

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024, at 5pm, 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
 Meghan Bolling
 Ashby Robinson, Jr.
 Senior Student Rayna Steele

Absent: Junior Student Conner Mattox

Staff present: Matt Perkins, Assistant Town Manager
 John Eller, Town Attorney
 Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Jordan added an amendment to the agenda: "Election of Officers"

Upon a motion by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and seconded by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, the Planning Commission voted 6-0 to approve the January 2024 meeting agenda as amended.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION

Chairman Jordan delivered an Invocation for this meeting; and afterwards led everyone in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ELECTION OF 2024 PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICERS

With a motion made by Vice Chair Marie Mitchell, and seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, the Commission voted 5-0 to reappoint John Jordan as the Altavista Planning Commission's 2024 Chairman. Accordingly, Mr. Jordan abstained from this vote.

With a motion made by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, and seconded by Commissioner Ashby Robinson, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve Marie Mitchell as the Altavista Planning Commission's 2024 Vice Chair. Accordingly, Mrs. Mitchell abstained from this vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Jordan asked the Commission if corrections were needed to the December 2023 meeting minutes; to which there were none.

With a motion made by Vice Chair Mitchell, seconded by Commissioner Ashby Robinson, the minutes for the Commission's December 2023 meeting were approved as presented, with a 6-0 vote.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Mr. Chris Germeroth, 7748 Leesville Road, owner of River Valley Resources and The Southern Granary in the Town of Altavista, addressed the Commission regarding short-term rentals.

Mr. Germeroth informed the Commission that he was currently renovating a property (on Lynch Road) to become a short-term rental. He shared his concern that the Zoning District where the property was located (C-2) did not currently allow Short-term Rentals.

Mr. Germeroth stated that his property was adjacent to both Industrial and Residential Districts, and he believed his intended use for the property was appropriate for that area. He asked the Commission to consider an ordinance that would allow Short-term Rentals in the C-2 District.

Vice Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Germeroth how many bedrooms would his short-term rental offer; to which he answered four.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked how many parking spaces the property had; to which Mr. Germeroth answered that there were currently seven, but there was space for a few additional spaces if needed.

Commissioner Bolling asked how many days a short-term rental could be rented; to which Mr. Germeroth answered 30 days or less, and above that number, the property would be considered a regular rental with a different set of regulations.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed the Commission that Mr. Germeroth had shared his Business Plan with Staff and given him a tour of the said property. He stated that Mr. Germeroth had done a good job renovating the property.

Chairman Jordan stated that it was the Planning Commission's intent to promote the Town of Altavista and any projects that were in the best interest of the Town and its citizens.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: There were no public hearings scheduled for the January 2024 meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ordinance Amendment Discussion: regarding Short-term Rentals (SUP)

Background: In response to recent changes in State Code, and in conformity with good zoning practice, Town Staff previously recommended creating a short-term rental ordinance. The Planning Commission asked Staff to draft the required amendments needed to the Code of the Town of Altavista, related to allowing short-term rentals, by Special Use Permit, in all districts.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins shared with the Commission a proposed amendment to *Section 86-32* of the Town's Zoning Ordinance, to include a short-term rental definition. He then shared a draft short-term rental policy, that included proposed General Standards, that he stated was broad enough not to exclude short-term rentals in any certain areas; but would require all short-term rentals to obtain a Special Use Permit, with which the Commission and Council could narrow specifications on an individual basis.

Mr. Perkins also shared comments from Town Attorney John Eller regarding the proposed amendment and standards for short-term rentals; to which Mr. Eller stated were merely suggestions to help the documents be easier to read/understand by the general public. Mr. Eller stated, ultimately, any amendments/additions would be the Commission's decision.

Chairman Jordan reiterated to the Commission that *Section 86-522* was a proposed new zoning ordinance to show the Town's desire to allow short-term rentals (with General Standards and a Special Use Permit), in all districts.

Vice Chair Mitchell asked, as being a business, why short-term rentals would not be allowed “by right” in the C-2, Commercial Districts of Altavista, but required to obtain a Special Use Permit. She also asked the cost of a SUP, and any other costs required.

Mr. Perkins stated that Altavista’s Zoning Ordinance was currently set up that a bed & breakfast business, similar to short-term rentals, was required to obtain a Special Use Permit; and being similar, it was believed to be an appropriate requirement. He said a SUP was a one-time cost of \$400, and the owner paid the cost of advertising the required public hearings.

Mr. Perkins reminded the Commission that the applicant was also required to obtain a Town Business License, with the cost calculated by projecting yearly revenue; and to submit monthly lodging taxes to the Town, which varied with each business, from its incoming revenue.

Vice Mayor Bennett shared his favor in short-term rentals requiring a SUP.

Mr. Perkins referenced the “registration fee” of \$100, proposed in the draft ordinance, and stated that the Commission needed to consider whether the fee would be charged initially only, or on an annual basis. He said the cost could be decreased after the first year, if charged annually.

The Commission reviewed and discussed the proposed General Standards for short-term rentals.

Attorney Eller suggested the term “operator” be used for the proprietor of each short-term rentals.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked, if someone violated their Special Use Permit, who was responsible for consideration of revoking the SUP: to which Mr. Perkins answered, the Town’s Zoning Administrator. Mr. Perkins also stated that each violation would incur a \$500 penalty.

Commissioner Robinson referenced number three of General Standards (b), and suggested the distance that an owner could live be thirty miles, instead of fifty miles away.

The Commission continued to review the proposed zoning ordinance amendment and addition of general standards for short-term rentals. Mr. Perkins stated that he would revise the documents from the Commission’s input and with their suggestions, including allowed signage for said businesses and the number of “guests” allowed with renters. He stated that he would present the revised draft to the Planning Commission at their February meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: There were no new business items to discuss on this date.

MATTERS FROM STAFF

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed the Planning Commission of the following:

- Public Hearings regarding aviation and correction facilities - at February Town Council Meeting
- Planning Commission Annual Report would be presented at their February 2024 Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Jordan adjourned this meeting at 6:23 p.m.

John Jordan, Chairman
Altavista Planning Commission

Mathew Perkins, Asst. Town Manager
Town of Altavista