

PITT COUNTY DISTRICT 5 COMMISSIONER MARK CANNON SMITH (R)

Republican Mark Cannon Smith is a first-term incumbent seeking reelection to the Pitt County Board of Commissioners District 5 seat, which covers Winterville and parts of southern Greenville. A lifelong Pitt County resident and director of North Carolina Driving School, Inc., Smith served five terms on the Winterville Town Council, including as mayor pro tem, before narrowly winning the District 5 seat in 2022 by 583 votes. He currently serves as board chairman. Smith is a fiscal conservative who has made opposition to tax increases the centerpiece of his public career and his record in office reveals consistent votes against public services and worker protections. He faces Democrat Dennis McLawhorn in the November 3, 2026 general election. Smith has no 2026 campaign website and no identifiable social media presence. Pitt County voted for Kamala Harris in the 2024 election by roughly 6 percent but is represented in Congress by Greg Murphy, a Republican representing North Carolina's third district.

Key findings:

Smith is a first-term incumbent whose 2022 margin of victory was razor-thin, winning District 5 by only 583 votes. Smith won his seat on the County Commission in 2022 defeating Democrat Randall Martoccia 5,688 to 5,105. This year he will face Democrat Dennis McLawhorn, a Winterville sales representative, in the November general election.

Smith's record reflects a consistent pattern of prioritizing fiscal austerity over public services and worker protections. Smith was the only vote against funding the Winterville library while he served on the Town Council in 2014 and he was one of two county commissioners who voted against retaining a local contractor in December 2022 because it offered workers paid sick leave. And in 2026, Smith dismissed pleas from Department of Social Services workers for more funding for foster care workers, indicating that there was no appetite on the county board of commissioners for increased budgets.

Smith voted to install "In God We Trust" in Pitt County courtrooms and opposed removing a Confederate monument from the courthouse. Smith opposed removing a Confederate monument from the Pitt County courthouse saying "I believe that all history is important." Smith also voted in a divided 5-4 vote to install "In Good We Trust" in Pitt County courtrooms, with the installation ultimately funded by a Christian nationalist nonprofit called the US Motto Action Committee.

<u>Potential Attacks Against Smith</u>
Anti-Tax Ideologue
Too Conservative

BACKGROUND & BIO

2022: Smith won the District 5, defeating Democrat Randall Martoccia by 583 votes.

“Holloman joins District 5 Republican Mark Smith, a Winterville town councilman, who defeated Democrat Randall Martoccia 5,688 to 5,105 votes to win the seat held by Republican Mike Fitzpatrick, who did not seek re-election.” [Daily Reflector, [11/8/22](#)]

2026: Smith is currently serving as chairman of the County Board of Commissioners.

“Dennis McLawhorn, a Winterville Democrat, filed Thursday to run for the Pitt County Board of Commissioners District 5 seat occupied by Mark Smith, a Republican and the board’s current chairman.” [Daily Reflector, [12/19/25](#)]

Smith served five terms on the Winterville Town Council. “I am serving my fifth term on the Winterville Town Council, where I serve as the mayor pro-tem. I have eight years of experience on the Contentnea Metropolitan Sewer District board, which is the sewer treatment entity for Ayden, Winterville and Grifton. I am currently the chairman of the CMSD board and I have 30-plus years of business experience.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

Smith is the director of North Carolina Driving School. “I am employed as the Director of North Carolina Driving School, Inc.” [Mark C. Smith for Winterville Town Council, [accessed 6/6/26](#)]

Smith is a lifelong resident of Pitt County. “I am the best candidate for District 5 because I have a wealth of experience in serving the people of this community. I have spent my life working and living in this community, so I have a good understanding of the needs and priorities of the people that I serve. This coupled with my extensive experience in local government makes me the best candidate to represent District 5.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

Smith is married to Lisa Smith and they have five children in Pitt County Schools. “My wife is a veteran educator with 20-plus years of experience in the Pitt County Schools system, and we have raised five children in Pitt County, all of whom attend or attended Pitt County Schools.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

No campaign findings identified.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

No political contributions findings identified.

AFFORDABILITY

No findings identified.

BUDGETS & TAXES

Smith's central political identity is opposition to tax increases. "Winterville has the lowest tax rate of any municipality in Pitt County. In my five terms, I have never voted to raise taxes, with the exception of the 2008 recession when we raised taxes to remain revenue neutral. I believe that it is important that elective officials are very cautious with taxpayer money. Our county residents pay enough in taxes, and they expect our elected officials to spend wisely." [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

Smith's town council platform called for no tax rate increases and lower sewer rates. "I believe Winterville can meet the many needs of its residents, such as a gymnasium/recreation for our youth, lower sewer rates, neighborhood policing and crime prevention, improved roadways and sidewalks, improved infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing community, and better internet options. All of these needs should be obtainable without increasing our tax rate, which is the lowest in Pitt County." [Mark C. Smith for Winterville Town Council, [accessed 6/6/26](#)]

2026: Smith praised the FY26-27 budget, which maintained ad valorem tax rates. "The Pitt County Board of Commissioners took less than five minutes to hold a public hearing and unanimously vote to approve the county's \$429.5 million budget for fiscal year 2026-27. Nobody spoke during the public hearing portion of Tuesday's meeting and no one on the Board of Commissioners had questions or proposed any changes. The ad valorem tax rate remains 56.63 cents per \$100 valuation. [...] 'Y'all did a fabulous job bringing this budget before us,' said Commissioner Mark Smith, the board chairman. 'Thank you so much for all of your hard work.' The adopted \$429.5 million budget, which goes into effect July 1, spends \$2.2 million more than the \$427.3 million budget that Gallagher originally proposed. The increase is a result of the commissioners allocating an additional \$2 million to purchase student devices and \$334,500 to employ three school nurses who were originally hired during the COVID-19 pandemic with grant funds that have since expired. The only other change in the budget was a \$40,000 reduction in the proposed commissioners' travel budget." [Daily Reflector, [6/3/26](#)]

2026: Smith dismissed pleas to increase funding for the Department of Social Services and foster care workers. "Pitt County Department of Social Services workers asked the Board of Commissioners for a second time to increase the agency's budget to fund contract workers who aid foster care services. Their request came on Monday, 24 hours before the Pitt County Board of Commissioners was scheduled to hold a public hearing on the county's 2026-27 budget, which includes a 2% cut to the county's share of the social services allotment. Social worker Elizabeth Bonham told board members during Monday's public comment period that contract workers are vital to the child welfare program. The six workers in foster care assist with transporting children to appointments, supervising family visits, moving children between placements and completing courtesy visits for agencies in outside counties who have children in their care living in Pitt County. [...] Following Monday's meeting, Board Chairman Mark Smith said he doesn't think that there's a lot of appetite for increasing the budget. 'There's not been a whole lot of discussion on it,' Smith said. 'I think everybody seems to be satisfied with the county manager's recommendation.'" [Daily Reflector, [6/2/26](#)]

2026: Smith opposed restrictions on county property tax authority. “Nearly 60 percent of Pitt County’s general fund comes from property taxes, so county leaders urged its legislative delegation to think about how mandated services such as education and public safety would be affected if the county’s taxing authority were restricted. [...] ‘We all pay property taxes and of course we all want as low a property tax as we can get,’ said Commissioner Mark Smith, chairman of the Pitt County Board of Commissioners. ‘Property taxes are what funds a good majority of the county, so we have to ask the state to be mindful of that because if you don’t have that money coming in, where do you generate money for county business?’” [Daily Reflector, [3/24/26](#)]

2022: Smith voted against retaining a contract for a waste contractor who offered paid sick leave to employees. “A new-look Pitt County Board of Commissioners voted to retain a local outfit that offers its workers paid sick leave even though it will charge a slightly higher rate to manage five of the county's 14 solid waste convenience sites. The board, which swore in two new members and elected new leadership on Monday, voted 7-2 to retain Truss-Denim Group to operate five sites and voted unanimously to award the other nine to Holden Temporaries, which has operated those sites on a temporary basis since the spring. [...] Commissioners Lauren White and Mark Smith voted against approving the Truss-Denim contract.” [Daily Reflector, 12/7/22]

2022: Smith opposed using county taxpayer funds to repair the Lake Glenwood dam. “I do not believe that it is financially prudent for the county to use taxpayer money to repair personal property. I feel like the county should help with the issue by offering support in obtaining grant funding for repairs and ensuring that the repairs are done to engineering standards.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

CONTROVERSIES

Smith’s driving school holds the current contract for driver education in the Pitt County Public Schools. “Pitt County Schools offers Driver Education outside the school day as mandated by the N.C. State Board of Education. The Pitt County Board of Education has chosen to contract the program through contractors.” [Pitts County Schools, [accessed 6/11/26](#)]

2022: One of Smith’s employees at his driving school drove a student through a flooded road. “A video surfaced Wednesday that shows a driver's education vehicle driving a SUV through a flooded area on Griffith Road near Salem Creek Drive. [...] School officials were made aware Wednesday of Warren's video, said Brent Campbell, a spokesman for the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. ‘It is certainly alarming and does not meet the safety standards WS/FCS expects of the driver's education program,’ Campbell said. ‘Student safety is of utmost importance, and we are grateful that the two students who were inside the car are safe.’ The school district provides driver's education vehicles for the driver's education program, but the instructors are not employees of the school system, Campbell said. The instructors are employees of the N.C. Driving School in Winterville, Campbell said. The school district has a contract with the driving school to provide all classroom and vehicle instruction for driver's education. The school district has made the driving school aware of the video, Campbell said. School officials asked the driving school to ‘immediately investigate what happened and remind instructors of all safety protocols,’ Campbell said. ‘It is the expectation of WS/FCS that the

instructor be removed until an investigation is complete, and that the students involved are given proper instruction on driving safely in these types of scenarios,' Campbell said. Officials at the driving school 'have assured us this is underway,' Campbell said. 'As always, we are thankful when someone sees something that concerns them and makes us aware.' Mark Smith, the driving school's director of operations, couldn't be reached Thursday for comment." [Winston Salem Journal, 7/8/22]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2024: Smith celebrated the arrival of Trader Joe's in Pitt County. "Greenville-area residents are abuzz about the possibility of a Trader Joe's grocery store setting up shop at Lynncroft Shopping Center. The City of Greenville issued a permit March 10 that allows commercial space renovations at 3160 Evans St., Unit B, for a Trader Joe's grocery store to occupy the vacant space formerly held by Bed, Bath and Beyond. [...] Several years ago Winterville's economic development director talked with representatives of Trader Joe's about several locations within that community, said Pitt County Commissioner Mark Smith, current chairman of the Board of Commissioners and former Winterville councilman. At the time, Trader Joe's representatives questioned if the area had the population to support a store. 'It certainly proves that Greenville and Pitt County and everybody is working hard to bring business to Pitt County and that we have the population to support that,' Smith said. 'Everyone is working hard to promote Pitt County and the municipalities to bring in business and to have more jobs ... having a business like Trader Joe's come in is nothing but good signs for what's coming down the road.'" [Daily Reflector, [5/30/24](#)]

Smith supports coordinated planning between municipalities and the county to manage growth. "The county should evaluate each individual situation and determine the highest and best use of property and resources. There should be constant communication between municipalities and the county as well as input from citizens and experts to ensure that infrastructure is in place to meet the demands of our growth." [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

ELECTIONS & BALLOT ACCESS

No findings identified.

EDUCATION

2022: Smith: "Our schools and our youth should be our utmost priority." "My wife is a veteran educator with 20-plus years of experience in the Pitt County Schools system, and we have raised five children in Pitt County, all of whom attend or attended Pitt County Schools. As a result, I have had the opportunity to experience firsthand and to hear from other parents the need for new schools, school updates or expansion, and redistricting to alleviate severe crowding in some of our schools. To accomplish this, we need to invest in educators, facilities, and transportation. Our schools and our youth should be our utmost priority." [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

2014: Smith was the only member of the Winterville Town Council to oppose library funding. “Winterville town officials voted Monday night to fund its library. Budget cuts had them concerned they'd have to cut back hours. Town officials already asked the Pitt County Board of Commissioners for more money to pay for the library. They decided to table the discussion until the spring, when they start working on next year's budget. The town went back to the drawing board Monday night for more ideas and voted to fund the library \$46,000, the amount needed to get through the fiscal year. Mayor Pro-tem Mark Smith was the only person not voting in favor. Without the money the library would cut hours at the end of the month from 52 to 30.” [WNCT, 9/8/14]

2014: Smith opposed a state budget that cut funding for driver's education, saying it would lead to more car crashes. “North Carolina's latest budget will eliminate driver education funding which will force parents to pay hundreds for their kids' driving lessons. [...] For decades, the state funded driver education which allowed parents to pay little to no money for their kids' driving lessons. With this change, North Carolina Driving School's Mark Smith is expecting less driving school students. ‘There will be families that simply cannot afford to provide driver training to their sons and daughters,’ Smith said. This creates a bigger problem. In North Carolina, if someone's under 18, they are required to attend driving school. Once they become an adult, you can take the driving test without any training. Smith expected more people will wait till they're 18 to save money. ‘Without driver training, you're going to have more fatalities. You're going to have more car crashes’” [WNCT, 8/20/14]

ENVIRONMENT

2026: Smith voted against a rezoning request for a solar farm. “The Pitt County Board of Commissioners voted 5-3 to reject a rezoning request that would have permitted a solar farm on N.C. 903 near Oakley Road following a debate over farmland losses, property rights and other concerns. Nunnally made a motion to approve the rezoning request. It failed with a 3-5 vote with Nunnally, Ann Floyd Huggins and Mac Manning voting for the rezoning and Perkins-Williams, Weaver, Rochelle Brown, Benji Holloman and Mark Smith voting against rezoning.” [The Daily Reflector, 3/19/26]

2025: Smith voted to OK a rezoning request for a sand mine. “A property owner seeking a rezoning for a sand mine since 2023 was granted the request over the opposition of neighbors after submitting plans that exceeded the county's requirements for setbacks and berms. The Pitt County Board of Commissioners on April 7 also added a condition that no dewatering activities be used in the mine's operation to the list of conditions recommended by staff before voting 6-3 to approve the request for 40.7 acres off Old Pactolus Road near an RV park. While Briley said he would not use a dewatering process, the commissioners required it. Commissioners Benji Holloman, Mary Perkins-Williams Rochelle Brown, Mark Smith, Lauren White and Chris Nunnally voted for the request and Commissioners Mac Manning, Ann Floyd Huggins and Melvin McLawhorn voted against it.” [The Daily Reflector, 4/14/25]

ETHICS & GOOD GOVERNMENT

No findings identified.

HEALTHCARE

No findings identified.

HOUSING

2025: Smith voted against tax incentives to encourage expansions. “The Pitt County Board of Commissioners has approved up to \$600,000 in tax incentives to encourage a proposed expansion at a county employer. The name of the business was withheld from the public during the discussion on Monday. Agenda materials said it is developing software for the gaming industry. The business initially planned to invest \$8.5 million in real and personal property when an agreement was first approved in 2020, said Kelly Andrews, Pitt County economic development director. In return for that investment, the county would provide up to \$32,000 in tax breaks annually for six years. Commissioner Benji Holloman, board chairman, said the \$2,000 offer was nearly \$800 above the county’s investment in the land. Hill said the proposed buyer also has to settle the taxes owed to the Town of Farmville. Commissioner Ann Floyd Huggins made a motion to accept the \$2,000 bid, which Commissioner Melvin McLawhorn seconded. Huggins, McLawhorn, Holloman and Commissioners Rochelle Brown, Mary Perkins-Williams, Gary Weaver and Mac Manning voted to approve the sale and Nunnally and Commissioner Mark Smith voted against the motion.” [Daily Reflector, [11/20/25](#)]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Smith supported expanding the Winterville Recreation Park during his tenure on the town council. “I served on the board in Winterville when we expanded the Winterville Recreation Park. This expansion included walking trails, tennis courts, amphitheater, and additional fields. It has pleased me to see the widespread use of these resources by so many residents.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

Smith’s town council platform called for improved roadways and sidewalks, youth recreation, neighborhood policing, and better internet options. “I believe Winterville can meet the many needs of its residents, such as a gymnasium/recreation for our youth, lower sewer rates, neighborhood policing and crime prevention, improved roadways and sidewalks, improved infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing community, and better internet options.” [Mark C. Smith for Winterville Town Council, [accessed 6/6/26](#)]

PHILOSOPHY & IDEOLOGY

2022: Smith opposed removing Confederate monuments: “I believe that all history is important and that we should never erase or change any of it.” “In the case of the Confederate monument that was removed from the courthouse in 2020, no further action should be taken. I believe that all history is important and that we should never erase or change any of it, but all viewpoints and perspectives should be represented. If we remove all reminders of a dark time in history, like that in which slavery was a practice in our country, we are disrespecting those who suffered through the time.” [Daily Reflector, [10/15/22](#)]

2024: Smith voted with Pitt commissioners unanimously to donate a Confederate monument to an outside group. “Pitt County officials this week OK'd the donation of the county's Confederate monument to an organization that preserves similar statues for historic and educational purposes. The Board of Commissioners on Monday unanimously approved the action as part of its consent agenda, a list of routine requests that can be approved with a single vote and no discussion. Voting for the donation were Commissioners Beth Ward, Benji Holloman, Chris Nunnally, Mark Smith, Mary Perkins-Willilams, Melvin McLawhorn, Ann Floyd Huggins and Tom Coulson.” [The Daily Reflector, 4/16/24]

2025: Smith voted to install “In God We Trust” in Pitt County courtrooms. “The motto ‘In God We Trust’ will be installed in 10-inch letters in Pitt County’s main Superior Courtroom and in 5-inch letters in two other courtrooms in accordance with a Dec. 15 vote by the Pitt County Board of Commissioners, and a nonprofit group will pay for the installation, the county manager said. [...] Brown said residents brought the idea to her. She was joined by other Republican Commissioners Benji Holloman, Mark Smith and Gary Weaver, along with Democratic Commissioner Mary Perkins-Williams in voting for the installation. Democratic Commissioners Christopher Nunnally, Mac Manning, Melvin McLawhorn and Ann Floyd Huggins opposed the plan.” [Daily Reflector, [12/27/25](#)]

PUBLIC SAFETY

2026: Smith voted against a contract for the sheriff’s office to provide security for Mr. Beast. “The Pitt County Board of Commissioners this week approved a security contract between the sheriff’s office and MrBeast LLC with a 7-3 vote despite concerns the recommended rate wouldn’t cover the costs. Commissioners Rochelle Brown, Mark Smith and Gary Weaver voted against the contract while Commissioners Mary Perkins-Williams, Benji Holloman, Melvin McLawhorn, Ann Floyd Huggins, Chris Nunnally and Mac Manning voted to approve it at Monday’s regular meeting. The contract was originally part of the board’s consent agenda, a list of items voted on by the board at once with no discussion. Brown asked for the contract decision to be removed and acted on separately. Pitt County Manager Janis Gallagher said the contract is expected to generate \$310,000 in revenue. It states the sheriff’s office will assign off-duty deputies to work security for MrBeast LLC, if staffing is available. The MrBeast contract wants three deputies on duty during a 24-hour period to provide security for its campus on Sugg Parkway in Indigreen Corporate Park. The work day would be divided into three eight-hour shifts.” [Daily Reflector, [3/5/26](#)]

2025: Smith opposed requiring sheriff’s officers to submit receipts for their clothing allowance. “Investigators and command staff with the Pitt County Sheriff’s Office will continue receiving stipends to purchase non-uniform work clothes following a vote by the Pitt County Board of Commissioners. The commissioners fell one vote short of requiring deputies to provide receipts before the county reimburses their work clothing purchases. A vote to continue with the current reimbursement system passed 7-2 at the July 21 meeting. [...] A vote to require the submission of receipts failed 4-5, with Anne Floyd Huggins, Chris Nunnally, Lauren White and Manning voting to pay a monthly clothing reimbursement if receipts were submitted. Melvin

McLawhorn, Mary Perkins-Williams, Mark Smith, Benji Holloman and Rochelle Brown voted against submitting receipts.” [Daily Reflector, 8/4/25]

2025: Smith opposed regulating the discharge of firearms in unincorporated neighborhoods. “Following multiple protests and several rewrites, the Pitt County Board of Commissioners approved the second reading of two ordinances that regulate the discharge of firearms in unincorporated neighborhoods with a 5-4 vote. The commissioners had to vote twice to approve the rules because violations can carry a criminal penalty. The ordinances went into effect immediately. The vote came near the end of the board's three-hour Monday meeting. There was no discussion other than Commissioner Mac Manning asking if he had to reread the ordinances, which were first approved with a 5-4 vote in early March. Board Chairman **Benji Holloman** said it wasn't necessary and the vote was taken. Manning and Commissioners Mary Perkins-Williams, Ann Floyd Huggins, Melvin McLawhorn and Chris Nunnally voted for the ordinances. Holloman and Commissioners Rochelle Brown, Mark Smith and Lauren White voted against them. It was the same vote split as the vote after the first reading.” [Daily Reflector, 4/8/25]

LINKS

No Social Media Accounts Identified

PUBLIC RECORDS

No findings identified.