

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, March 26, 2024

The Altavista Town Council held a Work Session in Council Chambers of the Town Hall/J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, located at 510 Seventh Street, on Tuesday, March 26th, at 5:00pm.

Call to Order

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

All Members were Present: Vice Mayor Reginald Bennett
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Timothy George
Mr. Jay Higginbotham
Dr. Scott Lowman
Mayor Michael Mattox
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Town Staff present: 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

1. Agenda Adoption

With a motion by Councilman Wayne Mitchell, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, the March 26th meeting agenda was approved as presented.

2. Recognitions and Presentations

- Town of Altavista: Financial Review - continued from February 27th work session
Presenter: RT Taylor, Davenport Public Finance

Mr. Taylor informed Staff that he was running a few minutes late to this meeting, so Mayor Mattox deferred this portion of the agenda to later in the meeting.

3. Public Hearings

STAFF: Public Services Director Tom Fore

Mr. Fore stated that the Town provided adequate notice of this hearing, by advertising it in the local newspaper (Altavista Journal) as required.

Mr. Fore stated that this public hearing was conducted to convey the Town of Altavista's intent to file an application with the USDA, Rural Development for funding of a proposed Wastewater Improvements Project; to perform upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to address existing deficiencies, while simultaneously performing upgrades that will further increase reliability and energy efficiency. He said the overall goal was to better position the Town to meet current, as well as future, treatment and capacity requirements.

Mayor Mattox opened the public hearing at 5:02pm to public comment, to which there were none. He closed the public hearing at 5:03pm, and asked Town Council if they had any questions or comments, to which there was none. Accordingly, Mayor Mattox read aloud the Resolution of Intent:

The Town Council of the Town of Altavista, Virginia, consisting of seven members, in a duly called meeting held on the 14th day of February 2023, at which a quorum was present, RESOLVED as follows:

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that in order to facilitate obtaining financial assistance from the United States of America, United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development (the Government) in the development of a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) and Environmental Report (ER) for improvements at the Altavista Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), to serve the community, the Governing Body does hereby adopt and abide by all covenants contained in the agreements, documents, and forms required by the Government to be executed.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Manager, of the Town of Altavista, be authorized to execute on behalf of the Town of Altavista, the above referenced agreements, documents, and forms; and to execute such other documents including, but not limited to, debt instruments, security instruments, and/or grant agreements as may be required in obtaining the said financial assistance.

Town Council unanimously approved the resolution - allowing Staff to move forward with the grant process; and authorizing the Town Manager to sign any documents related to the aforementioned grant.

4. CITIZEN'S TIME

There were none on this date.

RE: Agenda Section #2: Presentation

At this time, Mayor Mattox returned to Mr. Taylor's presentation. This information is intended to assist Town Council with making feasible decisions during the FY2025 budget process.

Mr. Taylor presented Town Council with an updated Financial Review of the Town's General Fund, stating that the Enterprise Fund had not been changed. He went over the information requested by Council at a previous meeting, during the initial review.

Council requested numbers for what the Town's businesses pay the county for Machine & Tool tax.

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

5. New Business

- Special Event Permit (SEP) Request: the Spark Innovation Center – Food & Networking Event Presented by Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins; also in attendance was Altavista's Business & Community Engagement Coordinator, which submitted the SEP application for Spark.

Mr. Perkins stated that the SEP application (shared with Council in their agenda packet) had more details about the event(s). he said this series of events was intended to draw attention to the Spark Innovation Center and its assets, in the hope to increase memberships for the facility.

There was a consensus of Town Council to approve the SEP, allowing the (once-per-month) event as presented on the application, which included having a Food Truck Vender on site.

- On Call Engineering Services

Background: Annually, the Town enters into contractual agreements with engineering firms for use when completing projects of the following nature: environmental, facilities, water, wastewater, storm water, structural and streets.

Public Services Director Tom Fore shared Staff's recommendation to secure ten (10) on-call firms for the Town's current multi-project needs: Peed & Bortz, Engineering Concepts Inc., Hurt & Proffitt, R W Lee Consulting, McGill, Dewberry, Mattern & Craig, Stantec, SEH, and CHA.

With a unanimous consensus, Town Council authorized this item to be placed on the April 9th Consent Agenda for official approval.

6. Unfinished Business

- Streetlight Upgrade to Decorative LID Heads

Staff requested that Council allow the use of funds, available from FY2024 CIP items that were completed under budget, to purchase the last (6) remaining decorative streetlight heads to finish this ongoing project in this calendar year.

Town Council voted 7-0 in favor of approving the request, which would complete this project.

- Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP): Sedimentation Project – Request to Advertise

Assistant Public Services Director Paul Hill informed Council that all design work was completed, along with engineer approval from VDH to advertise. He stated that Staff was seeking Council's authorization to move forward with advertising.

Councilman Higginbotham asked who completed the design work, to which Mr. Hill answered Dewberry Engineer Firm.

Upon a motion by Councilman Emerson, seconded by Vice Mayor Bennett, Town Council approved Staff's request.

- VDOT Project Update

Per Council's request, Staff shared a quote (approx. \$77,800) pertaining to the Sidewalk Extension Project at the intersection of Main Street and Seventh Street, Altavista. The amount given was if Public Works completed Phase I of this project, instead of VDOT at \$300,000.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, March 26, 2024

After discussion and consideration of the information presented, there was a consensus of Town Council to place this item on the April 9th Council Meeting Consent Agenda - authorizing Public Works to complete Phase I of the work as presented; and Phase II would be completed by VDOT as previously discussed. Phase III was put on hold, potentially not to be completed. The approval included that the funds would be coming from reserves to complete Phase I.

▪ Altavista Police Department - Flock Camera System

As requested by Council, APD Chief Tommy Merricks shared details at a previous meeting of what the Flock LPR Camera System was, and how it assisted law enforcement. Each camera's cost was \$3,000 per year to lease, and included system software. There was a Virginia State Police Grant Program (Heat) that can help pay the initial cost of the cameras, however, the 2024 deadline to submit an application for the grant had passed.

Councilman Wayne Mitchell asked to have this item removed from the March regular meeting consent agenda for further discussion. He stated that Council had just received the request at the regular meeting, and he believed Council needed the additional time to consider the request.

Mr. Mitchell also shared his belief that since citizens paid for police protection through state, county, and local taxes, then the cameras should be paid for the same way.

Councilman Higginbotham concurred with Mr. Mitchell regarding giving Council more time to discuss and consider new items and information.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett said that he thought the revenue from the Town's School Zone Speed Camera Program would be utilized to pay for the Flock cameras.

Chief Merricks stated the revenue from the School Zone Speed Camera Program was deposited into the Town's General Fund. He reminded Council this item was in the FY2025 Draft CIP.

Town Council voted 6-1 in favor of leaving the item in the FY2025 CIP, and making no changes to the draft budget for this item. Council Mitchell voted against the item.

▪ Green Hill Cemetery: Monument Request, continued discussion

Town Council heard this request and reviewed monument options during a previous meeting, and asked that the item be placed on this agenda for further discussion.

After consideration, there was a consensus of Town Council to place the item in the FY2026 CIP.

▪ FY2025 Draft Budget and CIP – continued discussion

At the March 12th Council Meeting, Finance Director Tobie Shelton shared draft budget information for the Town's Enterprise Fund and General Fund, reminding Town Council of scenario options identified by Staff that would allow for a balanced budget.

Councilman Jay Higginbotham referenced the funds (\$15,000) previously approved by Town Council and allocated in the FY2025 CIP to put a second surface treatment on the Cemetery Connector Trail. He recommended re-allocating the funds to begin surface treating the Jenks River Trail, between the two new bridges, and connecting the Jenks Trail to Eagle Trail.

Town Council voted 4-3 in favor of keeping the funds in the FY2025 CIP for its original intent.

There was a consensus of Town Council to move forward with the Draft Budget and CIP as it currently stood; which included an increase in Real Estate Tax from .10 to .20, and implementation of a garbage collection fee of \$8 per month/\$24 quarterly, to be billed to all utility accounts: with a separate public hearing to be held for this matter at the April 9th Council Meeting.

7. 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.

Mayor Mattox asked Staff if they had any additional updates for Council.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, March 26, 2024

- Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins shared that Altavista On Track (AOT) was recently informed of a \$75,000 Downtown Investment Grant opportunity through the DHCD. He asked Council to consider allowing AOT to apply for the grant, which required a 1/3 match from the Town. He said AOT indicated, if awarded the grant, they would utilize the funds to upgrade the Spark Innovation Center's front exterior, with shade awnings, tables, chairs, and umbrellas.

Town Council voted unanimously in favor of approving AOT's request, authorizing the grant application and the 1/3 dollar match (\$37,500) from the Town.

- Altavista's Business & Community Engagement Coordinator, Autumn Evans, gave Council a brief overview of the Spark Innovation Center's "first quarter" operations and activities. She stated that the center welcomed five new members, increasing monthly revenue by 30%, and that the Boost-Your-Business Series continued to be successful, with all cohorts at full capacity

Mrs. Evans also shared that Spark was partnering with Iron Lives to offer a Young Entrepreneurs Summer Program, open to (a maximum of) ten rising Juniors and graduating Seniors from Altavista High School. She said a grant would be utilized to give the students \$500 each to start their businesses.

- After "Matters from Council", Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins also informed Council that the Town of Altavista recently received a \$50,000 Brownfields Assistance Grant, which will be used for remediation efforts and design work for the Frazier Farm Project.

8. Matters from Council

- Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett asked Staff to remove, what he thought was a piece of equipment, located on Eagle Trail in English Park, near the old rock quarry, stating it had grass growing up around it. And Councilman Higginbotham mentioned old Ash Trees in English Park that still needed to be disposed of.

Assistant Public Services Director Paul Hill stated that Staff would address both matters, however, the PW grounds crew was currently busy with scheduled grass-cutting maintenance.

Public Services Director Tom Fore informed Council that Public Works had also been busy over the past few months cleaning and clearing out alleyways, ditches, and right-of-ways.

9. Closed Session 7:06-7:26pm

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

Notice was given to Staff, per the Asst. Town Manager Matt Perkins, that no actions were taken by Town Council after closed session.

10. Adjournment

With no further items for discussion, Mayor Mattox adjourned this meeting at 7:26pm.

Michael Mattox, Mayor

Matt Perkins, Asst. Town Manager