

Council Work Session March 24, 2020

The Altavista Town Council's March 2020 Work Session was held in Council Chambers at the J.R. Burgess Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on March 24, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

1. Mayor Mike Mattox called the meeting to order and presided.

Council members

Present: Mayor Michael Mattox
Mr. Reginald Bennett
Mr. Tracy Emerson
Mr. Timothy George
Mr. Wayne Mitchell

Absent: Vice-Mayor Beverley Dalton
Mr. Jay Higginbotham

Also Present: Mr. J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Town Manager
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Finance Director
Police Chief Thomas Merricks, APD
Mr. Tom Fore, Utilities Director
Mr. John Eller, Town Attorney
Mrs. Crystal Hailey, Administration

Absent: Mr. David Garrett, Public Works Director
Ms. Sharon Williams, Community Development Director

Mayor Mattox recognized there were two Council members absent, but stated the members present established the required quorum (5 out of 7) for voting, so the meeting would continue.

2. Agenda Approval

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the proposed March 2020 Council Work Session Agenda, to which there were none.

Mr. Emerson, seconded by Mr. Bennett, motioned to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Reggie Bennett	Yes

3. Recognitions and Presentations

- a. Mayor Mattox referenced COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the effect it was having on our local community, as well as the nation, due to the recent mandated quarantines and business shut downs. He stated our parents and grandparents had all been through tough times, such as wars, depressions, and local loss of industry and jobs, and stated it was times like this that everyone needed to stand together and "look out for one another" in order for the community to stay strong.

Mayor Mattox thanked the Town Manager, Town Attorney, Town Staff, and his fellow Council members for working together to help keep the town running as efficiently as possible during this difficult time.

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b. COVID-19 (aka. Coronavirus)

i. Consideration of a Proclamation Declaring a Local Emergency

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council that Campbell County (Altavista's county affiliate) had recently adopted a proclamation, "Declaring a Local Emergency", related to COVID-19.

Mr. Coggsdale stated, accordingly, staff had also drafted a similar proclamation concerning the Town of Altavista for Council's consideration of adoption. He stated the proclamation adoption was in preparation of a potential "local emergency" and the town needing to seek state and/or federal assistance due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any questions or comments concerning staff's proclamation adoption recommendation, to which there were none.

Mr. Emerson, seconded by Mr. Mitchell, motioned to accept staff's recommendation and approve the adoption of a proclamation "Declaring a Local Emergency" for the Town of Altavista, related to COVID-19.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Reggie Bennett	Yes

ii. Staff Update

Mr. Coggsdale gave Council a brief update of items staff was currently reviewing and/or working on in consideration of the recent requirements related to COVID-19.

- Council Meeting Public Availability:

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council that staff was currently working on achieving a "live stream" of all Council meetings in order to offer the public the ability to watch the meetings from their home.

- Meeting Cancellations:

Mr. Coggsdale stated it was staff's recommendation that Council consider canceling all committee meetings (AOT, Parks & Recreation, and AEDA), and advisory board meetings (Altavista Planning Commission) for the next month. He stated this would coincide with the town's continued safety efforts and adhere to the "social distancing" practices required by the Governor, at this point, until April 23rd.

All Council members were in consensus to do so.

- Town Offices – Hours of Operation:

Mr. Coggsdale stated the Town Hall, Public Works, and Utility offices, are all remaining open to the public at this time, with normal business hours. He stated, however, all town employees were limiting their interactions with the public to adhere with "social distancing" requirements due to COVID-19.

Mr. Coggsdale stated the Altavista Police Department (APD), Public Works, and Utility Directors are making their appointments in "common" areas, outside of their offices, to ensure allowance for social distancing.

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Mr. Coggsdale stated, instead of personal interaction, staff had also been encouraged to use emails and phone calls with their coworkers when possible.

- Town Parks:

Mr. Coggsdale stated it was staff's intent to keep town parks, greenways, and trails open to the public at this time, unless otherwise directed by the Governor.

Mr. Coggsdale referenced the park's playgrounds and public restrooms. He stated, in order to comply with the Governor's mandated "social distancing" requirements, the Altavista would be closing the playground areas of all town parks; and also the public restrooms located in English and Shreve Parks.

- Town-owned Rental Facilities:

Mr. Coggsdale reminded Council of the town's recent decision to temporarily stop all "rentals" of town-owned property, such as park pavilions and the Booker Building facility. He stated the original timeframe for non-rental was through the end of March, but to concur with the #53 Executive Order from the Governor on Monday, March 22, 2020, the town would be extending the non-rental timeframe through the end of April 2020.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council the Avoca Museum was also closing its facility through April 24th, in order to concur with the executive order.

- Local Resources:

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council staff was currently working to compile a list of resources to provide to Altavista's citizens and small businesses affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Mr. Coggsdale stated The Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance (LRBA) was offering their assistance to small businesses by creating a "Business Support Task Force". He stated, on Altavista's behalf, he would be attending "virtual internet meetings" (using ZOOM) with other surrounding localities, in order to keep the town up-to-date on the most current support resources available.

Mr. Coggsdale stated the LRBA was also offering an informational webpage (lynchburgregion.org/coronavirus-hub) for the public to utilize for information and resources regarding COVID-19

Mr. Coggsdale stated staff would be glad to work on any additional items Council would like to see addressed regarding COVID-19 citizen/town safety precautions.

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any questions for staff concerning this item.

Mr. Mitchell referenced the town's state funded, low-interest rate loan available to local small businesses for "improvements". He asked if staff knew whether or not the loan could be used for "support" during hardships, rather than only business improvements being allowed.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council that particular matter had been discussed during the most recent "Business Support Task Force" internet meeting he attended. He stated he would be keeping Council up-to-date on any decisions or new developments that are made during those meetings.

Mr. Coggsdale referenced the town's USDA low-interest rate loan for small businesses that Mr. Mitchell mentioned. He informed Council that staff was currently working towards making the loan (temporarily) available with "no interest". He stated the offer would be intended to help the town's small businesses that were experiencing hardships due to the COVID-19 crisis.

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Mr. Emerson, a Deputy Sheriff of Campbell County, shared with Council and the Town Manager a few of the precautionary measures/procedures the sheriff's office was implementing during the Governor's "social distancing" mandate.

Mr. Emerson stated each employee of the sheriff's office goes through a decontamination station before entering the building for work.

Mr. Emerson also stated the sheriff's office was no longer allowing delivery personnel (such as FedEx and UPS) inside of the building. He stated an officer or employee meets the delivery person outside of the building to receive their packages.

Mr. Coggsdale thanked Mr. Emerson for his input and suggestions.

Mr. George referenced the Town Manager's mention of Altavista's playgrounds and public restrooms being closed. He stated he felt both closures were a necessary safety precaution.

Mr. Coggsdale stated staff was currently working to implement the mentioned closures as soon as possible, and would inform the public accordingly.

Mr. Bennett referenced the recent limitations placed on restaurants in order to help prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. He suggested the town compile a list of the eating establishments that have remained open for pickup service, their phone numbers, and their hours of operation; and placing the list on the town's web site and social media page.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council that Ms. Williams, Altavista's Community Development Director, was currently working with AOT and The Chamber of Commerce to compile the "open businesses" list, and would be sharing the list with the public very soon.

There were no additional questions or comments from Council regarding this item.

Mayor Mattox took the opportunity to thank the Town Manager and Town Finance Director for their continued efforts to achieve a balanced budget for the current fiscal year and the upcoming 2021 fiscal year.

Mayor Mattox stated, with localities starting to show distress from the COVID-19 crisis and the Governor's recent restrictions for restaurants, there was a potential for Altavista to lose meals tax revenue in the next few months.

Mayor Mattox stated he realized a loss in revenue may put a strain on the town's current budget, and asked staff to evaluate the FY2020 Budget/CIP for items that were not considered "vital" and could be postponed if necessary.

Mr. Coggsdale stated staff quickly realized the town's current budget could be impacted by the recent COVID-19 crisis. He stated, using a "projection" for the potential loss of meals tax revenue, Mrs. Shelton and himself reviewed the FY2020 Budget to determine how much, if any, the budget may be affected.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council there were currently unused funds in the FY2020 Budget that could be reallocated, if necessary, to bridge the gap from a meals tax deficit. He stated he felt confident the town could overcome the potential loss of revenue.

Mr. Coggsdale referenced the upcoming 2021 fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2020. He stated, if the COVID-19 crisis continued, staff would also review the FY2021 Draft Budget for change options that may need to be considered in preparation of the possibility for continued revenue loss.

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Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any additional questions or concerns for staff.

- Mr. Emerson asked, if a national emergency is declared regarding the COVID-19 virus, would Altavista be eligible for government assistance.

Mr. Coggsdale referenced the proclamation Council adopted earlier that evening “Declaring a Local Emergency”. He stated, by adopting the proclamation, the town would be eligible for any assistance the State of Virginia or the US Government offered localities in regards to the COVID-19 virus epidemic.

- Mr. Mitchell referenced the memo shared with Council by Mrs. Shelton, Town Finance Director, regarding recent changes made to the FY2021 Draft Budget. He asked for the changes to be “highlighted” within the draft budget, so Council could easily locate the difference between the original numbers and the changes made.

Mr. Coggsdale stated he would ask Mrs. Shelton do so, and send the revised version to Council.

Mayor Mattox referenced the town’s Reserves Fund. He stated the fund was established for emergency situations and the COVID-19 public crisis could be considered as such.

Mayor Mattox stated, on behalf of Council, if the town needed to utilize the Reserve Fund in order to continue offering its residents “vital services”, he encouraged the Town Manager to do so. He stated he felt it was the Town of Altavista’s responsibility to take care of its citizens and community.

4. Public Comments - Agenda and Non-Agenda Items

Mayor Mattox asked if there were any citizen(s) attending the meeting that wished to address Council regarding a work session agenda item, or any other item of concern.

There were no public comments on this date.

5. Items Referred from Previous Meetings

a. Consideration of Borrowing Options to Finance Utility Improvements (Water & Sewer)

Mr. Coggsdale reminded Council this item was referred from the March 10, 2020 Town Council Regular Meeting, when Mr. R.T. Taylor, Davenport, provided them with the results from the town’s Bank Request for Proposals (RFP) associated with the proposed borrowing for public water and sewer improvements.

Mr. Coggsdale stated, due to the possibility of interest rates fluctuating for the VRA option, Council decided to wait until their March 24, 2020 Work Session before making a decision on whether to utilize a bank borrowing, or apply for funds through the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA). He stated Mr. Taylor was in attendance to provide Council with an update on this matter.

Mr. Coggsdale stated, if Council decided to proceed with borrowing funds for the utility improvements, they would need to commit to one of the two options that evening, due to submission deadlines. He stated the action(s) would also involve the adoption of an appropriate resolution for each (new money and refinancing).

Mr. R.T. Taylor shared with Council Davenport’s updated comparison analysis between the three initial banks chosen for consideration (Sterling, Pinnacle, and Truist Bank) and the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA).

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Mr. Taylor informed Council, since their March 10th meeting, there had been a few changes from the preliminary analysis. He stated Sterling Bank's interest rate had increased from 2.35% (originally the lowest bank offer) to 2.98%; and Truist Bank's (formally BB&T) rate increased from 2.44% to 2.48%. He stated, even with Truist Bank's "minor" increase, they were now the best "bank" option.

Mr. Taylor stated the newest, most recent analysis now reflected Truist Bank's interest rate offer as the town's best borrowing option available, rather than the VRA.

Mr. Taylor stated, if the Town of Altavista was intent on moving forward with their proposed utility improvements, and it was Council's intent to use "borrowing" as a method of funding the improvement projects, it was Davenport's recommendation the town use a bank borrowing, rather than a VRA loan, and accept Truist Bank's offer for financing their new debt service, and 1st National Bank's offer for refinancing the town's existing loan.

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any questions for Mr. Taylor regarding this item, or Davenport's rate comparison analysis, to which there were none.

Mr. Emerson, seconded by Mr. George, motioned to accept Davenport's recommendation and approve Truist Bank as the town's financial borrowing agent related to Altavista's current "Capital Improvements" needed for the town's water and sewer systems.

Council also approved adopting a resolution stating the acceptance of Truist Bank's borrowing offer for a 20-year structured loan with an interest rate of 2.48%.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Reggie Bennett	Yes

Mr. Emerson, seconded by Mr. Bennett, motioned to accept and approve 1st National Bank's refinancing offer for the town's existing loan with an interest rate of 1.99%.

Council approved adopting a resolution stating the acceptance of 1st National Bank's offer.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Reggie Bennett	Yes

Mayor Mattox asked Council and staff if they had any questions or comments regarding these two items/motions, to which there were none.

b. DEQ/VRA - Virginia Clear Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF)

Mr. Coggsdale reminded Council the town would be utilizing the VCWRLF to fund Altavista's Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) Electrical Upgrade Project.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council he had recently asked R.T. Taylor (Davenport) to evaluate whether or not the town should consider using a bank to fund the WWTP Electrical Project or continue moving forward with the VCWRLF process for this purpose.

Mr. Taylor confirmed with Mr. Fore, Altavista's Utilities Director, the town's VCWRLF application had been approved for the WWTP Electrical Upgrade Project. He stated he felt the DEQ/VRA loan was the town's best option for this project, because of the interest rate (1-1.8%) this loan offers.

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Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any questions for Mr. Taylor regarding this item, to which there were none.

Mayor Mattox thanked Mr. Taylor for his time and for the good work he continues to do for the Town of Altavista.

6. New Items for Discussion

There were no new items discussed by Council on this date, March 24, 2020.

7. Public Comments (Non-Agenda Items)

Mayor Mattox addressed this item earlier in the meeting.

There were no public comments for non-agenda items on this date.

8. Matters from Council

Mayor Mattox asked Council if they had any additional questions, comments, or concerns.

- Mr. Mitchell asked, since the March 24th work session agenda had been shortened, when would Council have the opportunity to continue discussing “budget” items/issues.

Mr. Coggsdale reminded Council their April 14th Regular Meeting Agenda included a “First Reading” of the FY2021 Draft Budget/CIP; and was also the designated time to schedule a public hearing on the proposed budget.

Mr. Coggsdale stated, since the draft budget needed to be “set” by the April 14th meeting, Council would need to discuss any potential issues/changes to the budget before then.

Mayor Mattox suggested Council consider adding an additional work session to their meeting schedule, allowing Council the time to discuss “only” the proposed draft budget.

Mr. Coggsdale stated there were two weeks, instead of the usual one week, in between that night’s meeting and the next regular scheduled meeting on the 14th of April. He stated Council could choose to extend that night’s work session, or schedule a new one.

Mr. Mitchell suggested continuing that night’s work session on April 7, 2020.

All Council members were in consensus to continue that night’s work session on Tuesday, April 7th at 5:00 p.m., to discuss the proposed FY2021 Draft Budget/CIP only.

- Mr. Coggsdale asked, with the current distance requirements mandating space between individuals be at least six feet apart, was it Council’s intent to continue using Council Chambers for their meetings and upcoming public hearing, or move to a larger location.

Mayor Mattox stated he was comfortable with the arrangement staff had made to Council Chambers to adhere to the “social distancing” requirements. He asked Council for their thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Mitchell stated he was also ok with keeping Council’s meetings in Council Chambers. He referenced the upcoming FY2021 Budget Public Hearing and suggested staff be prepared to accommodate citizens wanting to speak during the hearing.

Mr. Coggsdale stated citizens would be asked to stay in the lobby area, six feet apart from one another, until called into Council Chambers to speak.

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Mayor Mattox suggested opening the AEDA office, across from Council Chambers, to allow for additional space for “distancing”, to which Mr. Coggsdale agreed.

Mayor Mattox asked if citizens waiting in the lobby area, or AEDA office, would be able to hear what is being said by Council.

Mr. Coggsdale referenced the “speaker system” located inside Council Chambers. He stated staff would turn on the speakers located in the lobby, so everyone in the lobby area would be able to hear what is being said inside Council Chambers.

Mr. Coggsdale stated, with the Governor’s current regulation for public gatherings to be 10 people or less, staff would re-inform citizens they are welcome to submit a question, comment, or concern to Town Council or Town Staff at any time, by email or regular mail, through the Town Hall office.

Mr. Mitchell stated he favored the idea of submission through mail or email during the gathering restriction timeframe, but stated he preferred having citizens come before Council in person when they have comments or concerns.

Mayor Mattox agreed with Mr. Mitchell.

- Mr. George referenced the recent email sent to Council regarding the General Assembly’s recent approval of the town’s request for permission to initiate a utility assistance program.

Mr. Coggsdale stated he would place this item on Council’s April 7th continued work session agenda with additional information for Council’s review and further discussion.

- Mr. George also asked staff for an update on Council’s recent request for the town to hire an Assistant Town Manager.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council that he reviewed the original job description for the Assistant Manager position and made “minor” changes, mainly due to the fact the town did not previously have a Community Development Director (CDD) on staff. He stated the CDD now manages some of the tasks previously done by the Assistant Town Manager.

Mr. Coggsdale stated he would share the revised job description with Council at their April 7th continued work session for their review and consideration. He stated, at that time, Council may choose to adopt the new/revised job description, allowing staff to move forward with advertising for the Assistant Town Manager position.

- Mr. Bennett suggested the town develop a “hiring committee” for future town employees. He suggested the interview committee consist of staff and Council, with Council rotating their members, so that every member has a chance to be involved in the hiring process.

Mayor Mattox stated he did not feel Council needed to be involved with hiring “every” new employee. He stated he felt the Town Manager did a great job at managing the town’s hiring process, allowing department directors to hire their own workers/employees.

Mayor Mattox stated, since an Assistant Town Manager would (most likely) be the Town Manager’s successor, he felt it would be appropriate for Council to have input on hiring that position; or any other “key” positions, such as department directors, but they did not need to be involved with hiring all town employees.

Mr. Coggsdale stated he would offer input and/or assistance if asked, but he was confident in the town’s department directors and he was more comfortable having them hire their own employees, rather than himself, because they knew better of what they would be looking for in an employee and what was best for their departments.

All Council members were in consensus for the town’s hiring process to remain as it currently stands, with the exception of Council continuing to have input when hiring a Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Department Directors.

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- Mayor Mattox stated, with the current “social distancing” restrictions recently set forth by the Governor of Virginia due to COVID-19, he understood that some government procedures may have to be temporarily altered to adhere to the mandated restrictions.

Mayor Mattox referenced the upcoming election period and stated Altavista’s Town Council would have (4) seats available for election/re-election during that time. He stated he was concerned individuals wishing to become candidates for those seats would not be able to achieve the (125) signatures needed to participate in the election.

Mayor Mattox asked Mr. Eller, Town Attorney, to contact the State Registrar’s office inquiring for direction concerning current guidelines the Town of Altavista would need to adhere to regarding election procedures.

Mr. Emerson stated this was a time-sensitive matter. He reminded staff the mentioned “signatures” had to be submitted by June 2, 2020.

Mr. Eller, Town Attorney, and Mr. Coggsdale, Town Manager, agreed to work together to have an answer to the Mayor’s question as soon as possible.

There were no additional comments from Council on this date.

Mr. Coggsdale informed Council, in order to continue their work session on another date, Council would have to vote on the action to make it official.

Mr. Emerson, seconded by Mr. Bennett, motioned to continue the March 24, 2020 Council Work Session on Tuesday, April 7th at 5:00 p.m., to discuss the proposed FY2021 Draft Budget/CIP only.

Motion carried:

VOTE:	Mr. Wayne Mitchell	Yes
	Mr. Tracy Emerson	Yes
	Mayor Mike Mattox	Yes
	Mr. Timothy George	Yes
	Mr. Reggie Bennett	Yes

9. Closed Session

There was not a closed session scheduled for the March 24, 2020 Council Work Session.

10. Adjournment

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

Mayor Mattox thanked the Town Manager and Town Staff for their hard work for the Town of Altavista and the community during the COVID-19 public crisis pandemic.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Michael E. Mattox, Mayor

J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Clerk