

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Regular Meeting
October 26, 2004, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, Councilman Wayne Winkler, Councilman Thomas W. Fritz, Councilman Gene Ambrogio, Councilman Roy G. Hale; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk

Town Staff: Chief Cassin B. Gittings, La Plata Police Department

Guests: (see roster)

Minutes:

Mayor Eckman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Treasurer's Report

Mayor Eckman acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report dated September 30, 2004. Councilman Winkler reported he had spoken to Joe Norris, Town Treasurer, regarding General Services and Sewer Collection and Renovations accounts being over 100%, and that Mr. Norris explained he would be coming to the Town Council to obtain approval to transfer funds, which will bring the amounts to normal levels.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances (none)

Legislation

Ordinance 04-13 Sign Regulations (For Introduction) – For the purpose of defining certain terms; specifying certain signs that are exempt from these regulations; providing that window signs are not considered part of the business' overall allowed signage; increasing the time allowed for public event signs; providing that a sandwich board sign must be on-site and does not require a permit; providing for building identification signs under a Master Sign Plan; providing corner lots with additional signage; providing buildings with multiple public entrances additional signage; providing walk-up restaurants with additional signage; providing for "grand opening" signs; clarifying detached signs; providing for signage in residential and senior living communities; providing that the provisions of this Ordinance are severable and all matters generally related thereto.

Mr. Miller provided a (brief) description of the proposed changes to the sign regulations, noting that comments had been solicited from business owners, compiled by Ms. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager, reviewed by the Town Council in work sessions, and the ordinance was created by Ms. Bembe based on those comments and results of the Council's discussions.

He further noted that public hearings have been scheduled on November 2 before the Planning Commission and on November 9 before the Town Council.

Unfinished Business

Council reports

Councilman Hale announced that the Salute to Veterans Parade and Ceremony would be held on Sunday, November 7, with the parade beginning at 1:00 PM, and the program at the Town Hall beginning at approximately 2:00 PM.

Councilman Fritz had no additional report on the Parks and Recreation Commission, which met October 13, but noted that the next meeting will be November 11.

Councilman Ambrogio had no additional reports on the Beautification Commission, which met October 18, and the Kent Avenue Revitalization Committee, which met October 6.

Councilman Winkler reported on several topics:

- Bolton and Latham recently moved into the Facchina Building.
- He attended the annual Charles County Economic Summit today, and spoke to County Commissioner Wayne Cooper about having regular meetings between the Town Council and County Commissioners.
- The La Plata Business Association met last week and is conducting a membership drive.
- The Kiwanis are selling Christmas tree ornaments commemorating the La Plata Train Station.
- A Christmas tree was purchased for the Train Station and will be put up after Thanksgiving. The Train Station will be open every weekend in December until Christmas. He encouraged any nonprofit groups wishing to use the building to contact him via the Town Hall.
- Various locations in Town are still in need of repair and should be discussed at a Council work session.

Mayor Eckman reported on several topics:

- The design of the tree ornament being sold by the Kiwanis will be converted into a mural to be drawn on the back wall of the atrium in the new Town Hall.
- Papers have been filed for the Charles County Firemen's Museum Association.
- The new star has been erected.
- He attended the farewell party for Murray Levy, and noted that Commissioner Levy has been very helpful to the Town, especially after the tornado.
- He and Mr. Miller attended a meeting with the Maryland Department of the Environment, at which Secretary Philbrick was present. He noted that he believes Secretary Philbrick will be helpful to the Town, especially regarding the water tower.

- The new Town Hall project is on schedule. The move-in date is still scheduled for December 11. The grand opening ceremony is being worked on, and is tentatively scheduled for the week before Christmas. He noted that Lt. Governor Steele will be at the grand opening ceremony.

New Business (none)

Public Forum

Councilman Winkler advised he attended the MML conference last week, at which Lt. Governor Steele spoke and advised he would visit one elementary, middle and high school in each of the state's municipalities. Councilman Winkler noted he believes the Ehrlich administration is serious about improving our schools.

Tom Fenner advised he was pleased the star was erected and that he enjoyed the Pumpkin Jubilee. Mr. Fenner asked if the Town had any input to the Board of Education regarding theology teaching in the high schools. Mayor Eckman advised that the Town Council is not involved and that such is within the purview of other government agencies.

In response to Paula Winkler's remark that there seemed to be more water and ruts on E. Hawthorne Drive at its intersection with Crain Highway, Mr. Miller advised that the Town was still trying to determine what the State Highway Administration was planning to do. He noted that the Town believes the water is coming up from their signal device, and that it is coming from underground storm water from CVS' bioretention device at that corner.

There being no further business, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 7:38 PM. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk