

The Altavista Town Council held their April 2024 Regular Meeting in Council Chambers of the Town Hall/J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on Tuesday, April 9th, 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. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Timothy George
Mayor Michael Mattox
Dr. Scott Lowman
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Member absent: Mr. Jay Higginbotham

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

Associate Pastor Jim Critchley, Crossroads Ministries, delivered the Invocation for this meeting; and afterwards, Mayor Mattox led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance to the US Flag.

2. Agenda Adoption

Mayor Mattox informed Town Council that a closed session had been added to this agenda. Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett made a motion to approve the agenda as amended; seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, and approved with a 6-0 vote by Council.

3. Recognitions and Presentations

- Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett reminded everyone that Sunday, April 21st was John Henry Moseley Day in the Town of Altavista; stating the memorial day was previously approved by Council to be observed annually on the Sunday following Mr. Moseley's birthday (April 15th).
- Public Services Director Tom Fore shared with Council that the Altavista Water Treatment Plant received the 2023 GOLD Standard Award from the Virginia Office of Drinking Water, for excellence in clarification, filtration, and backwash. He said that this was the seventh consecutive year the Altavista Plant had received this award, and he wanted to recognize the WTP Staff for their continued great work.
- Mayor Mattox recognized Lynch Station native, Senior Airman Ricky Merritt for his service in the Gulf War. He said that Airman Merritt lost his life in a plane crash in the line of duty (not war), along with several other servicemen on the plane.

Vice Mayor Bennett recommended that Council approve a resolution in support of a bridge in Lynch Station being named for Senior Airman Merritt, currently being considered by VDOT.

Town Council voted unanimously to approve such a resolution.

4. Citizen's Time

- Brian Maddox came before Council with a request to add the name plate of Senior Airman Ricky L. Merritt to the Gulf War plaque at War Memorial Park.

Councilman Mitchell asked who was the organization that originally erected the plaques.

Mr. Mattox stated that he contacted the American Legion, and they told him that the Town of Altavista owned the property. He said, to his knowledge, it was the Veterans of Foreign Wars Association that sponsored the initial project/plaques.

Mr. Mitchell suggested the VFW be contacted and informed of the request.

Town Council all shared favor in Mr. Mattox's request to have Senior Airman Merritt's name added to the War Memorial wall.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger volunteered to work with Mr. Merritt on this matter; to which Town Council was in consensus and authorized the Town Manager to do so.

- Mitch Bernard, 1701 Avondale Drive, Altavista, shared his opposition to the proposed increase to Altavista Real Estate Taxes in the 2025 fiscal year draft budget. He handed out a piece of paper to each Council member that had two questions on it, and asked that Council return their answers to him by email.
- Vicki Mattox, 304 Myrtle Lane, Altavista, and also shared her opposition to the proposed Real Estate Tax increase for FY2025. She reminded Council that merely ten years ago, Town Council was discussing the means to decrease the Town's Real Estate Tax.

5. Town & Community Partner Updates

There were no partner updates on this meeting date.

6. Consent Agenda

- TOA Monthly Financial Reports - March 2024
- Town Council Meeting Minutes - Regular Meeting and Work Session, March 2024
- Altavista On-call Engineer Services, Annual Contractual Agreements
- TOA / VDOT Sidewalk Project Revisions

Councilman Tracy Emerson made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and Town Council voted 6-0 in favor to approve the April 19h Consent Agenda as presented.

7. Public Hearings

- FY2025 – Proposed Implementation of a Solid Waste Fee

Mayor Mattox opened the public hearing at 6:21pm. With no citizen input, or Council comments made, Mayor Mattox closed the hearing at 6:26pm.

Town Council made no decisions or changes to the draft budget at this time.

- Special Use Permit, SUP-24-01

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

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins shared a brief overview of the SUP request by Mr. Russell Kelly, to operate an Automobile Dealership, used, at 508 Pittsylvania Avenue, Altavista. He informed Council that this public hearing had been advertised for two consecutive weeks in the local newspaper (Altavista Journal) as required; and to this date, there had been no public opposition of the request.

There were no citizen comments offered. Mayor Mattox closed the hearing at 6:30pm, and asked Council if they had any comments on this matter, to which there were none.

Town Council voted 6-0 in approval, and authorized Staff to move forward in the zoning and permit process for Mr. Kelly's Special Use Permit/request.

8. New Items for Discussion

There were none on this date.

9. Unfinished Business

- FY2025 Budget and FY2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan - "First Reading"

Background: Over the past few months, Town Staff has provided budget sheets to Town Council for their review, discussion, and consideration. The budget sheets were updated based on direction of Council, to create the proposed budget that Council will see this evening.

Director of Finance and Administration Tobie Shelton stated that the Fiscal Year 2025 proposed Budget for all funds, including the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), totaled \$12,846,810. She gave Council a breakdown of the amount: General Fund \$6,063,260; Enterprise Fund \$5,618,190; Highway Fund \$993,210; Cemetery Fund \$107,150; and a transfer out to General Fund Reserves in the amount of \$65,000, to recoup the funds previously advanced to the Altavista Volunteer Fire Company for the purchase of a new fire engine.

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council if they had any questions for Mrs. Shelton, of which there were none at this time.

After reviewing the Draft Budget and CIP, the Town Council voted 6-0 in favor of allowing Staff to move forward with (required) advertising for two consecutive weeks, a Public Hearing to be held at Town Council's May 14th Meeting, for the FY2025 Draft Budget and CIP.

10. Town Staff Departmental Reports and Project Updates - March 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.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger informed Council that the Town received approximately \$3.5 million in grants over the last year. He said Town Staff worked hard to keep costs down for the Town, and they would continue to look for available grant opportunities.

11. Matters from Council

- Councilman Mitchell referenced the water fountain at Shreve Park, that needed repair, and was in the FY2025 CIP at an estimated repair cost of \$50,000. He suggested the item be postponed.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated that the Town should not only add new things to its parks, but also be committed to maintaining what amenities and attractions were already in place. He reminded Council that the Fountain Repair Project was in the FY2024 Draft Budget, and was postponed to FY2025. He said, with costs continuing to increase, if the project was postponed again, it may cost the Town more than the current estimate of \$50,000 to have it fixed.

Councilman Emerson shared his favor in removing the decorative water fountain.

- Councilman Emerson then referenced the proposed garbage collection fee, and asked if citizens would have the option to opt-out of the service. Staff answered that all utility account holders would receive the garbage collection fee.
- Councilman Emerson also referenced the proposed increase to Real Estate (RE) taxes. He stated that it was Council's intent a few years ago when RE was reduced, to keep it as low as possible, as long as they could; but when the time came, and it was needed, that the RE taxes would be increased to help cover the cost of inflation.

Mr. Emerson suggested Council look at Real Estate taxes each fiscal year moving forward, to hopefully be able to decrease the tax in the future.

- Mayor Mattox stated that it was always Council's goal to help Altavista be a great place to work, go to school, live, and play. He said the rising costs of inflation over the past few years had affected everyone, citizens and business owners alike; but the Town would continue to strive to do the best they could to continue improving Altavista's quality of life.

12. Closed Session

Section 2.2-3711 (A)(3): discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

Town Council convened in closed session from 6:46 - 7:02pm.

Notice was given to Staff that no actions were taken after closed session.

13. Adjournment

With no further items for discussion, Mayor Mattox adjourned this meeting at 7:03pm.

Michael Mattox, Mayor

Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk