

## Altavista Town Council Regular Meeting – December 12, 2023

The Altavista Town Council held their December 2023 Regular Meeting in Council Chambers of the Town Hall/J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on Tuesday, December 12th, at 6pm.

1. At six o'clock p.m., Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

### Council Members

Present: Vice Mayor Reginald Bennett  
Mr. Tracy Emerson  
Mr. Timothy George  
Mr. Jay Higginbotham  
Dr. Scott Lowman  
Mayor Michael Mattox  
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

### Town Staff present:

Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager  
Mr. Matt Perkins, Asst. Town Manager  
Chief Tommy Merricks, Altavista Police Dept.  
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Treasurer/Finance Director  
Mr. Tom Fore, Public Services Director  
Mr. Paul Hill, Asst. Public Services Director  
Mr. John Eller, Town Attorney  
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

Reverend Alden Gallimore, First Baptist Church of Altavista, delivered the Invocation. After the Invocation, Mayor Mattox led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance to the US Flag.

2. Agenda Adoption

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had questions regarding the agenda; there were none.

Councilman Wayne Mitchell motioned to approve the December 12, 2023, Meeting Agenda as presented; Councilman Tracy Emerson seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

3. Recognitions and Presentations

- Altavista Police Department (APD)  
Chief Tommy Merricks and Deputy Chief Kenneth Moorefield swore in a new APD Police Officer, Jacklynn Goyne.
- Town of Altavista Personnel Changes – November 2023:
  - Milestones: none
  - New Hire: Evan Gibson, Public Works-Buildings & Grounds
  - Departures: none

4. Citizen's Time

There were no citizen comments on this date.

5. Town & Community Partner Updates

Avoca Museum's Executive Director Caleb Lafoon presented Council with an overview of Avoca's 2023 activities and events. He said tours of Avoca and event attendance had risen to the highest numbers seen since before the COVID pandemic, and membership was steadily increasing as well.

Mr. Lafoon then shared Avoca's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, that included upcoming CIP items for continuing restoration efforts, and updating and enlarging existing exhibits. He said that he would continue seeking grant opportunities to assist Avoca with these efforts.

Mr. Lafoon stated that Avoca was working to build a network of resources with other regional museums, such as Poplar Forest and Red Hill; and he also hoped to expand Avoca's partnerships with local colleges, for education, programming, and intern opportunities with the museum.

Mr. Lafoon said Avoca would continue to look for additional financial resources (grants and private funding) that would help the museum become more self-sufficient and ensure long-term sustainability.

Mr. Lafoon referenced a set of architectural plans, dated 1998, that were recently found in storage at Avoca. He stated, as part of Avoca's new Strategic Plan, they look to expand the visitor's center/gift shop, which he believed had been needed for a long time, since there was also mention of expansion in the aforementioned old plans.

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Mr. Lafoon said that Avoca was having a feasibility study done for such an expansion, to explore options and gather cost information; and that he would present Council with the results of the study.

Councilman Tim George asked, since there was no designated office at Avoca at that time, would an expansion include an office, or offices.

Mr. Lafoon said that the old (1998) plans showed that concept, but the current Board would be exploring all available options before making any permanent decisions.

Councilman Higginbotham asked how many weddings Avoca hosted that year (2023).

Mr. Lafoon stated that Avoca hosted seven (7) weddings and six (6) private events in 2023; however, he and the Avoca Board were looking at ways to increase those numbers, as a way to help finance the museums operational costs.

Mayor Mattox said that he was impressed with the museum's growth over the past year, and thanked Mr. Lafoon for his hard work and dedication to the Altavista community.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked if Avoca membership had decreased since COVID or held steady.

Mr. Lafoon said that the number of memberships had been slowly increasing, and was currently at one-hundred and sixty-seven (167) active members.

Mr. Bennett referenced a couple other event venues new to the immediate area, Southern Granary and Senica Lake, and asked if Avoca's number of events had been effected by the competition.

Mr. Lafoon said that he believed they had, mainly due to the fact that Avoca did not have an inside "space" for events. He stated that Avoca's desired expansion would accommodate that need, and subsequently increase revenue for the museum.

Councilman Emerson shared that he attended a couple of Avoca's most recent events and stated that he was impressed with everything that Avoca does. He referenced the aforementioned expansion and reminded Mr. Lafoon that any additions needed to be in line with the original architecture and color scheme; to which Mr. Lafoon concurred.

Councilman Mitchell asked if Avoca had a marketing strategy to increase membership.

Mr. Lafoon said that, until recently, marketing was mostly done with Altavista's local radio and newspaper media outlets. He informed Council that Avoca's current Strategic Plan included a more detailed marketing strategy, which included social media, to help grow awareness of the Avoca Museum, and to increase memberships. He said, in his tenure as Executive Director, Facebook followers had increased from 1,100 to 3,200 followers.

Councilman Mitchell referenced Mr. Lafoon's mention of Avoca becoming self-sufficient and asked if the Avoca Board were thinking of owning the property, instead of the Town; to which Mr. Lafoon said that the Board had not discussed the notion.

Councilman Higginbotham referenced several local colleges

Mr. Lafoon stated that Avoca previously had interns from Liberty and Sweetbriar Universities in Lynchburg, and Hollands University in Roanoke, but not others. He said that he would continue to seek partnerships with other local colleges.

Mayor Mattox stated that he could see positive growth happening at Avoca. He thanked Mr. Lafoon for his hard work and contributions to that growth and the Avoca Board for continued success.

### 6. Consent Agenda

- TOA Monthly Financial Reports - November 2023
- Meeting Minutes – Town Council's November Regular Meeting and Work Session
- Altavista Town Council 2024 Meeting Schedule
- Altavista's FY2023 Financial Report
- Avoca Maintenance Fund – CIP Adjustment

Upon a motion by Councilman Wayne Mitchell, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, Town Council voted unanimously to approve the December 12th Consent Agenda as presented.

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### 7. Public Hearing

There were no public hearings held on this date.

### 8. New Business

Altavista Community Transit System (ACTS) Budget Review

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins presented Town Council with a draft proposal for ACTS's FY2025 Budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He reminded Council that this item was delivered earlier than other departmental budgets, due to the deadline in which transit applications were required to be submitted to the DRPT (February 1st) for funding consideration.

Councilman Mitchell asked if there were any significant changes from the previous year's budget.

Mr. Perkins stated the FY2025 proposed budget had an overall increase of 7%. He said it included increases in some areas, and a decrease in maintenance costs due to having two new buses.

Councilman Mitchell made a motion, seconded by Councilman Emerson, and Town Council approved the proposed ACTS FY2025 Budget/CIP as presented.

### 9. Unfinished Business

Vista/Leggett Project – continued discussion

Project Consultant Robert Lee presented Council with some of the required “first steps” for the Vista/Leggett Project, that included lighting the store fronts, cleaning the terrazzo entrances, reviewing insurance options, and safety sprinkler requirements.

Mr. Lee also shared some “second steps” for the project, which included setting up an LLC entity, and investigating what opportunities were available for grant funding. He said one of the Town's next steps was also to determine how the project's main concerns would be phased (roof, abatement, demolition, facades, etc.).

Mr. Lee then shared a design concept composed of elements favored by Council from the three options recently presented by CMJW. He said, if Council approved, he would gather a cost estimate for each element and deliver it to Council at a future meeting; to which Council concurred.

Mr. Lee also reminded Council that the Town still needed to decide whether the theatre would have a flat floor with movable seating, or a sloped floor with fixed seating. He suggested the Town form a design committee to work on some of the details of this project; reporting to Council through the process.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated, if Council was in consensus to form a design committee for the Vista/Leggett Project, it would consist of representatives from Town Council, the AEDA, Town Staff, and would include Mr. Lee. Councilman Emerson and Councilman George volunteered, and were approved by Council for the aforementioned committee.

Councilman Lowman stated that he believed fixing the roofs of the two buildings was one of the first items that needed to be addressed, to which Council and Mr. Lee concurred.

With no further questions or comments from Town Council, Mayor Mattox thanked Robert Lee for his work with the Town on the Vista/Leggett Project.

### 10. Town Staff Departmental Reports and Project Updates – November 2023

- TOA Finance Reports
- Utilities – Project Updates
- Public Services Monthly Report
- Community Development Report
- Altavista Police Department Reports
- Town Council Monthly Meeting Calendars

These items were included in Town Council's monthly agenda pre-packet, and delivered to Council on the Friday before their meeting, giving them time to review the reports.

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- Altavista Public Services Director Tom Fore stated the Town currently had forty-seven active projects. He said that five of the major CIP projects over the past three years had been completed, including the Melinda Pressure Tank Project, which had been operating up-to-speed for the past six months.

Mr. Fore informed Council that Public Services (Public Works, Utilities, etc.) was presently fully staffed. He then reminded Town Council of the Employee Luncheon on Friday, December 15th, from 11am -2pm, and invited everyone to attend.

- Altavista’s Business & Community Engagement Coordinator, Autumn Evans, presented Council with updates on the Spark Innovation Center and its most recent activities. She also shared a brief overview of upcoming events; which included a “Boost Your Business” series for small businesses, starting in January, to help with marketing, finance, retail hospitality, and leadership. This class series was made possible with a \$57,000 grant from the DHCD.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins stated that Mrs. Evans’ background brought a lot of knowledge needed by small businesses, and informed Council that she facilitated one of the recent classes held at the Spark Center (marketing).

### 11. Matters from Council

- Councilman Tim George referenced two of the Town’s water tanks, one on Bedford Avenue and one on Clarion Road, and stated that he thought the exteriors were dirty and needed cleaning.

Public Services Director Tom Fore informed Council that both tanks were scheduled for upcoming cleaning of the exterior. He stated that the current paint contract did not include maintenance/cleaning, but he assured Council that the next contract would include cleaning on an annual basis.

- Councilman Tracy Emerson shared his favor with the Leggett building display windows being decorated for Christmas, and being done before the Christmas parade, so that citizens could enjoy the scenery.

Director of Administration Tobie Shelton shared names of the Office Staff that contributed to decorating the windows: Samantha Crouch, Cheryl Dudley, Crystal Hailey, Mary Hall, and Sharon Rowland. She also thanked Public Works for assisting with the lighting.

- Councilman Wayne Mitchell referenced the “Deck the Heels” 5K event held on Saturday, December 9th, hosted by the Claire Parker Foundation. He said there was room for growth, but the 2023 event was successful, and had the most participants since the event began six years ago. He thanked the Public Works Staff that helped with the event.

### 12. Closed Session

There were none scheduled for this meeting.

### 13. Adjournment

With no further items for discussion, Mayor Mattox adjourned this meeting at 7:31pm.

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Michael Mattox, Mayor

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Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk