

Town Council Work Session, Tuesday, September 27, 2022

The 2022 September 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 27th, 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 (entered at 5:25)
Mayor Michael Mattox

Absent:

Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Also Present:

Mr. Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Treasurer/Finance Director
Mr. Thomas Merricks, APD Chief of Police
Ms. Sharon D. Williams, Community Development Director
Mr. Tom Fore, 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 September 2022 Council Work Session Agenda, to which there were none.

Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett made a motion, seconded by Councilman Tracy Emerson, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

VOTE:

Mr. Timothy George	Yes
Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes
Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes
Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes

2. Recognitions and Presentations

There were no items scheduled in this category.

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. There were no citizen comments.

4. New Items for Discussion

4.1 FY2024 Budget/CIP Calendar

Finance Director Tobie Shelton shared with Town Council the proposed FY2024 Budget and CIP Calendar for their review and consideration, which was the same as last year's schedule, with CIP discussions happening earlier in the budget process, and included additional work sessions in February and March, in case they were needed by Council to complete the budget process.

There was a unanimous consensus of Town Council to place this item on the October Regular Meeting Consent Agenda for official approval.

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4.2 Annual Delinquent Tax Listing

Finance Director Tobie Shelton stated, in accordance with Section 70-3 of the Town Code, staff annually prepared a list of the uncollectible and delinquent taxes from the previous fiscal year (this request was for FY2022). She informed Town Council that this year's outstanding taxes totaled \$38,934.85, an increase of almost \$8,000 over last year's total; with Personal Property Taxes accounting for much of the balance due, \$34,542.04; and the remaining balance of \$4,392.81 represented outstanding Real Estate Taxes.

Mrs. Shelton stated, at that time, Staff was requesting a consensus of Town Council to place this item on the October 11th, 2022 Town Council Regular Meeting Consent Agenda for approval; to include advertising the delinquent list, and pro-rate the cost of the ad to the delinquent taxpayer; as well as to write-off delinquent Personal Property Taxes for deceased individuals in the amount of \$1,007.98, delinquent Personal Property and Real Estate Taxes under \$20.00 in the amount of \$324.93, and uncollected taxes totaling \$7.70 for which no bills were sent.

Mrs. Shelton stated, due to the statutes of limitations regarding Personal Property taxes, Staff was also requesting approval to write off 2017 Personal Property Taxes totaling \$3,181.30, with collection efforts continuing through June 2023.

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council if they had any questions or comments for the Finance Director in regard to this item, to which there were none.

There was a unanimous consensus of Town Council to place this item on the October Regular Town Council Meeting for official approval of Staff's request.

4.3 APD Request for Discussion – Accepting a K9 in the Altavista Police Department

Altavista Police Chief, Tommy Merricks, requested consideration from Council to accept a K9 Police Dog into the department. He said Sheriff E.W. Viar, Amherst County, had graciously offered to gift a trained narcotics K9 to the Altavista Police Department (APD).

Chief Merricks informed Council that the APD currently had an officer that was interested in becoming a K9 Officer, having grown up with his dad's police K9. He stated that Sheriff Viar's five year old K9, Tank, was not an aggressive dog, and would be used for narcotics detection only. He said the APD believed the K9 would be an added deterrent to the use and distribution of drugs in the Town of Altavista.

Chief Merricks stated he believed being gifted a \$12,000 trained police K9 was a gift. He informed Council that the APD's current budget would cover the cost to train a handler; and there was support from local businesses that had offered to donate dog food, dog treats, a dog food bowl and water bowl, a dog kennel, and dog crate.

Mayor Mattox asked Town Council if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Chief Merricks request.

Councilman Emerson shared his favor in approving the request to accept the K9.

Councilman George asked what drugs the K9 would be used for.

Chief Merricks stated this specific K9 was not trained for marijuana, but for cocaine and opioids. He said that he also checked with VERSA, the town's insurance carrier, and the town was covered for the K9 under its current plan, there would be no extra charge.

Mayor Mattox stated he was concerned about traffic jams during road checks and asked Chief Merricks if the said K9 would be checking every vehicle on those occasions.

Chief Merricks said the APD was trained for such occasions and had specific plans-of-action to decrease the possibility of having a traffic jam.

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Councilman Higginbotham referenced a previous time when the APD had a police K9 and said, for some reason, the APD did not keep the K9.

Councilman Emerson said there were multiple reasons the addition of a K9 did not work the previous time, and the main reason was that the handler lived too far away (Brookneal).

Vice Mayor Bennett asked if a police K9 could have more than one handler.

Chief Merricks stated it was not recommended for a police K9 to have more than one handler. He said it was preferable they have only one handler, in order to form a bond.

Councilman Tracy Emerson made a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett, to approve Chief Merrick's request and authorize him to accept a narcotics K9 into the Altavista Police Department.

Motion carried.

VOTE:	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	NO
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Vice Mayor Reggie Bennett	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes

5. Updates and Informational Items

- Public Services Director Tom Fore asked Council to consider selling the Town of Altavista's extra/unused water tank to the Town of Hurt. He stated the 20,000 gallon tank had not been used in over five years.

Mayor Mattox asked Mr. Fore if Altavista had any use for the extra water tank.

Mr. Fore answered no, the water tank was no longer needed by Altavista. He stated the town recently drained both the Melinda and Bedford water tanks for inspection and were in the process of refilling the tanks, which was accomplished by utilizing the Reynolds Spring, not water held in a backup tank.

Councilman George asked Mr. Fore if he knew the estimated worth of the old tank; to which Mr. Fore stated he did not.

Councilman Higginbotham asked Mr. Fore when the completion date was for the Melinda Drive Area Pressure Zone Improvement Project.

Mr. Fore stated, if no issues arose, the project was scheduled to be complete by December.

There was a consensus of Town Council for Staff to gather additional information (coordinating costs) and place this item on a future agenda for further discussion and consideration.

- Town Manager Gary Shanaberger informed Council that the town's Gas Line Extension Grant, for the Dearing Ford Industrial and Manufacturing Park Project, had expired; however, Megan Lucas, Lynchburg Business Alliance, informed staff the town could reapply and potentially be successful, because she believed, if the funds were available, that GOVA would look favorable at the town's resubmitted application.

Councilman Higginbotham asked if the town's grant expired due to not having a user.

Mr. Shanaberger answered it did, however, with Ms. Lucas's confidence that the town could reapply, staff would continue efforts to find a compatible user for the property.

- The Town Manager also informed Council that Staff completed their first 2022 Managers/Directors Training in September, which he believed was very informative. He also shared the dates for the next two training sessions, October 19th, and December 1st.

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Councilman Scott Lowman entered the work session at this time, 5:25pm.

6. Matters from Town Council

- Councilman George referenced the “brown information sign” at English Park’s boat ramp that informed patrons that area was not a swimming hole. He stated the sign was very faded and shared a recommendation of the Parks& Rec. Committee to replace the sign.

Mr. George stated that the Recreation Committee also recommended placing additional signs, in both the English and Spanish language, at access points along the riverbank in English Park, currently being used as “swimming holes”.

Assistant Town Manager Matt Perkins stated he and Public Works Manager Jeff Arthur estimated the cost of the signs to be \$1,200, which could be covered in the existing budget.

On the recommendation of Town Attorney John Eller, there was a consensus of Town Council for Staff to move forward with placing the aforementioned signs.

- Councilman Tim George also shared a request by the Recreation Committee to allow the Altavista Combined School, high school seniors, to utilize a concrete wall on 9th Street for annual “Spirit Wall”, with colorful murals by seniors of the art department.

There was a consensus of Town Council for Staff to investigate this item further, and bring Council additional information for further consideration at a future work session.

Councilman Emerson asked for an update on the English Park Trail System Signs Project.

Public Works Manager Jeff Arthur stated that a family member of Ms. Cottle’s, sign contractor, had recently been ill, so she had not been at work. He stated she was working on the final draft of the signs and that he would contact Ms. Cottle and inquire about the progress of the project.

There were no other questions or comments from Town Council.

7. 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)(5) Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business’ or industry’s interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community.

Section 2.2-371 1 (A)(8) Consultation with legal counsel employed/retained by a public body regarding legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel, specifically, legal issues associated with the zoning and other regulation of solar development in the Town.

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

VOTE:	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes	Vice Mayor Bennett	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes

Town Council went into Closed Session at 5:37 PM.

Notice was given that Council was back in regular session at 6:37 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.

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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:	Dr. Scott Lowman	Yes	Vice Mayor Bennett	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mr. Jay Higginbotham	Yes	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes

8. Adjournment

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

The September 27th, 2022, Town Council Work Session was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Michael Mattox, Mayor of Altavista

Gary Shanaberger, Town Manager/Town Clerk