

# Altavista Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, May 23, 2023

The May 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, May 23rd, 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  
Mr. Jay Higginbotham  
Dr. Scott Lowman  
Mayor Michael Mattox  
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

## 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 May 2023 Work Session Agenda, of which there were none.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett 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
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes		

### 2. Recognitions and Presentations

There were no presentations given on this date.

### 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. Unfinished Business

There were no unfinished business items to discuss at this time.

### 5. New Items for Discussion

#### 5.1 Delinquent Utility Accounts: Write-offs

Finance Director Tobie Shelton asked the Town Council to consider authorizing Staff to write off six (6) utility accounts that were over five years old, \$1,510.64; and fifteen (15) accounts of deceased individuals, \$1,106.84; for a combined write-off request of \$2,617.48.

There was a consensus of Town Council to place this item on the June 13th Council Meeting Consent Agenda for official approval.

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### 5.2 FY2023 Budget Amendments / Departmental Transfers

Background: Items that arise during a fiscal year, that were previously approved by Town Council, require amendments to the budget. Some of the items may be receipt of unbudgeted revenue, which require an amendment to the budget as well. Amendments as directed by previous action of Council or the receipt of funds to cover an associated expense can be funded by various sources such as grant, designated reserves, undesignated reserves or additional revenue received.

Finance Director Tobie Shelton asked Town Council to authorize Staff to revise the FY2023 Budget to reflect changes that had occurred during the fiscal year.

There was a consensus of Town Council to place this item on the June 13th Council Meeting Consent Agenda for official approval.

### 5.3 USDA Housing Preservation Grant

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams asked Town Council for authorization to apply for a USDA Housing Preservation Grant for up to \$200,000; with no match was required and up to 20% of the grant could be used for administration. She stated, if awarded, the grant would allow the Town to create a Housing Repair and Rehabilitation Program for low, to very low-income families in Altavista.

There was a consensus of Town Council to authorize Staff to apply for the aforementioned grant.

Ms. Williams informed Town Council that a resolution of support from the governing body was required to be submitted as part of a grant application.

Town Council voted unanimously to adopt a resolution for submission with Altavista's application for the USDA Housing Preservation Grant. Mayor Mattox read the resolution aloud to be written in the minutes of this meeting.

*WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Service was authorized in 1983 to offer grants to organizations for the rehabilitation of single-family dwellings for low- and very-low-income families in rural America; and*

*WHEREAS USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to promote quality and affordable housing in rural communities; and*

*WHEREAS, the Town seeks to pursue efforts to create a Housing Rehabilitation Program to assist its low- to very-low-income citizens; and*

*WHEREAS, the Town desires to apply for a USDA Housing Preservation Grant for the aforementioned project; and*

*WHEREAS, the amount requested is up to \$200,000 and no local match is required.*

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF ALTAVISTA, VIRGINIA, THAT:**

*1. The submittal of a Housing Preservation Grant application to USDA, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000, to be used to create a housing repair and rehabilitation program for low- and low-to-moderate income families.*

*2. The Town Manager or his designee is hereby authorized to sign and submit appropriate documents and to take such other actions as he deems necessary, in connection with the proposed USDA Housing Preservation Grant.*

*Adopted this 23rd of May 2023*

### 5.4 School Zone Speed-monitoring Camera Program

Background: Altavista's School-zone Speed Monitoring Camera Program was implemented in 2022, and operational since November of 2022. Since implementation, there have been very few issues, due to proper signage being placed in the school zones and on appropriate feeder roads into the school zones.

Altavista Police Chief, Tommy Merricks, asked for direction from Town Council on whether to implement the program during the Altavista Combined School's 2023 summer school. He said there was less student enrollment for summer school, typically lasting until early July, therefore, far less vehicle and foot traffic on Bedford Avenue. He reminded Council that the timeframe for summer school was different from regular school hours, and would require public notification for the changed times.

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Chief Merricks informed Council that ACS Principal Wendy Thomas's was consulted for input, and she had no issue with the cameras not operating during summer school.

Chief Merricks also informed Town Council there had been some issues with the Postal Service; where correctly addressed payments were being "returned to sender". He stated that Altumint was aware of the issue, and informed the APD that it seemed to be an issue with either the processing center in Greensboro or the Postal Service in Baltimore.

Chief Merricks stated that taking the summer off would give time for the proper corrective action to be taken by Altumint and/or Capital One to get the mailing issue resolved. He said that Altumint stated, not issuing tickets during summer months would incur no penalty on the Town.

There was a consensus of Town Council to suspend the speed-monitoring program in the town's school zones during summer months, until school reconvened in mid-August.

### 6. Staff Updates

- Altavista Chief of Police Tommy Merricks shared that he was recently contacted by Phillip Saunders in reference to some memorabilia he had of his late grandfather, Ernest West, which was the first Police Chief of the Town of Altavista. Chief Merricks asked for Council's consideration to display the historic items at Town Hall, since the Police Department was not accessible to the public.

Vice Mayor Bennett stated, if not at Town Hall, he suggested consideration of the Staunton River Memorial Library, located just one block away from Town Hall and the Police Station.

Councilman Emerson suggested Staff also consider the Spark Center for such a historic display.

Councilman Mitchell referenced Avoca Executive Director, Caleb Lafoon, and suggested Chief Merrick consult with Mr. Lafoon regarding the preservation and display of such historic items.

Council was in consensus to allow the project, for Staff to consult with the Town Manager and investigate the details further, for discussion by Council at a future meeting or work session.

- Public Services Director Tom Fore asked Town Council to consider allowing the Town to begin a Community Service Work Program for individuals that need to complete community service hours, such as previous inmates (of non-violent crimes). He stated that he believed the program would benefit the Town by utilizing the individuals to help the Town stay caught up on tasks such as grass mowing, during the summer months when employees were taking vacation time.

Mr. Fore ensured Council that, if approved, Staff would always consult with APD Chief Merricks to verify all individuals before accepting them into the program. He stated the individuals would also be required to show proof of health insurance, because the Town would not be responsible for carrying workman's comp on the individuals while in the program.

There was a consensus of Town Council to authorize Staff to move forward with creating a Community Service Work Program in the Town of Altavista.

### 7. Matters from Town Council

- Councilman Tracy Emerson informed Council that the Altavista Fire Company (AFC) was installing a new sign on the Main Street side of their property. He stated that the AFC would like to utilize the sign to offer advertisement opportunities to local business, as part of the AFC's efforts to re-initiate fundraising efforts for the organization.

Councilman Emerson stated there had been some confusion in the past whether the AFC could solicit for donations, and he asked the Town Attorney, John Eller, for clarification.

Mr. Eller confirmed there was an ordinance in the Town Code that prohibited the AFC from soliciting donations while under contract with the Town to pay for a fire truck.

Finance Director Tobie Shelton shared that the aforementioned contract would soon be satisfied.

Community Development Director Sharon D. Williams reminded Council, if an amendment was needed, a public hearing was required as part of that process.

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There was a consensus of Town Council for Staff to review the Town Code to determine the amendment that would be needed to allow this request; and place the item on the June Work Session Agenda for further discussion.

- Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett requested a future agenda item for continued discussion by Town Council: the definitions of “blighted and derelict structures”, accompanied by photo references, for Council’s clarification of the meaning of both of these types of violation.

Mr. Bennett also asked that Council further discuss the possibility of whether the Town of Altavista should have a Property Maintenance Code to help deter blight and derelict violations.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed Council that Staff was currently working on these issues, consulting with the Town Attorney, and developing a file of information to share with Council when the discussion continues.

There was a consensus of Town Council to further discuss the matter at a future work session.

- Councilman Jay Higginbotham referenced a complaint made by a citizen at a previous Town Council meeting (May 9th) regarding an airstrip in the Town of Altavista, and what was transcribed as a violation of Town Code. He asked that the verbiage in the minutes of that meeting be revised to state, “an alleged violation”, until the matter could be investigated by Town Staff, and a determination be made of whether a violation was actually committed.

Staff said they would revise the notes and minutes of the May 9th meeting to reflect the change.

Town Council asked Staff to elaborate on what the alleged violation entailed.

Community Development Director and Zoning Administrator for the Town of Altavista, Sharon D. Williams, stated that Altavista’s Zoning Ordinance was “silent” regarding airstrips, and under the Code of Virginia, if a use was not mentioned/permitted, then it was prohibited. She informed Council that Staff was still investigating the complaint, and at that time, no Notice-of-Violation had been issued.

After a brief discussion on the matter, there was a consensus of Town Council for Staff to continue their investigation into the said complaint, and bring updates to Council at a future work session.

### 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.*

A Motion was made by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson. 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
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes		

Town Council went into Closed Session at 5:52 PM.

Notice was given that Council was back in regular session at 6:06 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.

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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 May 23rd, 2023, Town Council Work Session was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

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Michael Mattox, Mayor of Altavista

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Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk