

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, September 6th, 2022, at 5:00pm in Council Chambers at Town Hall, located at 510 7th Street, Altavista, VA.

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
 John Eller, Town Attorney
 Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Jordan called the Altavista Planning Commission Meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

With all Commissioners present, Chairman Jordan confirmed a quorum.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Jordan asked if there were any amendments needed to the agenda.

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams asked to add an item to the “Old Business” section of the agenda: f. Student Planning Commissioners, which was allowed by Chairman Jordan.

Upon a motion by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and seconded by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to approve the meeting agenda as amended.

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 saw any amendments to the August 2022 meeting minutes, to which there were none.

With a motion made by Vice Chair Mitchell, and seconded by Vice Mayor Bennett, the August 1, 2022, meeting minutes were approved, with a 5-0 vote, as presented.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

With no one coming forward with comments, Chairman Jordan closed the floor for public expression.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings scheduled for this meeting.

Chairman Jordan asked for an update on the proposed solar energy facility text amendment.

Ms. Sharon D. Williams, Altavista's Community Development Director, informed the Commission that John Porter, Clean Footprint, applied for a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to allow solar facilities within town limits. She stated that she would present the request to Town Council at their September 13th meeting; and she would keep the Commission informed of Town Council's decision on the matter.

OLD BUSINESS

2040 Comprehensive Plan Update – Continued Review and Discussion

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams informed the Commission that Ada Hunsberger, Regional Planner with the Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPDC), was present to assist with the continued review and discussion of the Town of Altavista's Comprehensive Plan update.

a. Preamble

Ms. Williams stated that a Comprehensive Plan was an opportunity for a locality to highlight itself. She said, as part of the update, she restructured the document and made it more user friendly, which was why she added the preamble "A Vision for Altavista" and the "History" of the town. Ms. Williams stated it was important that the town's Comprehensive Plan highlighted a healthy balance of industry, business, residency, and services to relay that Altavista had a stable economy and flourishing community. She said the town's previous Comprehensive Plan did not include any history of the Town of Altavista; however, the updated plan included its historic founding and an overview of its growth until present day. Ms. Williams stated, after the Introduction, Purpose of the Plan, and Legal Basis for the Plan, she added a new section, "Plan Implementation". She said the Comprehensive Plan was considered the town's vision for its future; and the documents, processes, and partnerships the town created, executed that vision; with tools such as Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, annual Operating Budgets, the town's Capital Improvement Program, incentives, and grants.

With no questions from the Commission, Ms. Williams moved forward on the agenda.

b. Historic District & Structures

Ms. Williams gave the Commission a brief overview of the Historic District and Structures section of the plan, which included Altavista's Historic Downtown District, and Avoca Museum. She said the information was taken from the town's application for historic designation.

Ms. Williams asked the Commission to inform her if there were any items they wished be removed or re-worded, to which there were none at that time.

c. Demographics

Ada Hunsberger, Regional Planner, CVPDC, covered highlights of the Demographics chapter, which she said included the most recent Census data. She said the Population Chart showed the data for both Altavista and Campbell County between 1990 and 2020. Mrs. Hunsberger gave a brief overview of the Population in Household by Age Groups Chart and pointed out that Altavista had a large number of seniors and children in its community. She said that she believed the Goals & Objectives in the Comprehensive Plan update reflected the age groups well.

Mrs. Hunsberger then overviewed the Population Projections Chart, with US Census data in 2020, and the projections estimated through 2050 by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia (UVA). She said Altavista was not listed in this chart because the information was only compiled on counties, not towns.

Chairman Jordan referenced the population projections for Appomattox having a significant increase by 2050 and asked if there was a specific reason for the projected growth in that area.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger answered, stating he believed the projections were reflective of the county's location between Farmville and Lynchburg, which allowed for an easy commute for employment opportunities. He stated the Highway 460 corridor, between Appomattox and Bedford Counties, seemed to be an asset to their communities' growth.

Mrs. Hunsberger continued in the Demographics chapter and shared the Employment by Occupation Chart, which was topped by "production"; and the Median Household Income Chart for Altavista and its surrounding localities, which showed Altavista as having the lowest annual household income; however, Altavista also had the lowest rent cost of its locality comparisons. She said that information was not currently on the chart, but she would add it. Mrs. Hunsberger touched base on the unemployment rate in Altavista being 13.3%, compared to the Commonwealth of Virginia's unemployment rate of 4.1%. Mrs. Hunsberger moved forward in the chapter with the Educational Attainment Chart and said this section mentioned the importance of the town seeking opportunities to partner with local educational institutions to encourage residents to further their education through trade schools, or colleges and universities, which equipped them to take advantage of higher-paying employment opportunities.

Commissioner Marvin Clements stated he believed the unemployment rate comparison between Virginia and Altavista would be a deterrent for potential housing developers.

Community Development Director Sharon Williams stated, if the Commission desired, the graphic could be removed from the chapter, or the unemployment rate for Campbell County, currently 3.1%, could be added. Ms. Williams also informed the Commission there were 2,700 tables of data in the US Census, and staff would gather data regarding any topic the Commission wanted more information about and add it to the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mrs. Hunsberger continued by overviewing the Housing chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update. She shared the owner versus renter-occupied data, which was 59% owner and 41% renter, and the estimated 12% vacancy rate, potentially due to blighted properties. Mrs. Hunsberger also informed the Commission that the Census data showed zero houses built in Altavista in the past five years, which she believed was inaccurate.

Ms. Williams stated that she was in contact with Rhonda Shreve, Director of the Altavista Campbell County Habitat for Humanity, to retrieve the number of houses built by Habitat in Altavista over the past five years, and said she would include that number in the Comprehensive Plan update instead of the incorrect census data.

Vice Chair Mitchell referenced the 12% vacancy rate and said it would benefit the town to pinpoint those properties to consider for the Acquire- Renovate-Sell (ARS) Program, as well as being options the Claire Park Foundation might utilize in their renovation program.

Ms. Williams stated, while Altavista's ARS Program was mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan update, it also included the Claire Parker Foundation, a non-profit organization, as another entity in the Town of Altavista with an established program to renovate houses.

The Planning Commission concurred with Ms. Williams' suggestion, with no further comments or questions regarding the Demographics chapter.

d. Transportation

Ms. Hunsberger continued and presented the revised Transportation chapter. She said this was mostly the same information previously shared with the Commission, with the inclusion of maps from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and an inflow/outflow analysis chart of individuals that lived in Altavista, but worked out of town, and the individuals that lived out of town that traveled to Altavista for employment. Ms. Hunsberger referenced the Functional Classification of Roadways, which included current and projected traffic volumes and levels of service maps. She said the colored legend was incorrect and that she would have the issue corrected for the final draft.

Vice Chair Mitchell referenced the inflow/outflow diagram of individuals traveling for work and stated she thought there were more individuals commuting into town than the 3,000 shown on the diagram.

Chairman Jordan shared his concerns with there being so many individuals commuting out of town for employment.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated the reason could be they are commuting to higher paying jobs, or the Town of Altavista not having jobs in those individual's field of work.

Ms. Hunsberger briefly went over crash data and informed the Commission that VDOT had two specific projects pertaining to Altavista in their five-year plan of potential locations for safety improvements; (1) the intersection of Main Street and Lynch Mill Road, and (2) the intersection of Lynch Mill Road and Clarion Road. Ms. Hunsberger referenced the Funding Opportunities for Transportation Improvements section of the Transportation chapter and said it was not a requirement and the Commission could consider moving the section to the Appendix of the chapter or removing it all together.

The Commission authorized staff to determine whether to remove the section or to keep the section in the Transportation chapter and move it to the appendix. There was no further discussion regarding the Transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that the entire Comprehensive Plan update was written, except for a few graphics, and it was her intent to deliver the draft document to the Commission within the next two weeks.

e. Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams reviewed the Town of Altavista's existing FLUM with the Planning Commission and asked them for their input, and whether they had any suggestions or desired changes to the map.

Town Attorney John Eller informed the Commission that he had another meeting to attend, and he left the Planning Commission meeting at 6:01pm.

Ms. Williams said that she referenced the FLUM when she received rezoning requests, to determine if the request was in line with the town's vision for the property and its surrounding area. She stated, since the Future Land Use Map was in the Comprehensive Plan, she believed it was also important to review the map for needed updates.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the 83-acre parcel recently acquired by the town on Dearing Ford Road, and asked if the property was on the existing FLUM.

Ms. Williams stated it was not but would be added during the update process. She asked the Commission if they had a recommendation for Town Council, whether the new property should be zoned M-Industrial or zoned as an Economic Opportunity Area, which encouraged both industrial and commercial opportunities.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated that he believed the property should stay M-Industrial as initially zoned by Council.

Chairman Jordan asked how the town's zoning map tied in with the Future Land Use Map.

Ms. Williams stated the zoning map should change over time. She said, as a part of the Comprehensive Plan update, related ordinances should be updated, and accordingly, the zoning map to reflect the updated ordinances. Ms. Williams stated that the FLUM was the most important picture shared in a Comprehensive Plan, as it was the vision of where the town wanted to be in twenty years.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the old Lane Company property, located off Pittsylvania Avenue, and shared that he believed the property should be considered mixed-use to allow small shops and housing, instead of its current zoning of only M-Industrial.

Chairman Jordan asked for an update of the Brownfields Project at the old Lane property.

Ms. Williams stated that she was awaiting an update from the town's consultants on this project.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger informed the Commission that the property owner contacted him on the previous Friday and stated that his grant was due to expire at the end of September, so he was filing for an extension to continue the cleanup project.

Ms. Williams asked the Commission if there were any other areas on the FLUM they wanted to discuss and/or change zoning designation.

Commissioner Bolling referenced the strip of land on the upper end of 7th Street, between Franklin Avenue and Lola Avenue, currently zoned commercial, however, there were existing homes along most of that strip of land. She suggested the area be rezoned to accommodate both small business and housing.

Vice Chair Mitchell reminded the Commission that 3rd Street needed to be addressed; as it was currently zoned industrial, but also had existing, long standing, homes in that area. Vice Chair Mitchell referenced the area previously mentioned by Vice Mayor Bennett, the right side of Lane Access Road, and stated she also believed the area should be changed to accommodate something other than only industrial.

Ms. Williams stated that she could re-word the Economic Opportunity Area definition to add adaptive reuse and recommend residential uses.

There was a unanimous consensus of the Commission to do so.

Ms. Williams referenced a parcel of land that sat just behind Abbott Laboratories and asked the Commission for their input whether the property should stay zoned as Mixed-Use, which allowed residential and commercial use, or should the property be changed to Industrial to mirror Abbott. She confirmed that Abbott currently owned the parcel of land.

Vice Mayor Bennett suggested the property remain Mixed-Use because it allowed flexibility for that area.

Vice Chair Mitchell shared her favor that the property remained Mixed-Use. She also referenced two parcels located at the north end of Bedford Avenue and asked why they were classified as Economic Opportunity and the adjacent properties in that area were classified as Residential.

Ms. Williams stated she was unsure of why the area was classified that way, and she reminded the Commission that they could recommend revising the FLUM to classify the entire area as one designation; taking into consideration which was the most flexible and desired for that location.

Since the two parcels were located within an established residential neighborhood, the Planning Commission recommended the said parcels be classified as Residential; the one located closest to US Highway 29 as medium density and the other as low density.

Ms. Williams referenced a previous discussion regarding 3rd, 4th, and 5th Street rezoning; and asked if the Commission wanted to extend residential past Bennett's Mechanical or leave the area as Mixed-Use.

There was a consensus of the Planning Commission to leave that area classified as Mixed-Use, so not to limit any opportunity for Bennett's Mechanical to expand.

Ms. Williams referenced an area in the Moseley Heights Community of Altavista classified Mixed-Use within a residential area and asked the Commission their input.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated that location included the old schoolhouse building.

There was a consensus of the Commission to leave that area of Moseley Heights designated as Mixed-Use.

Ms. Williams asked the Commission if it would help them to have an additional map that showed individual parcels/properties for their consideration during this process.

The Commission was in consensus that it would.

Ms. Williams said she would get that information to the Commission by the end of that week.

There were no additional comments or questions from the Commission regarding the FLUM at this time.

Chairman Jordan asked his fellow Commissioners if they had any additional questions regarding the Future Land Use Map, other than the ones mentioned that evening.

Commissioner Clements suggested taking additional time to review and discuss the FLUM.

Ms. Williams stated, to stay on track to adopt the Comprehensive Plan update by January 2023, the Commission might want to consider starting their next meeting earlier or holding an additional meeting, to allow ample time for them to continue reviewing the FLUM and the Comprehensive Plan update and to discuss holding the required public hearings.

The Planning Commission was in consensus to do so.

Ms. Williams stated that she would work with Mrs. Hunsberger on her available times and dates and contact the Commission later that week with options.

f. Student Planning Commissioners

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams referenced the Commission's recent discussion and request to Council to have a local senior be a non-voting member of the Planning Commission. She said Town Council recently approved the request. Ms. Williams asked Commissioner Bolling if she knew who to contact at the Altavista Combined School (ACS).

Commissioner Bolling, an art teacher at Brookville High School, stated she did not, but suggested contacting the ACS Principal, Mr. Gafford. She stated a senior might be able to use their time on the Commission as "community service hours" for certain school classes/programs.

Vice Mayor Bennett shared Mr. Gafford's contact information with Ms. Williams.

Ms. Williams stated that she would keep the Commission updated on her progress.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Comprehensive Plan Name – 2040 or 2045?

Ms. Williams asked the Commission for their input, whether to call the updated Comprehensive Plan 2040 or 2045.

There was a consensus of the Planning Commission to call the updated document the Town of Altavista's 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

b. Neighborhoods Within the Plan – Yes or No

Ms. Williams shared the multiple neighborhoods within the Town of Altavista, as defined by the US Census Data. She asked the Commission their input on defining them in the plan update.

Moseley Heights	Beverly Heights
Lakewood	Holly Hills South
Seminal Ridge	Valleyview Heights
Altavista (defined as the original 1.2 acres of the town)	

Vice Chair Mitchell asked what the importance was of having the neighborhoods defined in the Comprehensive Plan update, versus only referring to the Town of Altavista as a whole.

Ms. Williams reminded the Commission that the town was currently working with the Moseley Heights community and submitted a grant funding request for neighborhood improvements in that area. She stated it was important to have these types of efforts in the Comprehensive Plan to help when seeking grant funding. Ms. Williams stated, if the town was successful with the Moseley Heights project, additional neighborhoods would be targeted for similar improvements.

c. Comprehensive Plan Public Meeting

Ms. Williams stated, before the Planning Commission and Town Council could hold the required public hearings regarding the Comprehensive Plan update, staff would offer the public and town partners an opportunity to review the draft document. She said that she and Mrs. Hunsberger would work together to share date options with the Commission, keeping in mind the public should have thirty days to review the plan before holding the first public hearing.

Adjournment:

With no further business to discuss, Chairman Jordan adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

John Jordan
Planning Commission Chair

Sharon D. Williams, AICP
Planning Commission