

## Altavista Town Council Work Session: Tuesday, September 26, 2023

The September 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, September 26th, at 5:00 PM.

Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Council Members present: Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett  
Mr. Tracy Emerson  
Mr. Timothy George  
Mayor Michael Mattox  
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Absent: Mr. Jay Higginbotham  
Dr. Scott Lowman

Also Present: Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager  
Mr. Matthew Perkins, Asst. Town Manager  
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Director of Finance and Administration  
Mr. Tommy Merricks, Altavista Chief of Police  
Mr. Tom Fore, Director of Public Services  
Mr. Jeff Arthur, Public Works Manager  
Mr. John Eller, TOA Town Attorney  
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Assistant Town Clerk

### 1. Agenda Adoption

With no amendments needed, Mayor Mattox asked if they had any questions, comments, or concerns in regard to the September 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. With a 5-0 vote from Town Council, the motion carried.

### 2. Recognitions and Presentations

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins introduced Autumn Evans, Altavista's new Business and Community Engagement Coordinator, which includes the managerial responsibility for the daily operations of the Spark Innovation Center.

Mayor Mattox and Council welcomed Mrs. Evans to the Town of Altavista.

### 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.

- Trey Finch, President of Finch & Finch Funeral Home in Altavista, addressed Council with a request - for consideration to place a memorial of some type, such as a gazebo, in the center circle of the "teardrop" section in the Green Hill Cemetery.

There was a consensus of Town Council to authorize Town Staff to work with Mr. Finch to determine appropriate memorial options for the space, and the cost for each; and to bring the options to Council at a later date for consideration.

- Ann Mabry, 320 Myrtle Lane, Altavista, referenced the large rocks recently placed at Bedford Avenue Park, and asked that the three rocks behind her driveway be removed.

Ms. Mabry also suggested the Town add additional (regular) parking spaces, picnic tables, and park benches to Bedford Avenue Park.

Mayor Mattox thanked Ms. Mabry for her input, and stated that there was an item on this agenda, pertaining to parking at Bedford Avenue Park, that would be discussed later that evening.

4. Unfinished Business

▪ Vista and Leggett Feasibility Study

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger welcomed Mike Griffin, CJMW, back to Altavista to present Town Council with an update on the status of this project/study.

Mr. Griffin talked about CJMW's market analysis as it pertained to Altavista and its surrounding communities, which included interviews with local business owners, as well as the current, and potential, uses of the Booker Building. He said, to gain county-wide perspective, they contacted the Campbell County Economic Development Director for information that might be beneficial to their feasibility study for Altavista.

Mr. Griffin shared three potential design options with Town Council, and indicated that two of the options were still a "work-in-progress" with the Leggett building. He stated that his team would be meeting with a general contractor in the next week to confirm the design concepts were viable, before going any further in the design process.

Councilman George referenced the metal siding on the old Leggett building, and asked if there were windows beneath the metal.

Mr. Griffin stated there were windows covered up on the rear of the building, but he was unsure about the side of the building.

Councilman Emerson referenced the third draft plan (the "Bar" in the Leggett building) and stated he noticed that the theatre floor was "flat" in that plan.

Mr. Griffin stated yes, a flat floor would allow more event options than a sloped floor.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the amount of seating shown in the theatre designs, and asked Mr. Griffin to gather cost information for hiring small music acts or solo artists, verses large bands. He said the amount of seating in the theatre should reflect the type of entertainment the Town wished to attract. Mr. Bennett stated that a local band did not require a lot of seating, but a more popular band would require as many seats as you could fit in the space, in order for the revenue to cover the cost of the larger band.

Councilman Mitchell stated that the amount of available parking in the downtown area should be considered when determining how many seats to have in the theatre.

Councilman Emerson referenced the many town-owned public parking lots in close proximity to the theatre: the lower-end parking lot located on the back side of the restaurant directly across from the theatre, the lot beside the library, the lot beside the Town Hall, the lot beside the theatre, and the multiple "street" parking spaces in Altavista's Downtown area. He said he believed there was ample parking for large events.

Mr. Bennett stated, if the theatre events became a "big hit", the Town could utilize its transit bus to shuttle theatre patrons from additional parking lots, such as the high school.

Mayor Mattox shared an aspect to consider, whether it was better to have less seating with larger bands and tickets costing more, or more seating with cheaper ticket costs.

Vice Mayor Bennett asked if community input would be gathered on the three draft plans.

Mr. Griffin stated that a community survey and interviews with downtown businesses had already been conducted and would be considered when drafting plan options.

Mr. Emerson asked what the "next steps" were in this process.

Mr. Griffin stated, if the Town was in favor of the three draft plans presented, his team would continue to adjust those plans to three viable options for the Town to choose from. He said that he would share additional updates at Council's October 10th regular meeting, with the final report scheduled for submittal October 19th.

- Vista Theatre Façade Discussion

Project Consultant Robert Lee stated that, with the Town's purchase of the Leggett building scheduled to be finalized in early November, he offered recommendations the Town could do to the façade of both the Vista and the Leggett buildings, to show the community that renovation efforts were in progress.

Vista Theatre:

- Clean the exterior sidewalks.
- Showcase the poster windows (previously used for movie posters) with final project design and have lighted for visual interest.
- Consider having local art students draw murals on the exterior glass of the adjacent shop (previous barbershop)
- Light the Marquis at specific times of evening to draw interest.

Leggett Building:

- Clean the exterior store front and sidewalks.
- Wash the large glass storefront windows – and utilize the windows to share design renderings, once the feasibility study was completed.
- Keep the front windows lit in evenings.

Mr. Lee informed Council that Altavista On Track (AOT) had shown interest in utilizing one of the large Leggett display windows to market Altavista's Downtown District, and he recently found out that the lights of the theatre marquis were working (fixed by the previous owner) and it would be nice to light the marquis at key times of the evening

Mr. Lee said improving the visual appearance of the two building's exteriors, it would create community interest and support, with the Town being mindful of any restrictions due to historical grant opportunities. He said the proforma created through the feasibility study would offer sources of applicable grant funding.

Councilman Mitchell referenced the fact that birds were entering the theatre through the broken front door and asked if it could be fixed at that time, or had to wait for a later date.

Mr. Lee stated that he believed the doors could be realigned and fixed without restriction at that time. He also suggested the Town allow local art students to paint Altavista related murals on the glass windows of the old barbershop located adjacent to the theatre.

There was a unanimous consensus of Town Council to accept Mr. Lee's recommendations, and to authorize Staff to move forward with cleaning up the front areas of the Vista and Leggett buildings.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger stated that he would schedule the suggested work with Staff, to begin in mid-November.

- Bedford Avenue Park

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins stated that this item was added to the agenda at Town Council's request from a previous meeting, and that Staff was seeking Council's direction on how they wished to move forward.

Mayor Mattox asked for Council's input.

Councilman George shared his favor with adding a picnic table, park bench, and additional parking spaces to Bedford Avenue Park, and stated he believed all town parks should be accessible to everyone, including visitors, and not just for the citizens from the neighborhood where the park is located.

Vice Mayor Bennett referenced the large rocks that were recently placed at Bedford Avenue Park, with the intention to deter people from parking in the grass. He stated that he believed the rocks would become a nuisance for Public Works to work around, and suggested replacing the rocks with "no parking" signs, potentially with a fine if violated.

Mr. Bennett referenced the Town of Altavista having many parks for citizens and visitors to enjoy, and said the town should consider making appropriate changes to their parks as the community's needs changed. He stated that he believed the amenities suggested for Bedford Avenue Park would improve the park, and he was in favor of the suggestions.

Councilman Emerson stated that he was not an advocate of doing something just because of what may, or may not happen, at the park. He said that he had faith in Altavista's Police Department to take care of any unwanted issues that may occur. He shared his favor with adding additional parking spaces to Bedford Avenue Park.

Councilman Mitchell referenced Bedford Avenue Park, its current number of parking spaces, and the recent discussion of how many parking spaces the park should have. He reminded everyone the Town went through an initial "process" to determine appropriate sizes, which amenities to offer, and parking for each neighborhood park, Bedford Avenue Park being one of them.

Mr. Mitchell stated, if there was an issue of not having enough parking spaces, or whether the park needed additional amenities, he believed the Town should take the same approach and go through the same process again, to include input from citizens that lived adjacent to, or in close proximity to the park.

Mayor Mattox stated that during his time as Mayor and on Town Council, there had been many discussion over the years about the same issues at Bedford Avenue Park, including people parking in the grass, people backing into shrubs of neighboring citizens, and loud noise complaints.

Mayor Mattox asked APD Chief Tommy Merricks if there had been any noise complaints recently about the park.

Chief Merricks answered no, but there were noise issues from time to time.

Councilman George asked if Council was voting on the matter that evening, to which Mayor Mattox suggested the matter be discussed further at a future meeting when all Council members were present.

Councilman Mitchell stated, if additional parking spaces were added to Bedford Avenue Park, the Town should consider the same matter for another neighborhood park that also had no public parking available, Leonard Coleman Memorial Park on 15th Street.

Mayor Mattox stated this discussion would continue at the October 10th Council Meeting.

Vice Mayor Bennett made a motion, and asked Council to consider allowing Staff to remove the three large rocks, located in the grassy area of Bedford Avenue Park, that were directly behind Ms. Mabry's property. Councilman Emerson seconded the motion.

Councilman Mitchell suggested the motion be amended to have all of the large rocks removed from the park.

Vice Mayor Bennett agreed, and amended his motion to include all of the aforementioned large rocks. Councilman George seconded the amended motion.

Town Council voted 5-0 in favor and authorized Staff to remove all of the large rocks recently placed on the grassy back area of Bedford Avenue Park.

## 5. New Items for Discussion

- BIL Initial Offer – Lead Service Line Inventory

Public Services Director Tom Fore presented this item. He informed Town Council, since the Flint Michigan lead crisis, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) had been working on new lead and copper regulations.

Mr. Fore stated the first regulation required all water purveyors to create a Lead Service Line Inventory, and once completed, each must have a replacement plan in case any lead service lines were found. He said the Town must comply with the EPA requirement.

There was unanimous consensus of Town Council to authorize Town Staff to accept VDH's \$250,000 loan forgiveness; and to allow Staff to advertise an RFP to assist Public Works with the task of completing a Lead Service Line Inventory List.

- Avoca – Repair and Maintenance  
Presented by Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins

Mr. Perkins referenced Avoca's Reserve Maintenance Fund, established with funds from the sale of a town-owned property, and utilized to fund various repairs and maintenance projects for the Avoca property. He stated, to date, the fund balance was \$76,428.

Mr. Perkins said he and Caleb Lafoon, Executive Director for the Avoca Museum, communicate on Avoca repair and maintenance items that need attention, which lead to the creation of a prioritized action plan to address issues. He asked Town Council to consider authorizing Town Staff to review and approve maintenance and repair items costing under the \$5,000 threshold, to alleviate unnecessary delays in addressing issues; while larger capital improvements would continue to be addressed by Avoca leadership through the Town's Capital Improvement Program.

Mr. Perkins informed Town Council that after the approval of FY2024's CIP, Avoca's Reserve Maintenance Fund had a balance under \$10,000, therefore moving forward, the Town would need to decide upon the amount of funds to allocate to an annual maintenance plan for the Avoca Museum and property.

Councilman Mitchell asked if the Town had historical data that could be utilized to determine an annual maintenance budget for Avoca after FY2024.

Town Manager Gary Shanaberger answered yes that data was available, however "unknown" or emergency repairs could exceed that budget.

There was consensus of Town Council to authorize Town Staff to receive and review fund requests from Avoca for maintenance items costing less than \$5,000; and all other requests above that amount would be considered a CIP item and reviewed by Town Council.

- Town Park Amenity – Recreational Opportunity  
Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins informed presented this item.

Mr. Perkins informed Council that Staff was recently contacted by Andy McCracken, on behalf of Yeatts Transfer Company of Altavista, to inquire if the Town would be interested in receiving a set of concrete bag toss (cornhole) boards, free of charge to the Town.

Mr. Perkins stated, if accepted, Town Staff would work with Yeatts Transfer to determine the logistics of how to move/receive the concrete boards, and then it would be up to Town Council to determine where the boards would be placed.

Town Council was in consensus to accept the "concrete" cornhole boards, free of charge, from Yeatts Transfer Company; for placement in one of Altavista's parks. The consensus included placing this item on the October 10th Consent Agenda for official approval, and at that time, Town Council would direct Staff where to place the boards.

## 6. Staff Updates

- Public Services Director Tom Fore referenced the Town's recent Franchise Agreement with Brightspeed (internet company), and reminded everyone that Brightspeed was currently in the area installing the infrastructure that would hold their fiber cables.

Mr. Fore assured Council that he was closely monitoring the underground work being done, to ensure there were no disruptions to utility services for Altavista citizens.

Councilman George referenced a citizen living in Beverly Heights, Altavista, that had their waterline accidentally cut by Brightspeed. He asked if they would be held responsible.

Town Attorney John Eller stated that the contract between the Town of Altavista and Brightspeed stated that Brightspeed would be responsible for any such occurrences.

Mr. Fore stated that, when the accidental break happened, Brightspeed indicated that they would repair the break, but felt it was going to take too long for them to get to it, and he wanted Altavista's customer to have water sooner rather than later, so he authorized Town Staff to fix the break, and Brightspeed would be billed for the work.

#### 7. Matters from Town Council

- Councilman Tim George referenced the Cemetery Connector Trail, specifically the lower end that connects to the main trail (Eagle Trail) in English Park. He asked for an update on installing drainpipes and completing the surface treatment to that area.

Public Works Manager Jeff Arthur informed Council that some drainpipes were initially installed, but he was unsure of were any additional pipes were to be placed. He stated the Asst. Director of Public Services Paul Hill was currently working on the project, and said he would ask Mr. Hill to update Town Council on the matter at a future meeting.

- Vice Mayor Bennett asked that the internet accessibility in English Park be advertised on the Town website.

Asst. Town Manager Matt Perkins informed Council that Staff was currently investigating the internet accessibility in English Park to ensure the access was working currently and identifying the amount of access available before advertising, and stated that the Town would definitely be promoting the amenity when the information was verified.

- Mr. Bennett also asked Staff to look into how long a "study" such as the CAMOIN study stayed on the Town website, before being removed. He suggested such items remain on the town's website indefinitely.

#### 8. Town Council Closed Session

Section 2.2-3711(A)(6): Discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds, where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected.

Notice was given to Staff by Town Manager Gary Shanaberger there were no further discussions or actions taken by Town Council.

#### 9. Adjournment

Mayor Mattox asked if there were any additional comments or concerns from Town Council or Staff, of which there were none. This meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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Michael Mattox, Mayor of Altavista

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Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk