

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, April 1st, 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
Meghan Bolling
Ashby Robinson, Jr.
Rayna Steele, Senior Student Commissioner

Absent: Conner Mattox, Junior Student Commissioner

Staff present: Matthew Perkins, Assistant Town Manager
John Eller, Town Attorney
Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Jordan called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and presided.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice Chair Marie Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and the Planning Commission approved the April 2024 meeting agenda as presented, with a 5-0 vote.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Jordan referenced the “adjournment” section of the March meeting minutes, and asked Staff to change the facilitator as being Vice Chair Marie Mitchell.

With a 5-0 vote, the Altavista Planning Commission’s March 2024 meeting minutes were approved as amended. Due to his absence from the March meeting, Chairman Jordan abstained.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

There were no citizen comments.

PUBLIC HEARING

Special Use Permit: SUP-24-01

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins gave the Commission a brief overview of a Special Use Permit (SUP) application recently submitted by Russell Kelly; to operate an Automobile Dealership, used, at 508 Pittsylvania Ave, Altavista - as defined in Section 86-32, and subject to 86-504 of the Town Code of the Town of Altavista. Mr. Perkins informed the Commission that the hearing had been adequately advertised as required; and to date, there had been no public input for or against the application.

Chairman Jordan opened the public hearing at 5:03 pm. There were no citizen comments offered during the hearing, and Chairman Jordan closed the public hearing at 5:06 pm.

There was unanimous consensus from the Planning Commission in favor of moving this item forward to Town Council, with a recommendation of approval.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

NEW BUSINESS

Requested Text Amendment to Zoning Ordinance: pertaining to Indoor Pet Boarding Facilities

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins shared details of the application submitted by Melissa Logan, Precious Paws (dog and cat grooming), to amend the Town's Zoning Ordinance to define "Indoor Pet Boarding", to permit the use in the applicable district(s). He said Town Code did not currently contain provisions for indoor pet boarding.

Mr. Perkins stated, if the Commission deemed the request reasonable, Staff would schedule the proposed text amendment to Public Hearing.

The Commission shared their concerns regarding the potential for loud noise and the animals escaping from the facility.

Ms. Logan stated that her establishment was an "inside" boarding facility; and that the only time the animals would be outside, would be for bathroom breaks.

Mr. Perkins stated that, if approved, all concerns would be addressed with a Special Use Permit, and in conformity with established Design & Use Standards.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ashby Robinson, and the Commission voted 6-0 in favor of moving this matter to Public Hearing; to be conducted at their next regularly scheduled meeting, on Monday, May 6th, 2024.

Solar Energy Systems: Planning and Zoning Review Discussion

Background: The Planning Commission asked Staff to review current Planning and Zoning practices, and to lead a discussion on how the Town of Altavista could regulate solar energy systems by both residential and commercial users.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins reminded the Commission of (to date) the two primary efforts initiated by the Town of Altavista, related to solar energy systems.

1. Applied for and was designated as a SolSmart Community, Bronze Level, in June 2020. Guidance on zoning and permits was published on the Town website. No official zoning amendment action was taken, as the information only guided solar inquiries.
2. Amended Town Ordinance *Sec 86-32: Use Types* (April 2023) to add language that excludes "utility-scale solar facilities" in the definition to Utility Services, major.

Mr. Perkins referenced the Code of Virginia's *Local Regulations of Solar Facilities, Section 15.2-2288.7*, stating that localities could not be more restrictive, but could set forth certain regulations that would be beneficial to its community. He asked the Commission for input and any text amendments, pertaining to solar, they believed appropriate to recommend to Town Council.

Town Attorney John Eller reminded the Commission that, currently, ground-mounted solar was permitted in all Altavista Districts. He suggested considering each district individually when determining solar regulations. The Commission concurred with Attorney Eller.

After discussion and consideration of "ground-mounted" solar systems, the Commission had a unanimous consensus not to allow when the primary use of a lot or parcel was residential.

Mr. Perkins stated that Staff would continue investigating solar, and bringing questions to the Commission as they arise, until an applicable ordinance was drafted for consideration.

There were no additional comments or questions from the Commission on this matter.

MATTERS FROM STAFF

Mr. Perkins gave the Planning Commission a draft ordinance to review in advance of the Public Hearing on May 6th, regarding Indoor Pet Boarding Facilities. This would be a *draft* in consideration of recommending the ordinance to Town Council.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Jordan adjourned this meeting at 6:05 p.m.

John Jordan, Chairman
Altavista Planning Commission

Mathew Perkins, Asst. Town Manager
Town of Altavista