT

A REPORT FROM YOUR COUNCILMAN

Many have rightly asked: *Why is the new sidewalk on Lee Grant Avenue so narrow, especially given the significant public investment?* I'd like to answer that directly, and with the clarity and humility that public service requires.

Lee Grant Avenue is an unusual street: a former dirt road that organically became a connector route in the heart of Central Appomattox. Unlike the majority of our roadways, this stretch is not maintained by VDOT. Despite our efforts over the years, the Virginia Department of Transportation has consistently declined to assume responsibility for the road. Their condition for doing so: an expansion of the right-of-way by up to 15 feet, would have brought moving traffic within mere feet of homes, in some cases just yards or less from first-floor bedrooms.

The proposal to convert the street to one-way traffic was considered seriously, but we concluded it would disrupt schooltime travel, emergency response patterns, and everyday neighborhood flow. The geometry of our downtown simply doesn't allow for a tidy reroute without far-reaching ripple effects.

So, faced with a difficult choice, we opted for a compromise: maintain the street's historic character, avoid property seizures, and use the funds we had - specifically, \$600,000 in ARPA allocation - to repair and improve what we could. That included rebuilding the pavement, resetting curb lines, and replacing 900 feet of sidewalk and gutter where space allowed.

While \$600,000 in ARPA funding is not "free money" - every grant dollar still originates from the taxes of hardworking Americans, it did not come from our Town's general fund or reserves, which would have placed the full burden on just 1,800 residents. **This was a project past councils set aside for a rainy day, and when that day came, we used the lemons we were handed to make the best lemonade we could.**

We chose a narrower sidewalk because we refused to exercise eminent domain against our neighbors. Yes, the hundred-year-old Linden trees mattered. Yes, the cast iron fences are listed historic features. But more than anything, we weren't going to take people's land to widen a sidewalk. Not when that land includes front yards, gardens, and the space between a bedroom window and a passing car. We protected what was meaningful and what was right.

We preserved what we could. We improved what we could. We made way for the future by placing municipal conduit for fiber internet infrastructure. And we did so without subjecting homeowners to the blunt force of eminent domain, a process that would have cost not only money, but trust.

Some projects are measured in square feet. I ask that this one be measured in grace.

Sincerely,

**N.A. Simpson**

Member, Appomattox Town Council  
(434) 609-7014

# SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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# COUNCIL ACTIONS

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DATE	MOTION	BY	VOTE	RESULT
September 14, 2020	Adopt a Resolution of Support for the Lee Grant Avenue Smart Scale project.	N. Simpson	5-0	Motion carried.
April 23, 2024	Withdraw the Smart Scale application and authorize engineering for Lee Grant Ave and Burke St corrections.	N. Simpson	5-0	Motion carried.
September 24, 2024	Approve sidewalk improvements for Lee Grant Ave & Burke Street.	T. Garrett	6-0	Motion carried.
October 29, 2024	Use ARPA funds for the Lee Grant project construction and Hurt & Profitt fee.	T. Garrett	6-0	Motion carried.
December 18, 2024	Approval of additional items and final allocation of funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021	J. Boyce	6-0	Motion carried.

# FINANCIAL BURDEN

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<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Lee Grant/Burke Engineering	-76,174.47	<i>actual remaining on Hurt &amp; Proffitt contract</i>
Lee Grant/Burke Construction	521,600.00	<i>estimate based on bids and potential add-ons</i>
TOTAL	\$597,974.47	

\$597,974 of ARPA funds used for the Lee Grant and Burke Street Improvements

On a Motion by Mr. Boyce and seconded by Mrs. Puckette, the Council voted to allow the use of ARPA funds to purchase the following:

\$100,000 Playground equipment for the Appomattox Kiddie Park

\$100,000 Well Research

\$65,000 AI workstations (two) Mr. Simpson stated that they meet ARPA requirements.

\$300,000 toward Fire Truck for the Appomattox Volunteer Fire Department

\$32679 Camera system for the TOA facilities

Approval of additional items to, and final allocation of, funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

# TIMELINE

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## 2020: THE FIRST SMART SCALE APPLICATION

The Town of Appomattox began its effort to secure funding for the Lee Grant Avenue Improvement Project through the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Smart Scale program in mid-2020.

**July 28, 2020:** The Town Manager, Gary Shanaberger, reported that he had "participated in a conference call with the Central Virginia Transportation Technical Committee. During that meeting the Lee Grant Avenue Improvement project was voted on and endorsed by the committee."

**August 10, 2020:** The Town Manager's report noted that "Work continues on the Smart Scale VDOT application for Lee Grant Avenue. It is due on Friday, August 14, 2020. It is a very competitive process."

**September 14, 2020:** The council formalized its support, a required step for the application. A motion by Mr. N. Simpson was passed 5-0 to "adopt a Resolution of Support for the Lee Grant Avenue Smart Scale project."

**September 29, 2020:** The Town Manager confirmed, "The Smart Scale Grant application has been submitted to VDOT... We should know the status of the project in January or February 2021."

**March 3, 2021:** The Town Manager informed the Town Council via email that the Town of Appomattox did not receive an award under the Virginia Department of Transportation's 2020 Smart Scale program.

## 2023 - 2024: REAPPLICATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The project was resurrected in early 2023 and a new application was pursued, but it was ultimately withdrawn after public opposition.

**February 13, 2023:** The Town Manager's report indicated a renewed focus on the project: "He will begin retrieving the Town data for Lee Grant Avenue improvement. Mr. Elder will provide the Hurt & Proffitt study to Mr. McGhee."

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFPpM9140dM&t=3977s>

**February 27, 2024:** The effort to reapply for VDOT funding became official. Mr. Elder "led a discussion on the Smart Scale Project on Lee Grant Ave." Following this, the Council voted 5-0 to "proceed with the application for the Smart Scale Project."

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpIGeuW1tGA&t=8886s>

**April 23, 2024:** This meeting marked a major turning point. During the public comments, citizens Bryan Baine and Deana and Timothy Olsen "spoke out against widening Lee Grant Ave and the Smart Scale Project," citing concerns about yards being too close to a busy street and potential loss of property value. Following these comments, the Council took decisive action. On a motion by Mr. Simpson, the Council voted 5-0 to "**withdraw the Smart Scale application and to authorize the Public Works Director to advertise for engineering to correct the issues on Lee Grant Ave and Burke St.**"

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fED0ukdl0o>

**June 10, 2024:** A citizen, Bryan Baine, requested an update. The Interim Town Manager, Rob Fowler, "confirmed that the Smart scale plans were no longer under consideration... Hurt & Profitt is under contract, and they are currently working on the engineering plans for corrections to Lee Grant Ave and will include a portion of Burke St."

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf5GI-4xit4>

## 2024: MOVING FORWARD WITH TOWN (ARPA) FUNDING

Having withdrawn from the VDOT Smart Scale program, the Town Council moved to fund and manage the project in-house using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

**September 24, 2024:** The new, Town-led plan was approved. On a motion by Mr. Garrett, the Council voted 6-0 to "approve the sidewalk improvements for Lee Grant Ave & Burke Street as provided by Hurt & Profitt, with the 3-foot sidewalks, paving of Burke St and with ADA accommodations."

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0FC4XFitPQ>

**October 29, 2024:** The funding source was officially designated. On a motion by Mr. Garrett, the Town Council voted 6-0 to "**use ARPA funds for the Lee Grant project construction and for the fee for Hurt & Profitt for the project.**"

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lrz63KR\\_iAU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lrz63KR_iAU)

U.S. Dep't of the Interior, Nat'l Park Serv., NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM: APPOMATTOX HISTORIC DISTRICT, Form 10-900, VDHR File No.  
165-5002 (Nov. 5, 2002).

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... *Lee-Grant Avenue*, which intersects Church Street south of the tracks, has no lack of its own outstanding residential structures, many of which were likely built by the contractors C. W. Hancock and Son. Charles Thomas Moses, senator from 1935 until 1964, called the large Queen Anne house at 7 Lee-Grant Street (165-5002-0025) "Charmos," combining his first and last names. The house has undergone very few alterations to the interior or exterior since its construction in 1901.

Unique to this property are the remnants of an elaborate formal garden consisting of rows of large square columns and lattices covered in ivy. The border to the west in the front of the house was a project of Alice Goodwin Barham, who lived with the family. Caroline Babcock planted the boxwoods near the back door. The other areas of the garden more or less grew up as a friendship garden as family and friends gave the present owner plants.

Directly across from Charmos, the one-story T-shaped cottage at 6 Lee-Grant Avenue (165-5002-0023) was built in 1896 in the folk Queen Anne style so popular to the era. Each family to live there has made various alterations to the residence over the years without greatly compromising the integrity of the original design.

The two-story brick house (165-5002-0022) at the northeast corner of Lee-Grant and Burke streets is the only one of its kind in the area with hints of Craftsman and Spanish Colonial revival. Distinctive to this structure, large brick piers support robust Doric columns with exaggerated entasis on the front porch. The house also features teal terra cotta tiles on the roof.

Similar to Charmos, the house (165-5002-0021) neighboring it to the west was the second house built on **Lee-Grant Avenue (once a dirt road)** in 1900 for the Peers family. The three-bay double-pile house with turned posts, spindle frieze and decorative brackets on the porch has remained unaltered on the exterior. The front door displays the original imported beveled glass.

Built in 1909, the three-bay double-pile house (165-5002-0020) to the west of the Peers home also resembles Charmos, yet it features classical details such as Tuscan columns and modillions rather than the Queen Anne turned posts and scrolled brackets seen on the other two houses. **A cast-iron fence similar to others in town surrounds the lot.**



## Letter by Nathan Simpson to Mayor Richard Conner and Constituents

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N. A. SIMPSON  
AT-LARGE MEMBER

### TOWN OF APPOMATTOX

#### TOWN COUNCIL

TELEPHONE  
(434) 609-7014

HOME ADDRESS  
1508 CHURCH ST.  
APPOMATTOX, VA

April 23, 2024

The Hon. Richard Conner  
Mayor of the Town of Appomattox  
219 Linden Street  
Appomattox, VA 24522

Mr. Mayor,

I write today regarding a matter of pressing concern pertaining to the town-maintained portion of Lee Grant Avenue that lies between Linden and Church Streets. As you well recall, under a motion I proposed, our Council resolved to direct Town staff to tender an application for Smart-Scale funding from the Virginia Department of Transportation aimed at widening and repaving this road.

However, it is with a certain urgency that I now request this application be withdrawn.

Having accepted the invitation of several townsfolk whose homes stand to bear the brunt of this project; I walked the path of the proposed Lee Grant improvement corridor. What I witnessed compels me to assert that such an endeavor would irrevocably mar the very essence and valuation of our cherished historic district.

Notable amongst the potential casualties are various landmarks listed in our Department of the Interior Historic Resources report, including iron work fences and two witness trees, whose roots, I daresay, delve deeper into our town's history than any living soul. These silent sentinels have borne witness to Appomattox's growth, a progression that now threatens their very existence.

Though a devoted proponent of capitalist, development-friendly principles, I find myself, in this instance, most unexpectedly aligned with the preservationists. For there

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comes a time when we must pause and enumerate the treasures that define "Appomattox."

Further, I harbor reservations about the economic and legal implications of this project. The landowners have conveyed to me their resolute intent to resist any encroachment by means of eminent domain. Such a course would inevitably lead us into protracted and expensive legal skirmishes with our own citizens.

It is my conviction that our municipal resources would be better allocated to the enhancement of our existing infrastructure—specifically the sidewalk, curb, and gutter—and in devising strategies in concert with Appomattox County Public Schools to reroute school bus traffic.

Additionally, I propose the Town conduct an engineering study to explore the construction of a collector route along the southern boundary of our town, tracing Evergreen Avenue, intersecting with Church Street and continuing to Ferguson. This route would address the growing volume of through-traffic that now dominates our historic quarter.

While I am cognizant that the interests of a particular group should not unduly influence the governance of our locality, the potential detriment in this instance is so profound and the purported benefits so nebulous that we are compelled to heed the protests of those directly impacted.

I await the opportunity to deliberate on a resolution that safeguards the historic character of our Town while addressing the broader needs of our community.

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AT-LARGE MEMBER

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I trust this issue will be met with the significant study  
it duly warrants, and I look forward to our continued  
discussions.

As always, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

N.A. Simpson  
Member, Appomattox Town Council

**CC:**

The Hon. John F. Hinkle  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors  
County of Appomattox

Bobby Waddell  
Chairman, Appomattox County School Board

**Adjoining Landowners:**

Deborah And Bryan Baine  
Barbara Caldwell  
Bethany C. Garrison  
Kimberly And Kenneth Kress  
Liberty Baptist Church  
Timothy Olsen  
Dorothy And Eric Van Opstal  
Christopher Tolley