



John Jordan, Chairman
Marie Mitchell, Vice Chair
Reggie Bennett, Vice Mayor
Marvin Clements, Commissioner
Jennifer Morton, Commissioner

Sharon D. Williams, AICP,
Planning Commission Secretary &
Director of Community Development

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of the Town of Altavista, Virginia will be held in Town Council Chambers of Town Hall on Tuesday, September 7, 2021 beginning at 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Determination of a Quorum
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation
6. Approval of Minutes August 2, 2021
7. Public Expression
8. Introduction of Interim Town Manager Clarence Monday
9. Public Hearings – None
10. Old Business - None
10. New Business
 2040 Comprehensive Plan Citizen Survey
11. Adjournment

All meetings are livestreamed and can be viewed on the Town's website at www.altavistava.gov

Next Meeting: Monday, October 4, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting on August 2nd, 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
Jennifer Morton

Staff present - Sharon D. Williams, AICP, Community Development Director
John Eller, Town Attorney
Amanda “Amie” Owens, Assistant Town Manager
George Sandridge, Main Street Coordinator
Crystal Hailey, Town Administration

CALL TO ORDER:

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

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:

Chairman Jordan confirmed a quorum, as all Planning Commission members were present.

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 Mayor Reggie Bennett, and seconded by Commissioner Clements, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION:

Chairman Jordan delivered the Invocation and afterwards, the Planning Commission recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Morton, and seconded by Commissioner Clements, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes from their July 6, 2021, meeting.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Chairman Jordan opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Ralph English, 205 River Oaks Drive, Altavista, came before the Planning Commission with a request to gain approval to allow a solar farm project on a piece of property owned by ER and RT Properties, LLC. He stated the 49.3 acre piece of property was located off of North Main Street, behind English’s LLC, and adjacent to Abbott Laboratories.

Mr. English informed the Planning Commission that Clean Footprint, of Cape Canaveral, Florida, recently contacted him in regard to purchasing the said property and utilizing it for a 26 acre Solar Farm. He stated it was Clean Footprint's intention to come before the Planning Commission at a future date for an official request. Mr. English stated, since the land is undevelopable, he felt this would be the best use for this land and that it would also be a great benefit to the Town of Altavista. He stated, if approved the Solar Farm would produce enough solar energy to provide all of the town's electricity needs, including its existing manufacturers. Mr. English stated, since Abbott Laboratories is located adjacent to the property of the Solar Farm, Clean Footprint would be able to supply Abbott with "direct" energy, at a 10-20% savings from their current utility costs.

Ms. Williams informed the Planning Commission that Clean Footprint recently withdrew their petition in regard to this matter. She stated, since Altavista's Zoning Ordinance did not currently allow such projects, speculation regarding any potential property may not be appropriate to discuss at this time. She stated to continue the discussion would require an amendment to the town's Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Williams also reminded the Planning Commission of their decision at their last meeting to postpone any discussions regarding solar energy until at least September, allowing the town time to gather additional information and be better educated about solar use. She stated she has asked the Central Virginia Planning District Commission assist the Town of Altavista with this matter.

Chairman Jordan thanked Mr. English for his time. He stated the Planning Commission intends to pursue additional information in regard to solar energy, in order to set forth the appropriate guidelines for the town in the near future.

There being no additional speakers to come forward, the public comment period was closed.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no public hearings scheduled for this date.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Town Council July 13, 2021 Public Hearings Update

Ms. Williams updated the Commission in regard to three public hearings by Town Council:

- § Central Business District – Town Council approved amending the Zoning Ordinance of Town Code to define the Central Business District.
- § Parking Exception – Town Council approved an amendment to the town's Zoning Ordinance to exempt parking in the Central Business District.
- § Use of Metal in the Downtown Revitalization Overlay (DRO) District – Town Council approved an amendment to the town's Zoning Ordinance to allow the use of metal, such as roofing material, on buildings in the DRO District.

Ms. Williams stated, with so many Zoning Ordinance amendments recently in regard to the DRO District, the Planning Commission would need to review and decide, during their Comprehensive Plan update process, what requirements were desired and/or needed in the DRO.

b. 2040 Comprehensive Plan “Kick Off”

Ms. Williams reminded the Commission that the town was required by State Code to review its Comprehensive Plan every five years and decide if any updates are needed. She stated she was excited to get started on the process, as it was a way to help the town plan its desired future.

Ms. Williams stated the town has chosen to reach out to one of its local “partners” for assistance with this project. She introduced two representatives from the Central Virginia Planning District Commission (CVPDC): Kelly Hitchcock, Planning and Development Director, and Ada Hunsberger, Regional Planner. Ms. Williams stated the Town of Altavista and the CVPDC would be working together during the updating process as an effort to achieve the town’s desired goals for its Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Hitchcock shared her excitement with assisting the Town of Altavista with its Comprehensive Plan update. She stated the CVPDC’s goal was to help the town utilize a “public outreach process” to determine such items as its housing needs and natural resource resiliency. Ms. Hitchcock stated Ms. Hunsberger would be giving the Commission a more in-depth overview of the plan.

Ms. Hunsberger reminded the Planning Commission of the PDC’s main purpose: to help foster regional collaboration, intergovernmental coordination, and provide technical support when needed to its locality members.

Ms. Hunsberger stated the Town of Altavista has a lot of “opportunities” that could be capitalized on in its Comprehensive Plan. She stated the PDC will be assisting Ms. Williams with engaging the Altavista community, in order to gather feedback and information that will help shape the goals and objectives of the town’s Comprehensive Plan. She stated they would also be incorporating local and regional plan goals, such as the new Hazard Mitigation Plan; and coordinate intergovernmental reviews with partners, such as VDOT.

Ms. Hunsberger insured the Commission that it was the PDC’s intent to assist the town throughout the entire Comprehensive Plan update process. She stated they would assist Ms. Williams with a S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis, in order for the town to develop “Implementation Strategies and Measures”.

Ms. Hunsberger stated, by expanding the Housing Chapter, Parks & Recreation, Natural Resources, and Resiliency plans within the Comprehensive Plan, to better reflect the town’s priorities, it will set stage for how citizens, business owners, and the Planning Commission make decisions moving into the future, which is the ultimate goal of a Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Hunsberger concluded her presentation by stating she and Ms. Hitchcock would be happy to answer questions from the Planning Commission.

Chairman Jordan referenced the multiple references by Ms. Williams and Ms. Hunsberger to “engage the citizens for public input”, and asked Ms. Williams to give the Commission more details of her plan for this effort. Ms. Williams stated citizen engagement would be conducted through both electronic and personal means. She stated surveys would be posted on the town’s website; and she would be holding local meetings in places such as churches and civic groups, giving citizens the opportunity to give comments and take the survey in person.

Chairman Jordan also referenced the “Camoin Study” compiled for the AEDA a couple of years ago. He asked if that study was significant to the town’s Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Williams stated it was very significant, but was not represented in the current Comp Plan, as the plan was over five years old. She stated the Camoin Study, as well as other items such as the recently adopted WTP’s Source Water Protection Plan and the FEMA Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, would be examples of data that would be incorporated to update the Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Mayor Bennett questioned if the recent 2020 Census would be relevant to updating the town’s Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Williams stated census data was critical in regard to grant funding, so it was important for the town’s Comprehensive Plan to have the most current information available.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked if the goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Plan would be “prioritized”. Ms. Williams stated it would be a good idea for the Planning Commission to present a recommendation to do so, when the updated Comprehensive Plan was presented to Town Council.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked who was responsible for making sure the town follows through with its Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Williams stated, by State Code, a locality’s Comp Plan was not “policy”, but intended to be a guideline. She stated it was up to the town’s elected officials to make the Comprehensive Plan a priority and strive to implement its goals and objectives.

Vice Chair Mitchell asked if the fore-mentioned input survey would include the Altavista zip code and surrounding community, or was it for Altavista town citizens only. Ms. Williams stated staff would take the possibility into consideration when developing its target audience and in-person meeting agenda. Ms. Hitchcock stated it would be a good idea to include the surrounding community, due to amenities such as the YMCA and Riverfront Park that are utilized by visitors. She stated the town could draw value from knowing what their citizens like and want compared to visitors and the surrounding community.

Vice Chair Mitchell also suggested placing the input survey in with the town’s quarterly utility bills. Ms. Williams stated the town would use every avenue available, including the local newspaper and Altavista social media pages, to ensure an adequate amount of data is gathered. Mr. Clements suggested staff consider contacting Altavista High School for permission to survey the local seniors for their input on this matter. Ms. Williams agreed that would be a good idea.

Chairman Jordan stated the town's Comprehensive Plan was not only for town officials, but also for town citizens. He suggested the updated Comp Plan be made easier for an average person to comprehend. Ms. Williams stated staff had a goal to revise the document to be more visually appealing and easier for everyone to understand.

Chairman Jordan also suggested having "paper copies" of the updated Comprehensive Plan available for the individuals that do not use the internet or electronic devices for reading. Ms. Williams stated that was an important viewpoint and ensured Mr. Jordan that staff would explore all alternative sources for distribution of the updated Comprehensive Plan when complete.

Chairman Jordan asked if solar energy would be addressed in the updated Comp Plan. Ms. Williams stated there was no mention of solar energy in the current plan, however, there would be a chapter in the town's updated Comprehensive Plan in regard to "renewable energy". She recommended the discussion be postponed until staff had additional training and felt they had the appropriate information to bring before the Planning Commission for further consideration.

Ms. Williams assured the Commission that she was an advocate of clean energy/renewable energy and was responsible, under the recommendation of the Vice Mayor, in helping the Town of Altavista achieve a "SolSmart" Bronze designation. She stated she felt the town should proceed cautiously by taking its time and being deliberate in developing its renewable energy guidelines, and not be influenced by one particular individual or single company or developer, to which the Planning Commission agreed.

The Comprehensive Plan update discussion was concluded and the Planning Commission thanked Ms. Hitchcock and Ms. Hunsberger for their assistance to the town with updating Altavista's Comprehensive Plan.

New Business:

There were no new business items to discuss.

Adjournment:

Chairman Jordan adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

John Jordan
Planning Commission Chair

Sharon D. Williams, AICP
Planning Commission Secretary