

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

The April 2023 Work Session for Altavista’s Town Council was held in Council Chambers of the J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 7th Street, on Tuesday, April 25th, at 5:00 PM.

Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Town Council

Members present: Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Timothy George
Dr. Scott Lowman
Mayor Michael Mattox
Mr. Wayne Mitchell
Absent: Mr. Jay Higginbotham

Also Present:

Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager
Mr. Matthew Perkins, Asst. Town Manager
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Director of Finance and Administration
Mr. Tommy Merricks, APD Chief of Police
Ms. Sharon D. Williams, Community Development Director
Mr. Tom Fore, Director of Public Services
Mr. Paul Hill, Asst. Public Services Director
Mr. Jeff Arthur, Public Works Manager
Mr. John Eller, Town Attorney
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

1. Agenda Adoption

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council if they had any questions, comments, or concerns in regard to the April 2023 Work Session Agenda, of which there were none.

Councilman Tim George made a motion, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

Vote:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes

2. Recognitions and Presentations

▪ Brightspeed Internet, LLC – Proposed Services and Franchise Agreement

Mr. Richard Schollmann, representing Brightspeed, presented Town Council with information pertaining to their services and proposed Franchise Agreement for the Town of Altavista. Mr. Schollmann was accompanied through phone conference by Alonzo Mitchell and Jim Horne, both were Senior Engineers for permitting with Brightspeed.

Mr. Schollmann informed Council that Brightspeed acquired all assets and associated operations from CenturyLink in August 2021, for twenty states across the US. He stated the company was currently the nation’s fifth largest ILEC, and planned to deliver over 60,000 new fiber passings by the end of 2023, during their first phase of building in Virginia, which included Altavista.

Mr. Schollmann explained, the “new generation” of fiber, was capable of providing up to 10-gigabit connections, allowing upload speeds to equal download speeds; and allowed for quicker restoration when facilities were damaged. He said the product was also more resistant to weather.

Mr. Schollmann stated, while the current focus was on accelerating the upgrade of copper connections to fiber connections, Brightspeed would continue to service many copper customers for voice and DSL. He informed everyone that Brightspeed participated in the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP); and in addition to the ACP \$30 per month available discount, Brightspeed provided up to an additional \$30 for ACP-qualified customers on qualifying plans.

Mr. Schollmann said it was Brightspeed’s intent to provide all customers with the highest quality of service, regardless of the type of network.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Mr. Schollmann shared a photo map of the number of passings (1,600) Brightspeed would be working on in Altavista. He stated that Brightspeed would be utilizing the existing infrastructure, which included both an above and below ground network, however, any new fiber would be installed underground to decrease the potential for issues.

Mr. Schollmann referenced the Town of Altavista's franchise agreement with CenturyLink, which had expired several years prior; and asked for the Town's consideration to address the matter, so that Brightspeed could initiate their network build in Altavista. He informed Town Council that Altavista was at the top of the list in Brightspeed's plans for Virginia.

Mayor Mattox shared his appreciation for Brightspeed choosing the Altavista to begin their network project. He said that he was excited to have the fiber internet service option to offer Altavista citizens.

Councilman Mitchell asked, out of all the localities in Virginia, how Altavista was chosen for this project.

Mr. Schollmann stated that the localities chosen were mostly in rural areas, and almost all of them had existing overhead internet "facilities" (infrastructure), which was more conducive to work with than underground infrastructure, and more feasible for this project.

Mr. Mitchell asked, if approved, when would Brightspeed begin building their fiber network in Altavista.

By phone conference, Alonzo Mitchell answered stating, once permits were in place, the build would only take three to four months to complete.

Director of Public Services, Tom Fore, asked that Brightspeed keep Public Services and VDOT informed at all times of where they were working, and when each area was completed, so the Town could caution citizens of the work areas.

By phone conference, Jim Horn stated, since most of the fiber build would be arial, with very little underground work to be done, Brightspeed expected to have minimal disruption to the community. He said that Brightspeed intended to work closely with the Town to ensure a smooth process.

Mr. Horn stated that Brightspeed would also place placards around Town and informational door hangers on each door of the neighborhoods they worked in, to inform citizens of the work they were doing.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger asked Mr. Schollmann, since Brightspeed bought out CenturyLink, would their service cover all Altavista customers that had CenturyLink's service.

Mr. Schollmann referenced the map he shared earlier of Brightspeed's intended coverage area for Altavista and stated that he believed all of the Town was accounted for, except for a small area on the North end of Town that crossed the Rt.29 bridge.

Mayor Mattox and Vice Mayor Bennett shared their concerns with not having coverage in the small area that Mr. Schollmann spoke about, because there was a Walmart and an Industrial Park in that area.

Mr. Schollmann confirmed with Mr. Horn and Mr. Mitchell that the area was not covered by the current proposal, as it was mainly geared towards residential service. He assured Council that, if a large company or business, such as Walmart, wanted their fiber service, that Brightspeed would accommodate an agreement. He stated most large companies had individual contracts for that service.

With no further questions from Town Council or Staff, Mayor Mattox thanked Mr. Schollmann, Mr. Horn, and Mr. Mitchell for their time and presentation.

3. Citizen's Time

Mayor Mattox asked if there were any citizens present that would like to come before Town Council regarding a non-agenda item; of which there were none.

4. New Items For Discussion

Altavista Community Transit System (ACTS) - Revisions to the Town's FTA Drug and Alcohol Policy

Background: The Town of Altavista Town Council adopted the FTA Drug and Alcohol Policy - Town of Altavista, Altavista Community Transit System (ACTS) in May 2018, effective July 1, 2018, and amended October 2018.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed Town Council that ACTS underwent a compliance review in October 2022; and in March 2023, the Town received the summary report from that review from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), where one deficiency was identified, and corrective action was required.

Mr. Perkins stated, since the time of the policy's adoption, there had been revisions to 49: CFR-655 and 49: CFR-40, and to the Town of Altavista's Employment Policies and Procedures. He said that the proposed revisions to the FTA Drug & Alcohol Policy - Town of Altavista, Altavista Community Transit System (ACTS) also reflected the most recent changes in both federal and local policies.

There was a unanimous consensus of Town Council to place this item on the May 9th, 2023, Consent Agenda for official approval.

5. Unfinished Business

5.1 FY2024 Budget and FY2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – "First Reading"

Finance Director Tobie Shelton presented this item, for Town Council to conduct a "First Reading" of the FY2024 Budget and FY2024-2028 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). She referenced the budget sheets provided to Council over the past few months, and said they had been updated based on actions and/or direction of Council to create the budget that was being proposed.

Mrs. Shelton gave Council a breakdown of all funds in the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024, which included the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), for a total of \$21,156,030. The breakdown was as follows: General Fund \$5,500,140, Enterprise Fund \$14,253,020, Highway Fund \$1,241,020, Cemetery Fund \$96,850, and a transfer out to General Fund Reserves in the amount of \$65,000 to recoup the funds advanced to the Altavista Volunteer Fire Company for the purchase of a new fire engine.

Mrs. Shelton reminded Council that the proposed budget included rate increases for real estate tax, from \$.08 to \$.14, and meals tax from 7% to 8%, as well as a proposed utility rate increase of 10% for water and 5% for sewer, which would have an effective date of December 1, 2023. She said, in addition, a proposed increase to fees related to planning and zoning and weekend truck rentals were included in the FY2024 Budget; and all fees proposed for FY2024 were listed in the Master List.

Mrs. Shelton stated that Staff was requesting Council's authorization to schedule the necessary public hearings for the FY2024 Budget, the Capital Improvement Plan (FY2024 - FY2028), the utility rate changes, and the tax rate changes (real estate tax and meals tax) for Tuesday, May 9th, 2023, at the 6:00 p.m. Town Council Meeting.

Councilman Mitchell asked when the Cemetery Fund would be self-sustaining, without the Town needed to transfer funds from reserves to help cover the costs of annual maintenance.

Mrs. Shelton stated that she was not sure when that might happen. She informed Town Council that, after the budget process was over, Staff had a meeting scheduled with Davenport to discuss long-term investments. She said the Cemetery Reserve Fund was on the list for discussion.

Vice Mayor Bennett suggested the Town consider marketing Green Hill Cemetery; and increasing the services the Town provided as burial options. He said cremation and pet cemeteries were now more common than in the past and could add to the revenue generated by the cemetery.

With no further questions or comments, Town Council approved Staff's request and authorized the required Public Hearings for May 9th, 2023, for the FY2024 Budget, FY2024-2028 CIP, the FY2024 increase in utility rates, and the increase in water and sewer connection fees, and varies fees, including zoning related items, on the Town's Master List of Fees

6. Staff Updates

1) Spark Innovation Center

Business & Community Engagement Coordinator, Jamie Gillespie, gave Town Council an update on the center's most recent activities and upcoming events. She said marketing the center and getting the information out to the community was going really well.

Mrs. Gillespie stated that the tenants in the first four available offices were doing well and all planned to occupy their space indefinitely. She said there were also two individuals on the waiting list for an office when one became available.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Mrs. Gillespie referenced the upcoming Spark Innovation Summer Camp Series, that she partnered with Iron Lives, an organization that focused on leadership development for teens, and Altavista's Outreach and Enrichment Program, that focused on increasing literacy in the community, to offer the camp to local teens, ages 12-17.

Mrs. Gillespie informed Council that she applied for two grants to help cover the costs of the camp, but through partnerships, the camp would be held whether the grants were approved or not. She said there was a lot of excitement towards the summer camp and had already received fourteen applicantes.

Mrs. Gillespie also informed Council, in collaboration with Staff, she applied for a Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Virginia Business Resurgence Grant, that would be used to fund a Business Bootcamp, with 24wks of business training.

Town Council had no questions for Mrs. Gillespie. They thanked her for the work she was doing for the community.

2) Altavista's Acquire-Renovate-Sell Program

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins referenced Altavista's Acquire-Renovate-Sell Program, a housing development initiative for the Town of Altavista. He stated that the program was steadily moving forward, with three town-owned properties currently being excavated and demolition in progress, in preparation for a house build.

Mr. Perkins stated, on the 12th of April, the Town released an invitation to bid for the construction phase of (2) three-bedroom/two-bath homes. He said there was a pre-bid conference on the 17th of April with three interested parties, however, at the bid opening, only two contractors submitted bids.

Mr. Perkins stated that the bids received were in budget, and the Town intended to publish the Notice of Intent to Award on Wednesday, April 26th. He said construction was likely to begin within 30 days.

7. Matters from Town Council

- Vice Mayor Bennett asked Mr. Fore when the stoplight for 7th and Broad Street would be fixed.

Public Works Manager Jeff Arthur stated that he thought the light had been fixed. He said that he would look into the issue.

Councilman Mitchell asked if the aforementioned stoplight was VDOT's or the Town's responsibility.

Mr. Arthur stated that VDOT only maintained the stoplights on Main Street and Bedford Avenue.

- Councilman Emerson thanked the Town and everyone involved in former Fire Chief, John Tucker's funeral.
- Councilman Mitchell thanked Town Staff for the hard work they do; and stated he appreciated hearing about the Town's upcoming projects.
- Mayor Mattox thanked Town Staff for a "job well done" with their efforts, due diligence, and team work to balance the Town's FY2024 Budget.

8. Town Council Closed Session

The Altavista Town Council convened in closed session in accordance with the provisions set out in the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended,

Section 2.2-3711 (A)(3) Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8) Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter

A Motion was made by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson.
The motion carried.

Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, April 25, 2023

Vote:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes

Town Council went into Closed Session at 5:50 PM.

Notice was given that Council was back in regular session at 6:23 PM.

FOLLOWING CLOSED SESSION:

A motion was made by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, to adopt the certification of a closed meeting.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Town Council has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with provisions of The Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the town council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Town Council hereby certifies, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Town Council.

Vote:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes

Notice was given to Staff by Town Manager Gary Shanaberger, that Town Council did not make any official actions as a result of this closed session.

9. Adjournment

Mayor Mattox asked if there were any additional comments or concerns from Town Council, of which there were none.

The April 25th, 2023, Town Council Work Session was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Michael Mattox, Mayor of Altavista

Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk