

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, March 7th, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at Town Hall, located at 510 7th Street, Altavista, Virginia.

Members present: John Jordan, Chairman
 Marie Mitchell, Vice Chair
 Reggie Bennett, Vice Mayor
 Marvin Clements
 Meghan Bolling

Staff present: Sharon D. Williams, AICP, Community Development Director
 Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

Absent: John Eller, Town Attorney

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman John Jordan called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

With all Planning Commission members being present, Chairman Jordan confirmed a quorum. Chairman Jordan took this time to introduce the newest Commission member, Meghan Bolling. He asked Mrs. Bolling if she would like to say a few words.

Mrs. Bolling shared that she was an Art Teacher at Brookville High School. She said that she and her husband liked to bike and fish and enjoyed utilizing the town's natural resources. Mrs. Bolling stated she had lived in Altavista for 15 years and believed it was a great place to live.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chairman Jordan asked if there were any amendments to be made to the agenda, to which there were none. Upon a motion by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, and seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to approve the meeting agenda as presented.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION:

Chairman Jordan delivered an Invocation for the meeting and afterwards, the Planning Commission and staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Jordan asked the Commission if they had any questions or revisions pertaining to the February 2022 meeting minutes, to which there were none.

Upon a motion made by Vice Mayor Bennett, and seconded by Vice Chair Mitchell, the Planning Commission voted 4-0 and approved the minutes from their February 2022 Planning Commission meeting as presented. Mrs. Bolling abstained, as she was not a commissioner at the February meeting.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Chairman Jordan opened the floor for public comment.

Issac Grotto, 1212 Lynch Road, Altavista, introduced himself and stated he had purchased a parcel adjacent to the river and located behind the former Lane Company property that he and his wife wanted to develop as a campground. He stated he was at the meeting to listen to the Commission's discussion regarding an agenda item.

Community Development Director Sharon Williams reminded the Commission that the issue before them was a discussion about use, not a specific property. She advised against comments until public hearings were held, to protect the integrity of any future action.

Chairman Jordan told Mr. Grotto the Planning Commission had to follow procedure. He encouraged him to attend if public hearings were held. Chairman Jordan then closed the public comment period.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no public hearings scheduled for this date.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. 2040 Comprehensive Plan – Goals and Objectives

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that the Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Objectives discussion would be divided into topics, mirrored with the SOAR Analysis, and discussed over several meetings. She stated the updated plan would be structured differently than the previous 2016 plan. Ms. Williams reminded the Commission of the multiple town plans she showed them at a previous meeting and shared that each plan had different goals, objectives, and timelines. She stated, with Community Development being a part of almost each document, she had competing goals and objectives. Ms. Williams stated, for that reason, there was a comprehensive review of each plan so they could be meshed into one document, the town's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. She stated the 2016 Comprehensive Plan was very cumbersome and overwhelming to developers, staff, and citizens, therefore the updated plan would be streamlined to be more user friendly. Ms. Williams move forward and said she intended to cover two topics that evening, Natural & Cultural Environment and Economic Development.

▪ Natural and Cultural Environment

Goal: Protect the town's natural resources and strive to improve the physical appearance and quality of the town.

Objectives:

- 1) Support and expand initiatives that maintain or improve the town's air quality
- 2) Expand programs and practices that protect water resources
- 3) Protect the natural beauty of the town and surrounding environment
- 4) Maintain and expand the town's parks, natural spaces, and cultural amenities to provide low-costs and inviting spaced for resident and visitors
- 5) Mitigate natural hazard impacts to personal safety and property through education, programs, and policies

When discussion Objective 2, Ms. Williams referenced the town's Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP) that was recently updated by Director of Public Services Tom Fore and Town Staff, and added to the Regional FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is required to be updated every five years. She said it was important to keep the plan updated for hazard mitigation purposes, and it also showed the town's plan and stability when submitting grant applications.

Ms. Williams then referenced Altavista's Adopt-A-Street Program and stated the town needed to look at additional ways to advertise the program to encourage more community support and involvement.

Chairman Jordan asked how the program worked.

Ms. Williams stated an application needed to be completed and only certain streets were currently available for adoption. She said four cleanups need to be completed in a year and the town provided all supplies. She explained a sign would then be erected with the adopter's name.

Commissioner Marvin Clements asked if staff had a plan on how to reach more citizens with the information about the Adopt-A-Street Program and other town programs.

Ms. Williams stated the town did not have a large following on social media, but items were still posted in the hope they would be shared with other individuals and groups.

Commissioner Clements stated the town had a large number of older citizens that might not follow social media platforms and the town should consider holding more town meetings.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission of her involvement with Altavista On Track's (AOT) upcoming spring festival and stated they had discussed advertising on television, which was not as expensive as radio. She said the option could be considered for town information as well.

Vice Chair Mitchell shared her favor with the town's newsletter, which accompanied quarterly utility bills. She stated it was a good opportunity for the town to share multiple items of information with town citizens.

Ms. Williams referenced the town calendar, distributed to each resident and business the first week of each new year, and said the town also adds important information to the calendar bag.

Vice Chair Mitchell suggested adding reoccurring events held annually and ongoing town programs, such as Adopt-A-Street, to the calendar every year.

Ms. Williams moved on with the review of Goals and Objectives and referenced Objective 4, coordinating with the Altavista Area YMCA, and said the town needed to continue to pursue opportunities to coordinate with Altavista On Track (AOT), the Chamber of Commerce, and the Senior Center, to provide events and activities.

When discussing Objective 5, Ms. Williams referenced Campbell County's Civil Emergency Operations Plan and stated businesses and citizens continually needed to be updated of its hazard preparedness and plans. She said it was also important to promote and educate citizens on programs such as the National Flood Insurance Program and the Federal Emergency Management Association's (FEMA) federal flood insurance program.

Commissioner Clements asked if the town's emergency alert system still operated.

Vice Chair Mitchell stated the previous Assistant Town Manager, Dan Witt, discontinued the program due to lack of interest and citizen participation.

Ms. Williams said she would ask her fellow Town Directors for suggestions of how the town could improve on delivering information.

Ms. Williams asked the Commission for their thoughts on how the updated Comprehensive Plan's Goal and Objectives had been restructured. She said the intent was for the document to be easier to read and more comprehensive than in the past.

Vice Mayor Mitchell shared her favor with the simplicity of the document. She said, even though there were more details in the overview of the Goals and Objectives, it was easier to read.

Chairman Jordan referenced the Goals and Objectives section of the previous Comprehensive Plan and asked if the new one would also have the same structure that included an action plan, timeframe for implementation, and the organization or town partner(s) responsible.

Ms. Williams answered it would not. She said there were items in the previous plan where the responsible party did not know that they had been dedicated to that item. Ms. Williams reminded the Commission that a locality's Comprehensive Plan was not law as was the Zoning Ordinance, but to be considered a guidance document for a locality's vision, with the Zoning Ordinance and Sub-division Ordinance executing that vision. She said a Comprehensive Plan was a living document that could be amended as needed, as well as the Zoning and Subdivision documents, and used as a guide to accomplish the town's vision.

Chairman Jordan suggested Ms. Williams and/or a representative of the Commission bring the Comprehensive Plan before Town Council at least three to four times per year to review its progress and discuss how to keep the plan moving forward.

Ms. Williams stated she would explore the possibility with the Town Manager.

Town Attorney John Eller asked, when a rezoning was requested that did not match the Comprehensive Plan, would a Comprehensive Plan amendment be required.

Ms. Williams answered yes because of Substantial Accord. She said if it was not in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, an amendment was needed and could be done as a companion paper

With no further questions or comments, Ms. Williams asked Chairman Jordan if he wished to move forward to the next topic, Economic Development, or table the discussion for the next meeting and move forward on the agenda with item 8b. consideration of a student representative as an Ex-Officio member to the Planning Commission.

Chairman Jordan stated he believed the Commission needed a sufficient amount of time to discuss Economic Development and asked to move forward on the agenda.

b. Discussion of Ex-Officio Student Representative

Ms. Williams referenced the December 2021 Planning Commission meeting where the Commission discussed the idea of having more of an input from youth on town committees and asked her to take the idea of an Ex-Officio Student Representative on the Planning Commission to Town Council. She said Council was in favor of the idea and also suggested having an alternate on standby if the designated student was not available. Ms. Williams stated she asked Vice Chair Marie Mitchell if she would be the liaison between the Commission and the High School and Vice Chair Mitchell agreed to.

Vice Chair Mitchell said she contacted the school principal, Mr. Proffitt and had not heard back.

Ms. Williams said she agreed with Commissioner Clements' statement from the December meeting, that being an Ex-Officio was a great opportunity for a student to help shape their own future and the community they lived in. She stated she would be happy to contact the school if needed. Ms. Williams asked the Commission for their input on whether a student should be given a stipend for their time while serving as an Ex-Officio.

There was a consensus of the Commission to move forward with a student representative.

Vice Chair Mitchell told Ms. Williams, when she heard back from the principal with a viable meeting date, she would let her know so that she could also be a part of the discussion. She asked Commissioner Meghan Bolling, a teacher, for her thoughts on the subject.

Commissioner Bolling shared her favor with the idea and believed it would encourage students to participate in local government and promote community awareness with participating students.

Vice Mayor Bennett suggested staff confirm with the school whether a student was allowed to receive a stipend for their time as an Ex-Officio.

Ms. Williams asked the Commission, if allowed, what stipend amount they believed would be feasible.

There was a consensus of the Commission that \$25 per meeting was a fair amount.

Ms. Williams stated that she and Vice Chair Mitchell would discuss the matter with the school and they would update the Commission at the April 4th meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion on Camping – Not Currently Permitted by the Town's Zoning Ordinance

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that a couple that had recently moved to Altavista, had purchased a piece of property located between the old Lane Company and the Staunton River. She said the couple intended to develop it as a campground, which was not permitted under town code. She stated, under the Code of Virginia, if a use was not permitted, it was prohibited.

Ms. Williams referenced the town's Zoning Ordinance, *Section 86-8*, which addressed uses not provided for. She said staff sought direction from the Commission whether to recommend a Zoning Ordinance text amendment to Town Council, or to ask Council to direct the Commission to investigate the matter and gather additional information for further consideration.

Chairman Jordan asked if the request could be handled through a Special Use Permit.

Ms. Williams answered it could not, because the use was not permitted at all under town ordinance.

Town Attorney John Eller asked if the area in question was industrially zoned.

Ms. Williams answered yes it was but encouraged the Commission not to focus on any specific area of interest, but instead, focus on the requested use currently not being allowed in town code.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the Comprehensive Plan update reviewed earlier that evening and the mention of the town's desire to increase recreational use along the river. He shared his favor in pursuing a text amendment in order for the town's Zoning Ordinance to coincide with its Comprehensive Plan when the update was complete.

Chairman Jordan asked his fellow Commissioners if they desired staff to pursue the campground use any further, or not at all.

Commissioner Clements said he would prefer to have additional information on the matter before voting for this item.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission, if approved, the town would need to decide which zoning districts the use would be permitted in and if a Special Use Permit (SUP) would be required. She stated that she had worked in localities that had multiple issues with campgrounds, and for that reason, she would encourage the town to require a SUP for this use. Ms. Williams stated there was a process to request a use, which included coming before Council with a complete development plan to determine the impact on traffic, infrastructure, and if there were any environmental concerns. She said it would then be up to the Planning Commission whether to proceed, and ultimately up to Town Council whether to approve the request. Ms. Williams also informed the Commission that the Parks & Recreation Committee appropriated \$25,000 in their FY2023 draft Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for a feasibility study for an RV Campground in English Park.

Chairman Jordan referenced the City of Lynchburg and their ordinance, which had a section that covered campgrounds and the details of what was required. He asked Ms. Williams if that was similar to what she had in mind for Altavista.

Ms. Williams said, if the Commission desired, staff would look at localities of similar size to Altavista, not Lynchburg, and determine what was appropriate for Altavista when drafting a Zoning Ordinance text amendment. She asked the Commission for direction and if they were interested in moving forward with this item.

There was a consensus of the Planning Commission for staff to move forward.

Ms. Williams stated, once a zoning district(s) had been identified, staff could draft a text amendment.

Commissioner Bolling asked if the town should consider RVs only, or also allow the combination of RVs, tents, and cabins.

Vice Mayor Bennett reminded everyone, when discussing campgrounds, or any other activities, being allowed around the river, the conversation needed to include consideration of the flood plain as a factor in the decision making.

Ms. Williams stated the type/types of campgrounds to be permitted in Altavista would need to be decided before staff could draft the text amendment.

Vice Chair Mitchell shared her interest in knowing what types of campgrounds other small localities allowed before making a final decision for Altavista.

Chairman Jordan asked the Commission if they would like Ms. Williams to investigate the matter further, to which there was a unanimous consensus to do so.

There were no additional comments on this matter.

Before the meeting was adjourned, Ms. Williams reminded the Commission that Altavista On Track would be hosting its first spring festival, Altavista River Fest, on May 14th, 2022, in English Park.

Commissioner Clements asked if there would be an Uncle Billy's Day Festival in 2022.

Ms. Williams stated there would not.

Ms. Williams also informed the Commission that she and the Town Manager recently met with a solar farm representative that was interested in developing something in Altavista. She said the representative would attend the Planning Commission's April 4th meeting and give a brief presentation

Vice Chair Mitchell referenced the proposed solar farm for the land located across the river from Altavista, on the Pittsylvania County side, and asked if it was approved.

Town Attorney John Eller confirmed it was not approved.

Vice Chair Mitchell recommended they speak during the Public Expression portion of the agenda, and allow the speaker three minutes to present their information.

There was a consensus of the Planning Commission to accept Vice Chair Mitchell's recommendation.

Commissioner Bolling asked if there was any type of solar use currently allowed in Altavista.

Ms. Williams stated the town allowed residential solar use for property owners.

Chairman Jordan referenced a newspaper article pertaining to Bedford County and their decision not to allow solar farms in their county at all, only residential solar use.

Ms. Williams said she would email a copy of the article to each Commissioner.

Chairman Jordan stated, whether it be a campground or a solar farm, if approved the town would ensure that it was developed in the correct manner and visually appealing; and also be something the town and its citizens could be proud of.

Adjournment:

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Jordan adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

John Jordan

Planning Commission Chair

Sharon D. Williams, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary