

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, February 5th, 2024, at 5pm, in Council Chambers at Town Hall, located at 510 7th Street, Altavista, VA.

Members present: John Jordan, Chairman
Marie Mitchell, Vice Chair
Reggie Bennett, Vice Mayor
Ashby Robinson, Jr.
Senior Student Rayna Steele
Junior Student Conner Mattox

Absent: Meghan Bolling

Staff present: Matt Perkins, Assistant Town Manager
Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk
*Town Attorney John Eller was absent from this meeting

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Jordan called the Altavista Planning Commission Meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, and seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, the Planning Commission voted 6-0 to approve the February 2024 meeting agenda as presented.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION

Chairman Jordan delivered an Invocation; and then led everyone in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Jordan asked the Commission if corrections were needed to the January 2024 meeting minutes; to which there were none.

With a motion made by Vice Chair Mitchell, seconded by Commissioner Ashby Robinson, the minutes for the Commission's January 2024 meeting were approved as presented, with a 6-0 vote.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

No citizen comments were given at this point in the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

Zoning Text Amendment OA-2024-01: Short-term Rental

The proposed amendments included necessary changes to subsections of Chapter 86 (Definitions and Use Types) of the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Altavista; in matters related to definitions, permitted use types by district, process (special use permit requirement), and use and design standards.

- adding a definition for Short-term Rentals to *Section 86-32*
- add (new) *Section 86-522: Use and Development Standards for Short-term Rentals*
- add Short-term Rentals as a permitted use in Districts R1, R2, C1, C2, and the DRO (Downtown Revitalization Overlay); with the requirement of a Special Use Permit in districts R1, R2, and the DRO

Chairman Jordan opened the public hearing at 5:03 pm.

From discussion and direction of the Planning Commission at their January 2nd, 2024, meeting, Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins moved this item to Public Hearing. He presented this matter to the Commission for their consideration of recommending approval of the aforementioned text amendments to Town Council.

Mr. Perkins informed the Commission that Staff had issued a notice, as required, of this Public Hearing in the January 24th and January 31st editions of the local newspaper (the Altavista Journal). He also stated that he compared the standards of Short-term Rentals with the existing lodging uses in the Town Code and said he believed the use was comparable and cohesive.

Mr. Perkins said he took into consideration the Commission's comments and suggestions from their last meeting, and made the necessary changes to the proposed amendments; for instance, adding a definition for Short-term Rental "Operator", and the availability of the Operator (livable distance allowed for a quick response from the Operator when needed at their rental establishment)

Chairman Jordan closed the public hearing at 5:10 pm.

With unanimous consensus of the Commission, Vice Chair Marie Mitchell made a motion, that was seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, to move this item forward to the Altavista Town Council for their consideration; with a recommendation from the Altavista Planning Commission to approve the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendments to *Section 86-32*, as presented. The motion carried, with a 6-0 favorable vote.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no unfinished business items to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- Zoning Text Amendment Consideration – Automobile Dealership, Used, in the DRO

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed the Commission of a recent request by Jerry R. Kelly, 212 Ramp Road, Hurt, VA., a business and property owner in Altavista's Downtown DRO District, stating that Mr. Kelly was requesting a text amendment to Section 86-504, allowing automobile dealership, used, as a permitted use in the DRO.

Mr. Kelly was present at this meeting to offer comments, and to answer any questions the Commission may have regarding his request.

Mr. Perkins stated that most of the DRO District was zoned C2-Commercial, and Mr. Kelly's properties were zoned Industrial. He reminded the Commission, while a used car dealership was a permitted use in both the C2 and Industrial Districts, the DRO District superseded any underlying district, and currently did not permit the use.

Mr. Perkins said that the application was complete, and the accompanying fee was paid. He stated, if the Commission approved of the request going to a public hearing, Staff recommended reviewing *Section 86-504* to determine if Design Standards needed to be updated.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked Mr. Kelly if he intended to also conduct vehicle repairs; to which Mr. Kelly answered no, only used car sales.

Mr. Bennett stated there were some existing used car dealerships in Altavista that did not adhere to the specified guidelines of the Town Code, such as not keeping "stored" or junk vehicles behind an enclosure. He shared his favor with reviewing the Standards as Mr. Perkins recommended, in order to clarify guidelines, requirements, restrictions, etc. for this use type.

Mr. Perkins informed the Commission that the Virginia State Code had stringent regulations and requirements for certifying used car dealerships, such as having the capacity to hold a minimum of ten vehicles, and all vehicles on the property had to have "passed" current inspections.

Mr. Perkins recited the intent of the DRO, as written in the Town Code of Altavista.

“To fulfill the Comprehensive Plan’s goal of recognizing Altavista’s unique character, and promoting the revitalization of the Town’s Downtown District; as well as, promoting tourism as a viable economic development strategy. The DRO (downtown revitalization overlay) district seeks to fulfill the comprehensive plan's goal of recognizing Altavista's unique character and promoting the revitalization of the town's downtown area, as well as promoting tourism as a viable economic development strategy. The district regulations are adopted pursuant to authority granted to the Town under Code of Virginia, §§ 15.2-2280 et seq. and 15.2-2306. The district is established to promote the health, safety and general welfare; to bring harmony and cohesiveness to the visual appearance and uses of the district; to protect and promote compatibility in the appearance, character and uses; and to prevent intense automobile-oriented uses within the district. The portions of Main Street (U.S. 29 Business), Bedford Avenue (State Route 43), Broad Street, and Seventh Street, that lie within the DRO District serve as key access routes by tourists traveling through the district in route to the Central Business District, English Park, the Staunton River, Leesville Lake, the Altavista Trade Lot, and to the Historic Avoca Museum. Main Street and contiguous streets are significant routes of tourist access to the town and the core components of the town's rehabilitation, redevelopment, and economic revitalization of the Town. The DRO District is intended to promote architecturally responsible commercial development; to emphasize historic development techniques; to reduce vacant, dilapidated, and empty lots in the district; to encourage designs that integrate the relationship between individual sites, multiple modes of transportation, and adjacent areas; and to promote the district as a vibrant commercial hub of Altavista.”

Commissioner Robinson referenced a used car lot that previously occupied a property in Town, and said the business carried too many cars for the lot size, and there was rarely anyone there. He asked how those issues could be avoided.

Mr. Perkins stated that General Standards for used car dealerships would address the most obvious concerns and regulations, and a (required) Special Use Permit would address the finer details.

Chairman Jordan asked Mr. Kelly if he had any comments for the Commission.

Mr. Kelly shared his love for the Town of Altavista as a third-generation citizen. He stated that living in the area all his life, and with his other business (Scoops) being located in the Downtown District, he understood and valued the vision of the DRO to add to the Town’s quality of life and to promote tourism. Mr. Kelly stated that with the Town’s guidance, and the parameters of a Special Use Permit, that he believed the proposed text amendment could benefit both parties

With no additional questions or comments from the Planning Commission, a motion was made by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and the Planning Commission voted 6-0 in favor of moving this text amendment request to a public hearing, to be conducted during their March 12th meeting.

- Altavista Planning Commission Annual Report – CY2023
Delivered to the Planning Commission in their February Agenda Packet, Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins asked the Commission if they had any questions regarding their 2023 Annual Report; or if there was anything they would like to see added to the report, to which there was none.

There was a unanimous consensus of the Planning Commission to send their CY2023 Annual Report to Town Council.

MATTERS FROM STAFF

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed the Planning Commission that a Town Staff Member of Colonial Heights, VA, had reached out to him regarding Altavista's decision to have "Student" Planning Commissioners, because they were thinking about doing the same and wanted input. He said it was nice to see other localities taking notice of Altavista's initiative in this manner.

Chairman Jordan stated that Altavista had been fortunate to have three good students in that role.

Junior Student Commissioner Conner Mattox stated that he was grateful for the opportunity to speak for his generation on a legislative level, and that he knew the other two students felt the same way.

Chairman Jordan asked Mr. Perkins when the Commission would be continuing the solar discussion, to which Mr. Perkins answered that he planned to have the item on their March agenda.

Chairman Jordan informed the Commission and Mr. Perkins that he would be absent at the March, 2024, meeting, but encouraged them to continue their conversation on the solar topic.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Jordan adjourned this meeting at 5:43 p.m.

John Jordan, Chairman
Altavista Planning Commission

Mathew Perkins, Asst. Town Manager
Town of Altavista