

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on December 6th, 2021, 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
 Marvin Clements
 Reggie Bennett, Vice Mayor

Member Absent: Jennifer Morton

Staff present: Sharon D. Williams, AICP, Community Development Director
 and Planning Commission Secretary
 John Eller, Town Attorney
 George Sandridge, Main Street Coordinator
 Crystal Hailey, Office Assistant

CALL TO ORDER:

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

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

With four of five Planning Commission members being present, Chairman Jordan confirmed a quorum.

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 Commissioner Marvin Clements, and seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, the Planning Commission voted 4-0 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 attending Town Staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice Mayor Bennett asked that a correction be made to the November 1st, 2021 meeting minutes. He referenced the last page and stated Lynch Road should read Lynch Mill Road.

Chairman Jordan also asked for a correction to the November minutes. He referenced page three, paragraph eight, and stated the word said, in front of the word reminded, needed to be removed.

Upon a motion made by Vice Mayor Bennett, and seconded by Commissioner Clements, the Planning Commission voted 4-0 to approve the minutes from their November 2021 Planning Commission meeting as amended.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Chairman Jordan opened the floor for public comment.
There being no speakers to come forward, the public comment period was closed.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no public hearings scheduled for this date.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. 2040 Comprehensive Plan - SOAR Analysis

Chairman Jordan welcomed Ms. Ada Hunsberger, Regional Planner, Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPDC), back to the Planning Commission Meeting.

Ms. Hunsberger stated she would continue that evening with the SOAR Analysis for the town's Comprehensive Plan update by discussing the last two categories, Amenities and Town Services. She gave the Commission a brief overview of the previous two categories discussed at the last meeting, Housing and Transportation.

Housing

Strengths:

- Altavista is more affordable than nearby Lynchburg
- There are many lots that could be utilized for housing growth

Opportunities:

- Rehabilitation of blighted properties
- Consider how we can leverage partnerships with existing community agencies

Aspirations:

- Increase the number of affordable housing units
- Increase the overall number of housing units
- Develop new subdivision ordinances that will help support new development
- Incentives to attract new development - Develop a property maintenance code

Transportation

Strengths:

- Altavista Community Transit System (ACTS) offers deviated route service within 1 mile of the scheduled route
- ACTS: Low cost of service -Coordinate with schools to improve pedestrian safety at the Combined Schools
- Walkable downtown area with streetscaping

Opportunities:

- Offer Sunday transit service -Consider best use of the backup bus
- ACTS bus going into English Park
- Better inform citizens about the Virginia Breeze Bus Service
- Accessible Connection between English Park and Downtown
- Wayfinding Signage

Aspirations:

- Consider providing ACTS service to Rustburg for citizens to access County Services
- Consider expanding ACTS service to connect to Lynchburg or Town of Hurt

- Seek Grant opportunities to expand ACTS service
- Extended sidewalks along Bedford Avenue

Ms. Hunsberger said, at the January 2022 meeting, she would present the results from all of the categories the Planning Commission discussed during the SOAR Analysis. She informed the Commission, due to her maternity leave, she may not be available during the conclusion of the analysis process in February, but Kelly Hitchcock, CVPDC Planning and Development Director, was well informed and would assist Ms. Williams and the Planning Commission in doing so.

Vice Chair Marie Mitchell referenced the Housing review, under housing growth consideration, and stated the word lots should be changed to parcels.

Chairman Jordan referenced Ms. Mitchell's comment from a previous meeting regarding a land developer stating it was not feasible for him to develop in Altavista due to the town's low housing rates.

Ms. Hunsberger stated that affordable housing could be considered both a strength and a weakness.

Ms. Hunsberger moved forward in the SOAR Analysis with the Amenities category. She asked the Commission for their thoughts on meaningful and feasible uses of the Booker Building.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated there had been conversations by Town Council whether to keep the facility as a multi-use venue for weddings, banquets, concerts, tradeshow, etc., or utilize it for another use, such as a restaurant or brewery. He stated there was a consensus of Council that there needed to be improvements made to bring the facility up to a higher standard, such as adding HVAC and renovating the bathrooms. He informed the Commission that the interior floors had been refurbished, but Town Council decided not to move forward with any additional renovations until a definite use for the building had been finalized.

Commissioner Clements suggested, if the Booker Building remained a multi-use facility, the town consider allowing it to be utilized for a senior center on a scheduled basis, to which the Commission was in consensus that was a good idea.

Chairman Jordan asked the Vice Mayor if the town had acquired quotes for the potential costs of additional renovations to the Booker Building.

Vice Mayor Bennett answered the town did receive estimates from Robert Lee, English Construction, for multiple renovation options. He stated the town also acquired a quote to gain an estimation of what it would cost to add a sound system to the facility.

Ms. Hunsberger reminded the Commission that in their previous conversations regarding the town utilizing the Booker Building for events, that there were limitations on Staff's time; and who would coordinate multiple events needed to be considered.

Vice Mayor Bennett said, if the town desired to utilize the Booker Building as an event venue, it could hire another town employee specifically for that purpose or consider partnering with an agency that specialized in coordinating events and the two would share in the revenue.

Vice Chair Mitchell suggested the town first upgrade the Booker Building with nicer bathrooms and possibly a small prep kitchen , and then decide on its future potential uses. She said, with the town's recent purchase of the Vista Theater, which was better suited as an entertainment venue, she favored the Booker Building as a multi-use facility.

Vice Mayor Bennett informed the Commission that Town Council was considering all feasible options.

Vice Chair Mitchell said that she considered the Booker Building a town asset, as it was located within one of the town's community parks. She referenced a previous comment by Town Council for considering the possibility of leasing the facility to an outside entity, and stated she was not in favor of doing so and believed it should stay under town ownership, to which Chairman Jordan and Commissioner Clements concurred.

Chairman Jordan said, if managed and advertised properly, he believed that English Park, the Booker Building, and the Vista Theater could turn Altavista into a desired destination point.

Vice Mayor Bennett said he believed the Booker Building was underutilized and would be a great location for spring and fall vendor expos that highlight seasonal items.

Commissioner Clements shared he favored keeping the Booker Building as a multi-use facility and suggested the town consider promoting it as Altavista's Civic Center.

Vice Chair Mitchell said she thought a study had been done on the Booker Building that asked what town citizens wanted the facility to be used for.

Ms. Williams confirmed there had been.

Chairman Jordan asked Ms. Williams to gather all of the most recent information and studies done related to the Booker Building for the Planning Commission to review at their January meeting.

Ms. Hunsberger continued the analysis and asked the Commission for their input of some meaningful and feasible uses for the Vista Theater.

Vice Chair Mitchell shared her favor with the Vista Theater being considered a Performing Arts Center for dance recitals, plays, local musician performances, and showing movies.

Ms. Hunsberger asked if public outreach would be completed by the time the Comprehensive Plan update was ready for completion.

Ms. Williams stated most likely not. She said the project engineers and design team were currently surveying the facility to determine what needed to be completed first for the structure to be safe to move forward with any renovation efforts.

Chairman Jordan asked if the town had appropriated any funds towards the renovation of the theater. Ms. Williams informed the Commission that the town had appropriated \$1 million for the Vista Theater Project to date. She stated, per the engineers and architects, the project's overall cost was estimated between \$3-\$5 million to restore the theater. Ms. Williams stated it was Staff's intent to investigate grant options and historic tax credits to assist with lowering the project's cost.

Chairman Jordan said he believed the Booker Building and the Vista Theater were both tremendous assets for the Town of Altavista. He asked for an update on the old restaurant property located across from the Vista Theater.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that the property owner, Kimberly Cottle, intended to restore the restaurant and open by spring of 2022, and to include new outdoor seating.

There were no further questions or comments from the Commission regarding this category.

Ms. Hunsberger moved forward with the last category, Town Services, and shared with the Commission the list of services offered by Altavista that was listed on a recent citizen survey.

- Broadband Access
- Emergency Services (Fire, Police)
- Schools/Educational Opportunities
- Library Facilities
- Green Hill Cemetery
- Trash Disposal
- Snow Removal
- Leaf Pick-up
- Bulk Trash Pick-up
- Weekend Truck (available for rent)

Ms. Hunsberger asked the Commission which of the services they believed were town assets.

Vice Chair Mitchell stated she believed all of the town's services listed were assets to the citizens, to which the Commission agreed.

Ms. Hunsberger asked if any of the listed town services could be improved upon.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the Green Hill Cemetery. He suggested the town consider adding more small crematory spaces for individuals that wanted to be cremated and may not want an entire regular space to be buried or could not afford the cost. He said it would be helpful for single people with no other family because regular spaces were sold in pairs.

Vice Chair Mitchell said she believed the town's broadband services could be improved.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that staff was continuing to investigate ways to improve the town's broadband. She said the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) recently informed the town they were conducting a broadband study to show coverage. Ms. Williams said that DHCD made two recommendations for the town to consider: 1) adding a hotspot in Downtown Altavista, to improve connectivity while in English Park; and 2) figure out how to connect residents to the existing fiber lines.

Vice Chair Mitchell referenced Comcast and asked if the town had a longstanding agreement with them, or could other providers offer services in town.

Town Attorney, John Eller, stated the town was not contracted exclusively with Comcast for internet service and that the other providers could service Altavista.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission the DHCD indicated there may be an opportunity for another provider to partner with Mid-Atlantic, which already had existing internet fiber, to offer their service and be another option for citizens.

Chairman Jordan referenced an item on the list of town services, Trash Disposal, and said that service could be improved by offering disposal for electronic items.

Vice Mayor Bennett suggested the town investigate if a recycle company was available to come to Town Hall once a month or a couple times per year so the town could offer the service to its citizens.

The Commission was in consensus that an electronic disposal service would be a good addition to Altavista's town services.

Commissioner Clements referenced the Campbell County Landfill and stated they offered electronic disposal at its site in Rustburg. He suggested the Town of Altavista investigate the possibility of partnering with the county to bring the service to Altavista.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that the town had tried to partner with the county for this service, but the county regulated the service by requiring each individual's address. She stated the town would continue to investigate viable options.

Ms. Hunsberger stated the CVPDC (Central Virginia Planning District Commission), operated the landfill in Campbell County, so she would gather additional information to help assist the Town of Altavista in its efforts to offer an electronic disposal service to its citizens.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced an item recently brought to Town Council for consideration regarding an idea of the town offering a safe space at Town Hall for individuals to exchange their children between family members or to drop off and pick up online purchases.

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that APD Chief Merricks placed the item on the FY2023 Draft CIP for Town Council's consideration and potential approval.

Ms. Williams also referenced an item previously mentioned by Vice Chair Michell, which was paper shredding services. She stated that staff was continuing its efforts to bring the service to Altavista.

Vice Chair Mitchell shared her favor in having the electronic disposal service, the paper shredding service, and a prescription drug takeback all on the same day, at the same location. She suggested utilizing the Altavista Trade Lot, since it had a large parking lot and was in the center of town.

Ms. Hunsberger said she was unaware of the Town of Altavista having a drug takeback service.

Ms. Williams said that Town Council recently approved one to be located at the Police Department.

Vice Chair Mitchell suggested the town investigate what types of services other surrounding localities offered.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated the Staunton River Memorial Library previously started working on offering a visitor's center with various information about the town, but he was unsure if the project had been completed.

Ms. Williams said that the visitor center would be located at the library and she would keep everyone posted on the project's progress.

Ms. Hunsberger concluded the analysis and said she would return at the January 2022 meeting with an overview of the results from the Comprehensive Plan SOAR analysis.

Ms. Williams addressed the Planning Commission with additional information regarding the Comprehensive Plan and showed multiple other town documents that would be integrated into the final Comprehensive Plan update that had not been previously, such as the town's Hazardous Mitigation Plan, Source Water Protection Plan, Economic Development Plan, Bicycle Access Plan, the current Comprehensive Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the soon to be completed Altavista On Track Strategic Plan. She stated she and Ms. Hunsberger had been evaluating each plan to ensure they did not have competing goals. Ms. Williams stated the town's Comprehensive Plan needed to have cohesiveness with all of the town's plans, in order for Town Staff to have clear direction from the Planning Commission and Town Council.

Vice Mayor Bennett said he believed it would be beneficial to Town Staff and each of the town's Boards and Commissions to only have one place to find all of their plans and goals.

Chairman Jordan asked how staff intended to ensure the Comprehensive Plan would meet that goal.

Ms. Williams said at some point there needed to be a matrix created that included all of the town's plans before the Planning Commission adopted its future goals and objectives. She said that would ensure that the Commission did not make a goal that conflicted with another plan that was already approved by the Town Council.

Vice Mayor Bennett agreed with Ms. Williams that the town needed a matrix compiled of all town plans. He stated he believed the updated Comprehensive Plan, in combination with a matrix of all other plans, would be in the best interest of the town, and accordingly, hold each Board and Commission, along with Town Council, accountable for the plan.

With there being no further comments or questions from the Planning Commission in regard to the Comprehensive Plan update, Ms. Williams moved forward with the next agenda item.

New Business:

Ms. Williams referenced the solar company Clean Footprint and informed the Commission that they transferred their interest to another solar company and she expected to hear from them soon.

a. Informational Items:

Re: Resource Extraction

Ms. Williams informed the Commission that a company from Evington, VA was interested in conducting resource extraction on parcels in the Town of Altavista, which was permitted under the town's current Zoning Ordinance. She said resource extraction consisted of creating a borrow pit in order to extract soil and minerals from the earth. Ms. Williams stated she was unsure if the company still intended to move forward, but if so, the project would require a Special Use Permit be submitted, a public hearing with the Planning Commission, and considered by Town Council for final approval. She said this item was informational only at that point.

Chairman Jordan said, with the allowance being permitted in the town ordinance, there was nothing keeping a developer from requesting permission to conduct resource extraction.

Ms. Williams confirmed that was correct. She stated, however, before a company could receive a recommendation from Staff to proceed, they would have to submit an application with additional information that pertained to the floodplain, wetlands, and how the land would be developed. She stated, if not conducted correctly, this type of project could cause erosion and sediment issues, therefore, the developer would also be required to submit a Reclamation Plan for the property.

Re: the Frazier Farm in Altavista

Ms. Williams said she was recently contacted by a developer that was interested in pursuing the Frazier Farm as a solar energy site. She said she appreciated that the request did not involve the entire property. Ms. Williams stated she would keep the Planning Commission up to date as any new information became available to her.

b. Discussion of the 2022 Organizational Meeting, 2022 Intended Goals, and 2021 Annual Report

Ms. Williams reminded the Commission that the January 2022 meeting would be an organizational meeting and consist of electing officers. She asked the Commission to also be thinking about what goals they wanted to set for 2022, which should include the Comprehensive Plan and the previously discussed need for housing. Ms. Williams stated she would also be providing the Commission with a draft of their 2021 Annual Report, which was required by the Code of Virginia to be submitted

annually to the governing bodies from the previous year. Ms. Williams said she and Ms. Hunsberger would be presenting the Commission with an overall review of the SOAR Analysis of the Comprehensive Plan at the January 2022 meeting. She said they would have joint meetings with the AEDA, the Chamber of Commerce, and Altavista On Track, and any other groups as necessary, to gain input for the Comprehensive Plan update.

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