



**John Jordan, Chairman**  
**Marie Mitchell, Vice Chairman**  
**Reggie Bennett, Town Councilman**  
**Marvin Clements, Commissioner**  
**Jennifer Morton, Commissioner**

**Sharon D. Williams, AICP,**  
**Planning Commission Secretary &**  
**Director of Community Development**

THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF ALTAVISTA, VIRGINIA, WILL BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021 AT 5:00 P.M.

## **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Determination of a Quorum
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Pledge of Allegiance- American Flag & Invocation
6. Approval of Minutes – January 4, 2021
7. Public Expression
8. Public Hearings - None
9. Old Business
  - a. Source Water Protection Plan
  - b. Signage in the Downtown Revitalization Overlay District (information to be provided at the meeting)
10. New Business
  - a. Discussion on tiny houses (see attached article)
  - b. Storage containers as dwelling units (view story online <https://wset.com/news/local/shipping-container-home>)
11. Adjournment

**All meetings are livestreamed and can be viewed on the Town's website at [www.altavistava.gov](http://www.altavistava.gov)**

**Next Meeting: March 1, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.**

The Altavista Planning Commission held a regularly scheduled meeting January 4, 2021 at 5:00 PM in the Council Chambers at Town Hall located at 510 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Altavista, Virginia.

Members present        -        John Jordan, Chairman  
Marie Mitchell, Vice Chair  
Marvin Clements  
Reggie Bennett, Town Council Liaison  
Jennifer Morton

Staff present        -        Sharon D. Williams, AICP – Community Development Director  
Amanda “Amie” Owens – Assistant Town Manager  
John Eller – Town Attorney  
Cheryl Dudley – Customer Service Specialist

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman John Jordan called the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

**DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:**

Chairman Jordan stated that a quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Chairman Jordan asked if there were any amendments to be made to the agenda.

Motion by Mr. Marvin Clements, seconded by Mrs. Marie Mitchell to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & INVOCATION:**

The Commission recited the Pledge of Allegiance and Chairman Jordan delivered the Invocation.

**ELECTION OF 2021 PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN:**

Mr. Clements made a motion to elect Mr. Jordan for Chairman, there were no other nominations. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Mitchell. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mrs. Jennifer Morton made a motion to elect Mrs. Mitchell for Vice-Chairman, there were no other nominations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Clements. The motion was approved unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Mrs. Mitchell, seconded by Mrs. Morton to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2020 meeting as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC EXPRESSION:**

Chairman Jordan opened the floor for public comment; there being none, citizen input was closed.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **a. Source Water Protection Plan**

Ms. Sharon Williams, Director of Community Development stated that Tom Fore, Public Utilities Director, would attend the meeting on February 1, 2021 to answer any questions about the Source Water Protection Plan, to allow the Commission to make a recommendation to Town Council. She said that public input would be accepted at that meeting.

Mrs. Morton asked how the public would be notified.

Ms. Williams stated it would be advertised through the Altavista Journal, social media, and the Town of Altavista webpage.

Chairman Jordan stated he reviewed the document and would recommend Town Council adopt it after public input.

Councilman Reggie Bennett stated that he also reviewed the document and said it was an in-depth piece of work. He stated he would recommend approval to Town Council as well.

The Planning Commission was in complete agreement to accept public input at the February 1, 2021 meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. Annual Report and Work Plan**

Ms. Williams stated that the Code of Virginia required that the Planning Commission annually submit a report to the governing body for activities of the Commission as well as planning staff. She presented the Planning Commission a draft report for their consideration.

Chairman Jordan informed the Planning Commission that discussions had occurred with a developer interested in building a solar farm in town and asked if it should be added to the 2021 Work Plan.

Ms. Williams suggested it be added and referred to as renewable energy, which covered wind and battery storage, which were topics of conversations she recently had with developers.

Mr. Bennett asked if it was appropriate to add electric vehicle charging stations, which had been discussed by Town Council in 2020.

Ms. Williams answered that it was a good suggestion and should be added.

A motion was made by Mr. Bennett to approve the 2020 Annual Report and 2021 Work Plan. Mr. Clements seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mrs. Amie Owens, Assistant Town Manager, gave the Planning Commission an update on the Steering Committee for Downtown Revitalization.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

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John Jordan  
Planning Commission Chair

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Sharon D. Williams, AICP  
Planning Commission Secretary

The purpose of the SWPP is to protect surface and ground water which serves as a source of public water supply from the threat of contamination as a result of accidents or unwise practices from nearby residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, waste management, or transportation activities.

Provided for you is a copy of the final draft Source Water Protection Program that if approved by the Planning Commission and Town Council will protect the source water sources that the Town currently uses once Implemented.

There are recommended action Items in the plan beginning on Page 9 -14 that will need to be addressed on an ongoing basis as well as specified completion date ranging from 1-5 years for these action Items.

If the Planning commission approves of this Source Water Protection Program I would recommend as an educational item you publicly advertise this to solicit citizens Input and after hearing any citizens input recommend approval of the plan to the Town Council.

Respectfully,

Thomas W. Fore

**Planning Commission Staff Report  
Signage in the Downtown Revitalization Overlay District (DRO)**

**Request:**

Recently staff received a request from First National Bank, to install an additional wall sign. Staff reviewed the Zoning Ordinance and saw that the signage was not allowed in the Downtown Revitalization Overlay (DRO) District, as the maximum allowable square footage for signage had already been exceeded.

**Sec. 86-428. - Regulations for signs in the DRO.**

Unless otherwise specified below, all signage within the district must comply with the regulations set forth in article V of this zoning ordinance.

*(1) Maximum size and number of signs.*

- a. Three signs maximum per business per street or opened alley facing. Where buildings only face one street, but signs can be seen from passing traffic, wall signs (only) may be used on side walls, but all sign sizes and numbers apply as if they were placed at the building front. Number and size of all signs will be limited to a maximum of three regardless of where they are placed.
- b. Thirty square feet maximum per sign, regardless of the number.
- c. Sixty square feet maximum aggregate.
- d. No sign shall exceed 15 feet in height measured from the base of the sign or the grade of the nearest street, whichever is higher.

*(2) Signs for multiple businesses on a single zoning lot.*

- a. Maximum size of signs per business.
  1. Thirty square feet maximum per sign, regardless of the number.
  2. Sixty square feet maximum aggregate.

**Planning Commission Discussion:**

At the December 2020 Planning Commission meeting, it was recommended that staff review the allowable signage in the Downtown Revitalization Overlay District (DRO). Staff suggested that additional signage might be appropriate for large lots, multi-story buildings, and lots with multiple street frontages. The Planning Commission asked staff to perform a comprehensive review that would address all parcels in the DRO and not limit its review to the bank.

**Process:**

To make a recommendation on what might be appropriate, staff will need to complete its review of the 198 parcels in the DRO to measure lot width, building heights, and view from street frontages.

Since this information is not readily available, staff must manually measure and/or view each parcel in the DRO. Based on that information, staff will be able to make a recommendation of what is appropriate for signage types and square footages.

As of the writing of this report, staff has not completed its analysis. There are vacant parcels within the DRO and the maximum height under the underlying C-2 zoning is 45' or 4 stories. In the DRO, the maximum height is based on a floor area ratio formula. Potential development should be considered as part of this request.

*floor area ratio (FAR) means the ratio of the total floor area of buildings located on a certain parcel of land to the area of that parcel. [Note: As a formula: Floor area ratio = (total covered area on all floors of all buildings on a parcel) divided by (area of the parcel). Thus, a FAR of 2.0 would indicate that the total floor area of a building is two times the gross area of the parcel on which it is constructed.]*

As downtown has been identified as the town's economic development focus, staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider if changes to the ordinance will hinder that plan or alter the aesthetic appeal of downtown.

## **Planning Commission Staff Report Tiny Houses and Storage Containers as Dwellings**

### **Request:**

In the fall of 2020, the Community Development Director present a report to Town Council with a Community Development and Housing Analysis.

Since that time Town Council and staff have been working together on ways to improve and enlarge housing stock within the town.

Since that time, Councilman Reggie Bennett has shared information he has found about what other communities are doing to expand housing options.

Attached to this report is an article which details what Pensacola, Florida is doing to allow tiny houses.

The second attachment has photos of storage containers that have been transformed into a dwelling unit in Forest, Virginia. A story on this project can be viewed at: <https://wsnet.com/news/local/shipping-container-home>.

### **Tiny Houses:**

The Zoning Ordinance does not contemplate tiny houses as a use within any zoning district. Due to the way that they are constructed and transported, the code as written prohibits them.

#### **Zoning Ordinance Definitions:**

1. *Manufactured home* means a structure subject to federal regulations, built since June 15, 1976, which is transportable in one or more sections; is eight feet or more in width and 40 body feet or more in length in the traveling mode, or is 320 or more square feet when erected on site; is built on a permanent chassis; is designed to be used as a single-family dwelling, with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required facilities; and includes the plumbing, heating, air conditioning, and electrical systems contained in the structure. This structure is not constructed to meet the Industrialized Building Code, Council of American Building Officials, Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code Use Group R-4.
2. *Recreational vehicle* means a vehicle which is (1) built on a single chassis; (2) 400 square feet or less when measured at the largest horizontal projections; (3) designed to be self-propelled or permanently towable by a light-duty truck; and (4) designed primarily not for use as a permanent dwelling but as temporary living quarters for recreation camping, travel or seasonal use.



### **Storage Containers:**

The Zoning Ordinance does not allow storage containers to be used as dwelling units. Additionally, there is a time-limit on how long they can be placed on a site.

*Sec. 86-602. - On-site storage and temporary mobile storage containers.*

(a) Storage containers and buildings shall be considered accessory structures and shall be located in accordance with the standards for accessory structures as described in article III of this chapter.

(b) No vehicle, truck body, manufactured home, mobile home, bus, trailer, recreational vehicle, shipping container, portable storage unit, or similar equipment shall be used as a storage container of building in any zoning district, except that:

(1) Temporary mobile storage containers designed for site delivery and pickup may be placed and used on any residentially or commercially zoned property for a period not to exceed 45 days per calendar year. Such a container may be placed in the front yard of a residentially zoned property only if it is not possible to locate it elsewhere on the property.

(2) Commercial and industrial use types may use shipping containers for storage provided that:

a. All containers are maintained in suitable condition and be free of rust, deterioration, graffiti, etc.

b. All containers are placed in an approved location that does not utilize existing parking spaces, fire lines, etc.

c. All containers are placed in the rear of the property where feasible and shielded from public views.

d. Such containers shall not be allowed for more than 90 consecutive days in any one-year period.

## LOCAL

# Pensacola sets sights on city's first tiny home community

**Madison Arnold** Pensacola News Journal

Published 5:11 a.m. CT Oct. 30, 2020 | Updated 11:00 p.m. CT Nov. 5, 2020

A tiny home-like structure that developers believe could be a blueprint for Pensacola's first tiny home community will soon come to La Rua Street.

Developer Kevin Hagen, president of housing nonprofit AMR at Pensacola, said he is just waiting on a final building permit to construct a 336-square-foot house, which he expects to be complete in the first quarter of 2021.

The house will be a model of the kinds of tiny homes AMR will build in the near future to help ease the area's affordable housing crisis.

"We will use it to show the local authorities, anybody that's interested; here's exactly what we're proposing to do so you have something you can identify (with). Anything new is hard for people to accept, and some folks may not want it in their neighborhood. But when they see what we're going to build and how we're going to do it, the stigma of it will go away," Hagen said.

The unit had to be granted a zoning variance last week to be placed on property owned by AMR, which already has a duplex on it, so the house will be considered an accessory dwelling unit. Developers had to do it that way because most local municipalities have yet to adopt a building code that specifically allows for tiny homes.

Beginning next year, the Florida Building Code is set to include new regulations, called Appendix Q, that define exactly what a tiny home is, including guidance for staple features like lofts or no minimum-sized bedrooms. When that happens, Hagen said he hopes local governments will follow.

The 2017 building code does currently allow for very small homes to be constructed, even less than 150 square feet, but it does not address those characteristics often associated with tiny homes like lofts, including head room and ladder access, Largarde said.

"We hope and our anticipation is yes, that once the building code Appendix Q is adopted that the local planning boards will adopt a land ordinance code," Hagen said. "We hope for all of this to

happen early 2021."

If the new building code is adopted by Pensacola, official tiny homes with all the typical characteristics, on properties independent of existing houses, can be built in the city.

The city's Building Services Department will be modifying a chapter of the Florida Building Code currently in effect in December, with one of the changes being adopting Appendix Q. If approved by the City Council, it will go into effect on Dec. 31 along with the adoption of the 2020 Florida Building Code, said Kaycee Lagarde, city spokeswoman, in an email statement.

The city of Pensacola is also undergoing a simultaneous effort to increase the affordable housing stock. The Affordable Housing Task Force finished a final report in late August, which is meant to be a road map for building 500 affordable homes in the city in five years.

More affordable housing is desperately needed in the city, as shown by a Florida Housing Coalition report that found nine of 10 of Pensacola's top jobs can't afford a market-rate, two-bedroom apartment.

The report says leaders should identify potential sites for in-fill or small-unit development, which could encourage construction of tiny homes. It also suggests the city use a flexible land-use and zoning code to allow for small-unit and manufactured homes to increase the affordable housing stock.

The advantage of tiny homes isn't that they cost less per square foot than a regular house, Hagen said. Rather, they can be built quickly and with a smaller impact on the land and environment.

"It allows somebody a piece of ownership of their own space. They aren't sharing an apartment in a large complex. They have their own building that they occupy all to themselves. It's going to build community. It's going to build ownership and it's going to make folks who would otherwise have a hard time either owning and renting their own space get it at a price they can afford," Hagen said.

Once complete, the La Rua tiny home will have a 120-square-foot covered front porch, one bedroom, full kitchen with smaller appliances, a pantry, bathroom, closet and stackable washer and dryer.

It will be built on site with a permanent foundation.

"We don't want to build ourselves out of helping affordable housing. We can build these things and make them as fancy as we could possibly make them, and then not become affordable," Hagen said. "We're going to set the rents or the sales prices where we can get buyers that need these units."

## Related coverage

**Red tape:** Tiny homes could become easier to build in Escambia County

**Santa Rosa homes:** Milton opens door for tiny home ordinance to bring affordable housing options to city

**City plan:** 500 new affordable homes in 5 years? Here's how Pensacola plans to do it

AMR doesn't have a rent price for the La Rua property yet or any rent or sales prices for future projects.

AMR already has spent \$10,000 for designs and permitting on the La Rua property. Because of the hoops, Hagen said the rent prices likely won't be as affordable as AMR would like them to be.

However, the organization plans to reuse some floor plans in future projects. Hagen said they won't all look the same though because builders will change up the exterior.

In conjunction with the La Rua property, AMR at Pensacola is planning a tiny house community at the intersection of T Street and Lakeview Avenue with 12 units. AMR hopes to begin work on that complex in the second quarter of 2021. The project rests on the state building code change that is expected.

Those are planned to be rented like the La Rua property to see how they operate and to gauge market demand before the nonprofit moves onto developing some for sale.

That project, called the Phoenix Project, was an IMPACT 100 grant winner.

The overall goal of the nonprofit to combat the affordable housing crisis is to build 150 tiny homes in Escambia County. When that might happens depends on land availability and if and when new tiny home-friendly ordinances are passed by local governments.

"We don't have any final deadline to build it out. We just want to start the momentum going and keep the momentum going once we get it started," Hagen said.

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<https://wset.com/news/local/shipping-container-home>



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