

Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting, March 12, 2024

The Altavista Town Council held their March 2024 Regular Meeting in Council Chambers of the Town Hall/J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on Tuesday, March 12th, at 6:00pm.

1. Call to Order

At six o'clock p.m., Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Members Present: Vice Mayor Reginald Bennett
Mr. Timothy George
Mr. Jay Higginbotham
Mayor Michael Mattox
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Member absent: Dr. Scott Lowman

Town Staff present: Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager
Mr. Matt Perkins, Asst. Town Manager
Chief Tommy Merricks, Altavista Police Dept.
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Administration/Finance Director
Mr. Tom Fore, Public Services Director
Mr. Paul Hill, Asst. Public Services Director
Mr. Jeff Arthur, Public Works Manager
Mr. John Eller, Town Attorney
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

Mr. Bobby Lamb, First Southern Baptist Church, delivered the Invocation for this meeting; afterwards, Mayor Mattox led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance to the US Flag.

2. Agenda Adoption

With a motion from Councilman Tracy Emerson, seconded by Councilman Jay Higginbotham, the March 12th meeting agenda was approved as presented.

3. Recognitions and Presentations

Project Consultant Robert Lee shared with Council a progression schedule for the Vista/Leggett Project, which included addressing initial remediation items, preparing and submitting grant applications, design committee meetings, and construction timelines.

Mr. Lee referenced the project committee that was overseeing this project, consisting of the following: Council Liaison Tracy Emerson, Council liaison Tim George, Town Manager Gary Shanaberger, Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins, Altavista YMCA Director Maria McCracken, and himself as Project Consultant. He informed Council that the committee recently met with Kathrine Gutshall, a Historic Preservation Architect with Hill Studio in Roanoke, to gain insight on what the Town may need to do/address in order to secure historical tax credits for the Vista Leggett Project. He said that Ms. Gutshall was currently preparing a report for their review.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger referenced Council's efforts to visit other venues to gain insight and inspiration for the Vista Theatre. He informed Council that he was unable to secure a viable date for them to visit the Movie complex in South Hill. He encouraged them to notify him by email if they had any other local venues that they would like to consider for a visit.

Councilman Higginbotham referenced the Virginia Tobacco Commission, and said that they may have a grant that would help with the project.

Mr. Lee stated that he was working with Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins to investigate potential grant opportunities, such as the Tobacco Commission and the Powell Foundation.

Councilman Wayne Mitchell referenced the project timeline shared by Mr. Lee and stated that he believed it was quite "aggressive".

Mr. Lee stated that the Town would be moving the project forward as much as possible, even when waiting on grant awards, there was "groundwork" that could be addressed and/or accomplished.

Mr. Mitchell asked if there was a tentative timeframe on a proforma that would show the shared cost of this project between grants and the Town.

Mr. Lee answered, at that time, there was not. He said that proforma would not be available until the Town knew which grants, if any, would be awarded for this project.

There were no further questions from the Town Council at this time.

Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting, March 12, 2024

4. Citizen's Time

There were no citizen comments at this time.

5. Town & Community Partner Updates

There were no partner updates on this meeting date.

6. Consent Agenda

- TOA Monthly Financial Reports - February 2024
- Town Council Meeting Minutes - Regular Meeting and Work Session, February 2024
- APD Request – Flock Camera System
 - Upon a request by Councilman Mitchell, this item was removed from the consent agenda, and placed on the March Work Session agenda for further discussion.

Councilman Wayne Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, and Town Council voted 6-0 in favor to approve the March 12th Consent Agenda as amended.

7. Public Hearings

STAFF: Town Manager Gary Shanaberger presented both public hearings to Council.

- Ordinance Amendment OA-2024-01
 - Section 86-32: amend to add a definition for Short-term Rental
 - Amend the following sections to add Short-term Rental as a “permitted use” in the said districts: 86-132 District R-1, 86-192 District R-2, 86-322 District C-1, 86-352 District C-2, and 86-427 the DRO District
 - Section 86-522: amend to add Use & Design Standards for Short-term Rentals

Mayor Mattox opened the public hearing at 6:29pm.

Mr. Shanaberger stated that the Altavista Planning Commission also held a public hearing on this matter on Monday, February 5, 2024; and recommended approval to Town Council.

Mr. Shanaberger informed Town Council that notice of this public hearing had been published in the Altavista Journal for two consecutive weeks as required; and stated that to this date, there had been no opposition from the public on the matter.

Councilman George asked for the definition of Short-term Rental.

Mr. Shanaberger stated that “short-term” referenced thirty days or less.

Councilman Mitchell asked if the State Legislator, recently being considered about this matter, had been passed, which could regulate local policy.

Mr. Shanaberger stated that the matter before the State Legislator was geared more towards accessory structures, but depending on what was, or wasn't passed, could affect localities.

With no public comments offered, Mayor Mattox closed the hearing at 6:34pm; and asked Council if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the proposed amendment.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett informed Council, as a liaison to the Planning Commission, that the Commission amended the initial text amendment to require the operator of a Short-term Rental to live only thirty miles from the rental establishment.

Councilman Tracy Emerson made a motion, seconded by Councilman Wayne Mitchell to approve Ordinance Amendment OA-2024-01 as presented by Staff that evening.

Town Attorney John Eller asked that the official motion be revised to include all text amendments proposed for the Town Code.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett made a motion to approve the following texts amendments to the Town Code of Altavista:

- Amend *Section 86-32* to add a definition for Short-term Rental
- Amend the following sections to add Short-term Rental as a “permitted use”: 86-132 District R-1, 86-192 District R-2, 86-322 District C-1, 86-352 District C-2, and 86-427 the DRO District (Downtown Revitalization Overlay)
- Amend *Section 86-522* to add Use & Design Standards for Short-term Rentals

Councilman Tracy Emerson seconded the motion, and Town Council voted 6-0 in favor of approving the aforementioned ordinance amendments at presented.

Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting, March 12, 2024

- Ordinance Amendment OA-2024-02
 - Amend *Section 86-427*: to include Automobile Dealership, used; subject to *Section 86-504*, a Special Use Permit required.
 - Amend *Section 86-504*, Use and Design Standards: to include adequate screening as determined by the Zoning Administrator; and only in operation when in full compliance with State, Federal, and Local regulations.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated that the Altavista Planning Commission held a public hearing pertaining to this matter on Monday, March 4th; and voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the amendments to Town Council.

Mr. Shanaberger also informed Town Council that notice of this hearing was published in the Altavista Journal for two consecutive weeks as required; and stated that to this date, no citizen had been to Town Hall to inspect the document, and Staff had not received any citizen comments for, or against, the proposed amendments.

Mr. Kelly (requested the amendment) was present at this meeting to answer any questions that Council may have pertaining to his request; of which they had none.

Mayor Mattox opened the public hearing at 6:36pm. With no public comments offered, Mayor Mattox closed the hearing at 6:40pm and asked Council if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the proposed amendment, to which there were none.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett made a motion to approve the ordinance amendment OA-2024-02, adding Automobile Dealership, used, as a permitted use in the DRO; subsequently adopting *Section 86-427* and *Section 86-504* to the Town Code of Altavista. The motion was seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, and the Altavista Town Council approved Ordinance Amendment OA-2024-02, with a 6-0 vote.

8. New Business

Town Water Tank Maintenance

STAFF: Asst. Director of Public Services Paul Hill

Mr. Hill reminded Council that the Town's current contract agreement for tank maintenance would expire at the end of fiscal year 2024 (June 30th). He stated that Staff worked with Mattern & Craig to draft a new contract, and asked Council to allow Staff to proceed with advertising an RFP.

Councilman George asked what maintenance tasks did the contract include.

Mr. Hill stated that the contract included sandblasting, painting, sanitation, and inspections.

Councilman Mitchell asked how long was the tank maintenance agreement contracted for; to which Mr. Hill stated that this particular contract was for a ten-year period.

Director of Public Services Tom Fore reminded Council of a previous conversation they had regarding putting the Altavista Colonels logo on the Clarion water tank with the Altavista logo. He stated, since the tank was scheduled to be painted in the next couple of months, did Council still desire to have the additional logo.

There was a consensus of Town Council to allow Staff to contact the Altavista Combined School to obtain consent; and to gather the cost for adding the additional logo.

After discussion and consideration, Town Council was in also in consensus to authorize Staff to move forward with advertising for RFPs, to secure water tank maintenance for FY2025-FY2035.

9. Unfinished Business

- FY2025 Draft Budget and FY2025-2029 CIP – continued discussion

STAFF: Director of Finance and Administration Tobie Shelton

Mrs. Shelton stated that, at this point in the budget process, Staff was seeking to finalize the FY2025 Budget and CIP. She shared with Council the draft budgets for both the Enterprise and General Funds, which at this point in the process showed a surplus of \$550,260. The draft included a 10% increase to both water and sewer, but did not include COLA, Agency requests, or proposed CIP items. To include those three items would cause a budget deficit, therefore, Mrs. Shelton shared scenarios for Council's consideration, to assist them during the budget process to balance the budget.

Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting, March 12, 2024

Councilman George asked, if the Town increased its Lodging Tax, would the revenue from that increase have to be used towards “advertising” tourism for the Town.

Town Attorney John Eller stated that was a requirement for counties, not towns and cities.

Councilman Higginbotham asked if any proposed CIP items could be removed or postponed.

Mrs. Shelton stated that Staff had either removed or postponed projects to a future fiscal year that were not a necessity at that time, in order to decrease the CIP budget.

Councilman Higginbotham reference a proposed CIP item: improvements to the War Memorial Park entrance and paving the Trade Lot/Shreve Park parking lot.

Mrs. Shelton reminded Council that, at this point in the budget process, they could still choose to remove a CIP item, if so desired.

Mayor Mattox shared his belief that Staff had already went through the CIP and removed items that did not need immediate attention. He said that Council needed to focus on increasing revenue, and increasing Real Estate Tax was one option to accomplish that goal.

Mr. Higginbotham also referenced the \$10,000 in FY2025 and \$650,000 in FY2026 allocated to the Spark Innovation center. He stated that he believed the Vista Theatre Project would be a more suitable project for those funds, since the Spark Center was already up-and-running.

Vice Mayor Bennett informed Council that AOT President and Town Councilman Scott Lowman was currently working on a grant to help cover the cost of Spark upgrades.

Councilman Mitchell reminded Council that a locality or organization had to have an “active” project in order to receive a grant for said project.

Vice Mayor Bennett reminded Council that costs would only increase in future years, so it was important to complete the projects that could be completed now, to avoid some of the increases.

Mayor Mattox agreed with Councilman Higginbotham that the Spark CIP project could wait.

Councilman Higginbotham continued evaluating the proposed CIP items and referenced the \$15,000 allocated to adding an additional layer of surface material to the Cemetery Connector Trail. He shared his favor in re-allocating those funds to surface treating the Jenks River Trail.

Councilman George stated that the project and funds were previously voted on by Council in favor of asphalt treating the Cemetery Trail, not using millings. He shared his favor in leaving the funds in the budget to complete the project as initially approved.

Public Services Director Tom Fore informed Council that Public Works was, as time allowed, continuing to clear the Jenks River Trail of dead limbs and trees, and when deemed safe, would then surface treat the Jenks River Trail with Town millings, to help lower the cost of this project

Councilman Higginbotham referenced the option to “charge a solid waste fee” for garbage collection. He stated that he did not agree with implementing that fee to Altavista citizens, but if Council made that decision, he favored starting at the lowest cost option.

Councilman Mitchell reminded Council that inflation had increased fuel and labor costs, and that the Town could not feasibly continue to offer the service without charging a small fee.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated that several localities surrounding Altavista charged a garbage collection fee. He also said that the Campbell Council Landfill would be at full capacity in just a few years, which would cause the Town to drive even further to empty garbage trucks, costing the Town more money in fuel costs. He shared his belief that the Town needed to start charging for the service, in order to help lower the costs involved with this matter.

Mr. Higginbotham asked, if implemented, how the garbage collection fee would be charged.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated that the fee would be added to utility bills.

Councilman Emerson asked Staff to find out what Campbell County spends on park renovations in other Campbell County localities.

Councilman George referenced the annual contribution that the Town makes to the Altavista Area YMCA, and stated that the county should be supporting the Town in that area of costs.

Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting, March 12, 2024

Vice Mayor Bennett asked Council to consider allowing Staff to remove completely from the FY2024 budget, the \$25,000 allocated for an engineer study pertaining to adding additional lighting on Bedford Avenue; and reappropriating the funds to an ongoing project - replacing the lamp heads of existing light poles on Main Street with LED bulbs/lamp heads (currently 42 more to complete the project).

Assistant Director of Public Services Paul Hill stated that there was \$32,500 in the current budget to purchase 17 LED lamps, and with the proposed \$25,000 would cover the cost of thirteen additional lamps, leaving only twelve more to complete the said project.

There was a consensus of Town Council to do so.

Councilman Higginbotham asked what the War Memorial Park Entrance Project consisted of.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated that it included sandblasting the old paint off and repainting the archway.

Councilman George asked what the \$250,000 in the Recreation Dept. Budget was for.

Public Services Director Tom Fore stated those funds were to pave and re-strip the Trade Lot parking lot.

Mrs. Shelton stated that Staff was seeking direction from Council on which items they wished to implement in order to balance the budget.

After reviewing the draft documents and scenarios, Council asked Staff for the following:

- to reconfigure the draft budget with:
 - 1) increasing Real Estate Tax to .20 cent (generating \$340,570 in annual revenue), and
 - 2) implementing a garbage collection fee of \$8 monthly/\$24 quarterly (generating \$160,720 of annual revenue).

Town Council also requested the following additional information:

- What dollar amount in taxes the Town of Altavista pays to Campbell County annually.
- What amount of funds have been given to other Campbell County localities for park renovations, in the past few years.
- When was the last time Campbell County donated funds to Altavista for park renovations; and the (\$) amount of that donation.

10. Town Staff Departmental Reports and Project Updates – February 2024

- TOA Finance Reports
- Altavista Police Department Reports
- Public Services Monthly Report
- Utilities - Project Updates
- Employee Changes
- Town Council Monthly Meeting Calendars

These items were included in Town Council's monthly agenda pre-packet, and delivered to Council on the Friday before their meeting, giving them time to review the reports.

11. Matters from Council

There were no additional comments from the Town Council.

12. Closed Session 7:38-8:02pm

Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8) Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter

Notice was given to Staff, per the Town Manager, that no actions were taken after closed session.

13. Adjournment

With no further items for discussion, Mayor Mattox adjourned this meeting at 8:03pm.

Michael Mattox, Mayor

Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk