

Town Council Work Session, January 25, 2022

The January 2022 Work Session for Altavista’s Town Council was held in Council Chambers of the J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on January 25, 2022, at 5:00 PM.

Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Town Council

Members present:

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Timothy George
Mr. Jay Higginbotham
Dr. Scott Lowman
Mayor Michael Mattox
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Also Present:

Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Treasurer/Finance Director
Mr. Thomas Merricks, APD Chief of Police
Ms. Sharon D. Williams, Community Development Director
Mr. Tom Fore, Interim Public Services Director
Mr. Jeff Arthur, Public Works Manager
Mr. John Eller, Town Attorney
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

1. Agenda Adoption

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council if they had any questions or concerns in regard to the proposed January 2022 Council Work Session Agenda, to which there were none.

Councilman Tracy Emerson made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried:

VOTE:

Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes
Mr. Timothy George	Yes
Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes
Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes
Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes

2. Recognitions and Presentations

2.1 FY2023 Budget Process: Local Agencies and Non-profits Annual Fund Requests

- YMCA: Maria McCracken, Executive Director

Ms. McCracken stated that the YMCA was asking once again for financial support from the Town of Altavista, in the amount of \$100,000. She stated, through town support, the YMCA was able to continue offering the quality programs to the community, such as multiple youth sports and also exercise programs for area seniors.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the YMCA’s new exercise equipment and asked if the YMCA had any new programs.

Ms. McCracken offered Council insight on the new YMCA-360 Program; a new video program that was available through email access. She stated the “lifestyle platform” offered over 2,100 health and wellness videos to the community.

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Ms. McCracken informed Council that the Altavista YMCA was currently working with other area YMCA facilities to bring “E-sports” to the Altavista facility. She said the program teaches coding, cooperative play, and problem solving.

Mayor Mattox and Town Council thanked Ms. McCracken and the YMCA for the work they do to help promote a good quality-of-life for the community.

Ms. McCracken thanked Council for their time and consideration.

- Altavista Area Chamber of Commerce: Grace Mattox, Executive Director

Ms. Mattox stated the Chamber of Commerce was asking Council to continue the town’s annual support of the Chamber in FY2023, in the amount of \$30,000. She shared with Council a spreadsheet identifying where the town funds were utilized and allocated in previous years.

Ms. Mattox thanked Town Council and the Town of Altavista for their continued support, not only financially, but also physically by attending Chamber events.

Councilman Mitchell shared his appreciation for the Chamber of Commerce’s continued efforts to widen their presence in the community by supporting, not only town businesses, but also town citizens, with events such as the Christmas parade, Christmas tree lighting, and TGIF events.

- Altavista On Track: Reverend Ed Soto, AOT Board President

Reverend Soto came before Council on behalf of Altavista On Track to request a total of \$10,000 in funds for FY2023. He stated the request represented the usual \$5,000 for administration fees and \$2,500 each in “seed money” for two new events.

Councilman Mitchell referenced the \$10,000 request and shared his appreciation for AOT’s fundraising efforts to lower the amount by \$5,000 from the previous year.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated, with a spring festival being added to AOT’s fundraising event schedule, he was confident the fall and spring festivals would eventually be self-funded. He shared his appreciation for AOT’s continued involvement, not only in the downtown area, but also throughout the Altavista community.

Reverend Soto stated, as President of AOT, the Board would continue to look for additional ways to incorporate new fundraising activities and events to AOT’s annual schedule, helping AOT to become more self-sufficient.

Mayor Mattox thanked Reverend Soto for his time and the work he does with AOT.

- Altavista Senior’s Center: Stormi Anderson, Campbell County Recreation Program

Ms. Anderson informed Town Council that the county’s recreation department would soon have a new name – “Citizen Engagement & Quality of Life Program”.

Ms. Anderson stated the Altavista Senior Center met every Wednesday (weather permitting) from 12 noon-2pm and currently served approximately thirty (30) seniors. She stated the center offered seniors a place to gather outside of their own homes for fellowship, activities, and community service opportunities.

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Ms. Anderson asked, on behalf of the Altavista Senior Center, for \$1,000 in funds to help support the center in FY2023. She stated she would be happy to answer questions.

Councilman Mitchell asked if the COVID pandemic affected the center's attendance.

Ms. Anderson stated the center's members did not meet in person during the height of the pandemic. She said, late last year, the group participated in sending "cards of kindness" to area nursing homes as an activity they could do from home and are now back to meeting at the center each week.

Mr. Mitchell stated it was important to keep in mind that the pandemic could affect a person's mental health, especially seniors that were homebound, so any interaction or activities with others was a good way to help.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked Ms. Anderson to share the center's contact information.

Ms. Anderson stated anyone could contact her at the Campbell County Recreation Office and she would be happy to help them with enrollment into a senior program.

Mayor Mattox and Town Council thanked Ms. Anderson for her presentation.

- Small Business Development Center: Stephanie Keener, SBDC Executive Director

Ms. Keener stated the SBDC served the Lynchburg region, which included the Town of Altavista. She thanked Town Council for their consideration of continuing the town's annual contribution to the SBDC.

Ms. Keener informed Council that the SBDC served 125 clients during the previous fiscal year, with \$2 million in capital formation. She stated the SBDC's current clients/businesses represent approximately 500 jobs across the region.

Ms. Keener stated, over the past two years, the SBDC hosted 42 online events that hosted over 1,100 registrations from across the Commonwealth of Virginia, which included Altavista businesses.

Ms. Keener stated the SBDC was looking forward to working with Altavista's new Town Manager and to continue its partnership with the Town of Altavista. She stated she was excited for the new Spark Innovation Center to open, allowing the SBDC a local destination to meet clients and hold training events.

Councilman Mitchell thanked Ms. Keener and the SBDC for the work they do.

Councilman Lowman stated he agreed with Ms. Keener and believed the Spark Innovation Center would be a good opportunity for the SBDC to utilize a local space to service the Altavista area.

Mayor Mattox asked Ms. Keener for the dollar amount the SBDC was requesting from the town for support in FY2023.

Ms. Keener stated the Small Business Development Center was requesting \$6,000 in support funds from the town. She reminded Council that any funds the town contributes was a one-to-one "match" with the SBDC, therefore, a \$6,000 contribution becomes \$12,000 in program funding.

Mayor Mattox thanked Ms. Keener for her time and presentation.

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2.2 Lynch Creek Stream Bank Restoration Project – Bid Recommendation

Background:

Town Council previously agreed to the proposed Lynch Creek Sewer-line Replacement Project due to the line having multiple problems that had created inflow and infiltration issues. This project is the last of several projects that were funded by the current borrowing. Town Council approved moving forward with the bidding process for this project and bids have been received.

Mr. Tom Fore, Altavista's Interim Public Services Director, informed Council that Mendon Pipeline was the lowest bidder at \$2,229,500, however, the bid was over the initial cost estimate by \$458,115.

Mr. Fore stated he believed, with the recent increase in material costs, Mendon Pipeline's bid was in line with the current market and stated Hurt & Proffitt recommended awarding them the project.

Mr. Fore informed Council the town had a cost savings of approximately \$100,000 from the McMinnis Waterline Project that could be utilized for this project; and he would confer with Tobie Shelton, the town's Finance Director, to determine if more savings were available to reappropriate for this project.

Councilman Mitchell asked when the town would be finished with the Lynch Creek Project, to which Mr. Fore stated by the end of next fiscal year.

Mr. Fore stated the Lynch Creek Project was the last of eleven projects that were funded by the town's most recent borrowing. He stated, once the project was complete, he believed the shortfall in funds would be less than the fore-mentioned amount.

Councilman Higginbotham asked when the Melinda Drive Project would be complete, to which Mr. Fore stated by the end of summer, 2022.

Mayor Mattox took this opportunity to thank Mr. Fore and the Public Services Department and Road Crew for the outstanding work they did in removing snow and ice from town streets and parking lots after the recent large snowstorm.

Mr. Fore stated he believed the department had a lot of pride in their work and their community and he also agreed they did an excellent job at removing the snow and ice.

Vice Mayor Bennett also thanked the Public Services Department and Road Crew for the good job they did during the snowstorm. He stated he believed Altavista was one of the best towns in the area at keeping their streets cleared from snow. He stated the town was also fortunate to be able to offer such great service and amenities to its citizens for the lowest tax rates in the area.

Mr. Fore asked for Council's consideration to approve Hurt & Proffitt's recommendation and award the Lynch Creek Sewer-line Replacement Project to Mendon Pipeline for the quoted amount of \$2,229,500.

There was a unanimous consensus to place this item on the February Regular Council Meeting Consent Agenda for official approval.

Councilman Higginbotham stated, due to the continuous increase in materials and vehicle costs, he suggested Council consider authorizing (Utilities) staff to purchase the vehicles in the FY2023 Draft CIP now, rather than later.

Mr. Fore stated, per Mr. Higginbotham's suggestion, he would have the cost information related to the vehicle purchases proposed in the FY2023 CIP for Council's consideration at the February 8th Council Meeting.

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2.3 Town of Altavista Comprehensive Financial Review – Davenport Presentation/Report

Background:

Town Staff previously briefed Town Council regarding a financial analysis for the General Fund and the Enterprise Fund. Staff met with RT Taylor, Davenport, and the analysis of both funds has begun. Mr. Taylor is seeking Council's input before finalizing the analysis.

Mr. Taylor shared with Council a document that gave an overview of what Davenport was currently working on with Town Staff, which included gathering and compiling information to set the initial framework for the town's financial update report.

Mr. Taylor informed Council that a portion of the report would include a review of the town's borrowing a couple of years ago for Utility maintenance and upgrade projects. He stated the review would offer "next step" recommendations for moving forward.

Mr. Taylor stated Davenport's financial analysis would be completed in time to offer Town Council a better financial view of the town for their budget process.

He asked for Council's input and guidance on any other items or questions they would like answered in the analysis report.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the town's annual revenue versus its expenses. He asked if the financial analysis would review the town's current health/status in those areas.

Mr. Taylor stated the town's revenue and expenditures would be part of the report's financial trending review over the past five years.

Mr. Bennett asked how often the town should review financial trends.

Mr. Taylor stated it was part of the GFOA's (Government Finance Officers Association) recommended "best practices" to do so during an annual budget process and it was Davenport's intent for their report to help the town manage those practices.

Councilman Mitchell asked if the Town of Altavista should consider being "bond rated".

Mr. Taylor stated it was not required for the town to acquire a bond rating, however, that item was looked at by creditors during borrowing reviews. He stated, when a locality was financially strong, it offered its community a sense of stability in knowing it was being well-managed.

Mr. Mitchell referenced Council's recent approval to decrease the town's Reserve Fund from 100% to 50%. He asked if that action would affect the town's borrowing power.

Mr. Taylor stated, although the action of reducing the Reserve Fund would be a "red flag" during a credit review, it was an action that could be favorably explained, therefore it would not lower a credit review or hinder a borrowing outcome.

Mayor Mattox referenced Council's decision to lower the Reserve Fund percentage and stated the decision was made so the funds could be placed in an investment account and allocated its use towards projects for the betterment of the community.

Mayor Mattox asked if there was a significant difference in savings between the town utilizing its reserve funds and using a bond to pay for a (utility) project.

Mr. Taylor stated it would depend on the current market rates and their long-term projections. He stated he would include the analysis to the town's comprehensive financial report.

There were no additional comments or questions from Town Council in regard to this item.

Mayor Mattox thanked Mr. Taylor for his time and for Davenport's update.

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3. Citizen's Time

Mayor Mattox opened the meeting floor to any citizen(s) wishing to address Town Council.

Mr. Isaac and Elaine Grotto, 1212 Lynch Road, informed Town Council they had recently purchased the piece of property along the river behind the Old Lane Company. Mr. Grotto stated, if approved by the town, his family intended to construct a campground on the property.

Mayor Mattox informed Mr. Grotto that he would need to speak with the town's Community Development Director, Sharon D. Williams, for zoning requirements pertaining to the property

Councilman Mitchell shared his excitement for the proposed campground and stated it was always nice to have new businesses open up in town.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked if the proposed campground would only be for short-term camping usage, or would long-term options also be available.

Mr. Grotto stated he intended to offer seasonal options, considered long-term, but would close the campground in the winter months.

Councilman Mitchell asked if RVs would be accommodated, or if the campground would be primitive camping only.

Mr. Grotto stated the campground would have areas for both RV parking and primitive (tent) camping. He stated he also intended to add cabins to the campground as another short-stay option for visitors in town.

Mr. Grotto stated, with water, sewer, and electrical access already existing on the property, he believed it was a perfect location to add a campground to the town's river amenities.

Mayor Mattox thanked Mr. Grotto for his time and welcomed his family to the Town of Altavista.

4. Items Referred from Previous Meetings

There were no referred items to discuss.

5. Discussion for Items New and Unfinished

5.1 FY2023-2027 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Parks & Recreation

Background:

Annually, the Town is required to adopt a budget prior to July 1st, the beginning of the new fiscal year. During last year's budget process, there was a consensus of Town Council to receive the draft capital budget much earlier in the budget process, allowing them more time to review the working document to ensure it reflected changing community needs, priorities, and funding opportunities. Council received the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) project sheets for Parks and Recreation, detailing large capital projects, and as well as associated funding options. This will be the first opportunity for Council to provide staff input and direction on the Parks & Recreation's draft CIP working document.

Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Altavista Treasurer/Finance Director, stated the Parks & Recreation Department was the last item for Council to receive for review of the FY2023 Draft CIP. She referenced the Walking/Biking Trail Connection Project and reminded Council that item was in the FY2022 CIP Budget, but there was a consensus of Council to move the item to FY2023. She stated there was also \$25,000 allocated in the budget for planning and design of this project.

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Mrs. Shelton stated two items listed in the Parks & Recreation FY2023 draft CIP were maintenance items for the Public Works Department: (1) painting two town gazebos, and (2) painting the interior of restrooms in both English and Shreve Parks, as well as painting the interior of the concession stand located inside War Memorial Park (ballpark).

Mrs. Shelton referenced the Shade Sails item and reminded Council this item was introduced at Council's April 7th, 2021, Work Session, at which time, Town Council directed staff to place the item on a future CIP for further discussion and consideration.

Mayor Mattox asked if there would be any surplus funds available in the budget that could be utilized for the Parks & Recreation FY2023 proposed CIP projects.

Mrs. Shelton stated it was too early in the budget process to determine. She asked if Council had a dollar amount they would like to stay under or close to.

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council to look over the Parks & Recreation proposed CIP and offer any suggestions to prioritize the items on the list.

Councilman Emerson referenced the proposed Shade Sails and asked in which parks they would be located.

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams stated the Shade Sails, produced by Jeremy Funderburk, were proposed for Leonard Coleman Memorial Park, Bedford Avenue Park, and the yard area located behind the Booker Building in English Park.

Councilman George shared photos from the Parks & Recreation Master Plan showing the road along Pittsylvania Avenue, from Main Street to the Lane Access Road. He stated the Master Plan referenced information to implement a walking/biking lane alongside the existing sidewalk and continuing to the Third Street entrance, with a crosswalk to cross Pittsylvania Avenue, as a safer way for walkers and bikers to enter English Park.

Councilman Higginbotham stated the bank at the entrance of Third Street was steep and often flooded, making it not conducive to adding sidewalks or bike lanes.

Mrs. Shelton reminded Council that they were presented with a \$600,000 improvement plan for that area in March 2021, and Council decided not to move forward at that time.

Mayor Mattox suggested Town Council consider having a "placeholder" for the Parks & Recreation CIP, and during the budget process, select viable CIP items within that amount.

Councilman George referenced the proposed Dog Park in the FY2023 draft CIP and stated he did not believe there had been a consensus of Council to proceed with this item.

Vice Mayor Bennett reminded Council that the Town of Altavista was a "leash required" community and he believed there was a great need for this item. He shared his favor with keeping the item on the draft CIP.

Councilman Mitchell stated, with Council just receiving the Parks & Recreation draft CIP that evening, he agreed with Mayor Mattox to set a placeholder in the budget and discuss the matter further during the continued budget process.

Mayor Mattox reminded Council that evening was designated to receive the draft CIP, however, they were not in the position to decide on any of the items until staff could provide them with an amount that would potentially be available to work with as a placeholder.

There was a consensus of Council not to decide on any Parks & Recreation draft CIP items at that time, but to have a "placeholder" (dollar amount) allocated for Parks & Recreation CIP projects that would be approved during the budget process; and place this item on a future agenda for further discussion.

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Council asked staff to keep them posted if there would be any funds available from the FY2022 P&R Budget to help them make a decision on the FY2023 placeholder amount.

Councilman Higginbotham asked for an update on the progress of the Jenks River Trail Extension Project (FY2022).

Tom Fore, Interim Public Services Director, informed Council the first bridge was around \$50,000 and the second bridge was approximately \$60,000, including installation. He stated the trail extension total cost was estimated at \$250,000, with stone or crushed gravel.

Councilman George asked for an update on the FY2022 English Park New/Additional Restroom Project.

Tobie Shelton, Altavista's Treasurer/Finance Director reminded Council there was \$124,000 allocated in the FY2022 Budget for this project, however, it had been discussed that permanent structured restrooms could not be installed at the initial/desired location, therefore portable toilets would be considered.

Mayor Mattox suggested this item could be placed on a future agenda for further discussion

Town Treasurer and Finance Director Tobie Shelton referenced the Town Council's FY2023 Budget Process Calendar, previously approved by Council. She asked that the calendar be amended to receive the FY2023 Draft CIP on February 22nd instead of the 8th.

Councilman Jay Higginbotham made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, to approve Mrs. Shelton's request and amend the budget calendar to reflect that Town Council would receive the revised draft CIP at their February 22nd Work Session, instead of at the February 8th Regular Council Meeting.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes

6. Updates and Informational Items

6.1 Utility Project Updates

Mr. Tom Fore, Interim Public Services Director, gave Council updates on a few of the town's current projects.

- McMinnis Water Line:
Mr. Fore informed Council that this project had been completed, except for a final walk-through. He stated the contractor would return in the spring to lay additional grass seed.
- Lynch Creek Sewer Line
Mr. Fore stated, due to waiting on needed materials, this project would not begin until August 2022.

Mr. Fore stated he would be happy to answer any questions Council may have in regard to Peed & Bortz's January 2022 Status Report and/or the Bi-weekly report on the Melinda Drive High Pressure Zone (HPZ) Project, to which there were none.

Mayor Mattox thanked Mr. Fore and Public Services for the work they do for the Town of Altavista.

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6.2 Town Council 2022 Retreat Consideration

Background:

Every two years, Town Council holds an extra work session, identified as a "Retreat". This is an opportunity for Council to review if the town's goals and objectives established at their last retreat were being met; and to determine whether new goals were necessary to accomplish the town's current needs.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated, under direction of Council, he contacted Kimble Payne, with The Berkley Group, and requested his services to facilitate the 2022 Town Council Retreat. He stated Mr. Payne agreed to "pencil-in" the meeting on his calendar and would confirm within two weeks if he would be available for the June 7th meeting.

Mr. Shanaberger also informed Council that he received a confirmation that the Altavista Train Station's meeting room was available and had been reserved for Tuesday, June 7th for Council's 2022 Retreat.

Mr. Shanaberger referenced the fore-mentioned discussion pertaining to the Parks & Recreation FY2023 Draft CIP. He stated, although the Recreation Committee had not met in three months, he was hopeful they would have a quorum to hold their February meeting. He stated it was his intention to discuss their draft CIP and have recommendations finalized for Town Council by the February 22nd Work Session.

7. Public Comment (Non-Agenda Items)

There were no public comments on this date.

8. Matters from Council

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any additional comments or items for discussion.

- Councilman Lowman referenced the Cruise-In Car Shows held in Altavista during summer months by the Backwoods Rod & Custom Association. He stated it was brought to his attention that, while they appreciated being able to use English Park for the car shows, it was more conducive to have them at the Altavista Trade Lot.

Councilman Higginbotham asked why the organization was no longer able to hold the car shows at the Trade Lot.

Ms. Sharon Williams, Community Development Director, stated the transition happened before she was employed with the town, so she was unsure of what took place.

Mayor Mattox asked if Council agreed with authorizing Dr. Lowman, Ms. Williams, and APD Chief Merricks to investigate whether there were any issues hindering the organization from holding their event at the Trade Lot; and keep Council informed of the matter, to which there was consensus to do so.

Dr. Lowman informed Council that the Car Shows held in Chatham, VA usually drew an estimated 400 participants to the event.

Councilman Higginbotham shared his support with allowing events such as this that would potentially draw a large amount of people and visitors to town.

Ms. Williams reminded Council that, if approved, the organization would need a Special Use Permit for the car show event and staff did not normally authorize a Special Use Permit without Council's approval. She asked if it was Council's will to allow staff to approve this specific request if found viable.

There was a consensus of Town Council to do so.

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- Councilman George asked for an update on the Lynch Creek Bank Restoration Project located behind the Altavista YMCA Family Center.

Mr. Tom Fore, Interim Public Service Director, stated the project was currently underway at an estimated cost of \$70,000. He stated staff (Public Works) would be helping to fill the gabion baskets with crushed rock that were placed along the creek to stabilize the banks.

- Mayor Mattox informed Town Council that he and the new Town Manager recently attended a meeting with Campbell County Administrator Frank Rogers and Board of Supervisors member Dale Moore. He stated the meeting was very positive, especially pertaining to Broadband.

Mayor Mattox stated both gentlemen ensured him they would be working hard to get better Broadband services in the southern portion of Campbell County, such as Altavista and Brookneal.

- Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett asked Jeff Arthur, Public Works Manager, to investigate the traffic light at the intersection of 7th and Amherst, which he believed was defective, because the light was not operating correctly during evening hours. Mr. Arthur stated he would check on the light.
- Councilman Tracy Emerson informed Council that the county was struggling to keep police officers due to other organizations, such as Lynchburg City, offering higher salaries. He suggested allowing a salary analysis with surrounding peers/agencies for potential salary increases for the Altavista Police Department (APD), in order to get and retain quality officers.

Chief Merricks stated he was also evaluating other ways to compensate officers as incentives to come to, and stay with, the APD.

- Councilman Wayne Mitchell agreed with Mr. Emerson that the Town needed to be “proactive” with their pay scale and encouraged Council to also consider a salary analysis for all Town Employees.

9. Closed Session

No Closed Session was scheduled for this date.

10. Adjournment

Mayor Mattox asked if there were any additional comments or concerns from Town Council, to which there were none.

Mayor Mattox adjourned this portion of the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Michael E. Mattox, Mayor

Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk