

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
August 12, 2003, 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; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk

Guests: (see roster)

Minutes:

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

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Mayor Eckman read and presented a Town Seal to Amy DiMisa, expressing the Town's appreciation of the six years she served on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Approval of July minutes

Councilman Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 8 regular meeting, July 15 special meeting, July 15 closed meeting, and the July 22 regular meeting, and to open the minutes of the closed meeting to the public. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Legislation

Resolution 03-9 Appointment of Clerk-Treasurer (For Adoption) - For the purpose of clarifying that the Town Treasurer is the Clerk-Treasurer for the Town of La Plata and appointing Joseph W. Norris as Clerk-Treasurer of the Town of La Plata; and all matters relating to said clarification and appointment.

Mr. Miller explained that this Resolution is necessary in order to conduct the financial process of issuing a General Obligation Bond, as outlined in Emergency Ordinance 03-11.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to adopt Resolution 03-9. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Oath of Office – Joseph W. Norris, Clerk-Treasurer

Mayor Eckman administered the oath of office as Clerk-Treasurer to Joseph W. Norris.

Ordinance 03-9 Major Facilities Fees (For Adoption) – For the purpose of creating an “Old Town Utility District” in the Town; revising the Town's Major Facilities Fee by exempting

from its application properties located in the Old Town Utility District; providing for the use of monies currently in the Town's Major Facilities Fund and revenues to be contributed to the fund on and after a certain date; correcting an error in the amount of a certain major facilities fee and ratifying, validating and conforming the collection of major facilities fees under the incorrect rate; providing for the severability of the provisions of this Ordinance; providing that this Ordinance shall take effect on a certain date; and all matters generally related to the Town's Major Facilities Fee.

Mr. Miller provided a brief summary of Ordinance 03-9. Councilman Hale made a motion to adopt Ordinance 03-9. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion. In discussion prior to the vote, Mr. Miller clarified for Councilman Winkler that this ordinance exempts his Old Town Utility District property from having to pay major facilities fees again. Vote: the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Emergency Ordinance 03-10 Moratorium – Sign Permits (For Adoption) – For the purpose of establishing a moratorium on the acceptance, processing, granting approvals for and issuance of certain sign permits by the Town of La Plata for a certain duration of time in order to enable the Town to undertake certain planning and regulatory implementation activities; and all matters generally related to the establishment of a temporary moratorium on the acceptance, processing, granting approvals for and issuance of certain sign permits by the Town of La Plata.

Mr. Miller briefly explained that the Design Review Board and Vision Implementation Team are working on amendments to sign regulations, that a moratorium on all permanent signs is needed until the new regulations are in place, and that the Town Council is being asked to deem this as an emergency ordinance so it may be adopted and immediately become effective. Mr. Miller also noted there were three amendments. In response to Mayor Eckman's question, Mr. Miller confirmed that this moratorium would not impact temporary signs, and that the new regulations will address temporary signs.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to adopt Amendment 1, Amendment 2 and Amendment 3 to this ordinance. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to adopt Emergency Ordinance 03-10 as amended. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Emergency Ordinance 03-11 General Obligation Bond (For Adoption) – For the purpose of issuing a General Obligation Bond pursuant to Section C8-21 of the Town Charter, for the purpose of taking advantage of the present low interest rate market and prepaying the special accrued liability to the State Retirement and Pension System of Maryland; and all matters generally related to the issuance of a General Obligation Bond and prepaying the special accrued liability.

Mr. Miller briefly explained the purpose of this ordinance and advised that a motion would be needed to suspend the provisions of Town Charter § C6-4 Ordinances to adopt this as an emergency ordinance. Mr. Miller complimented Joe Norris, Treasurer, for pursuing this financial arrangement, which reduces the interest rate from 8% to 3.61% on the loan to pay the

State Retirement System debt. Mr. Norris explained that the bond will be used to pay the unfunded liability and will save the Town approximately \$1.5 million over a period of 15 years. He noted that the reason the Town needs to move quickly on this ordinance is due to the 30-day term of the loan rate quote. Mr. Norris further noted that much of this time has already passed and that settlement is scheduled for August 25.

Councilman Hale made a motion to suspend normal procedures and enact this as an emergency ordinance. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to adopt Emergency Ordinance 03-11. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Unfinished Business

Council reports

Councilman Hale reported that Clarks Run and other sites had good turnouts for National Night Out events on August 5. Councilman Hale reported on topics discussed at the Planning Commission's August 7 meeting.

Councilman Fritz reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be meeting August 13, at 5:00 PM, and will be reviewing data regarding the upgrades to the parks at the Train Station and on Caroline Drive. Councilman Fritz also invited residents to volunteer to fill the vacancy on the Parks and Recreation Commission created by the resignation of Ms. DiMisa.

Councilman Ambrogio reported on several topics: (1) Phoenix Run had a large community event for National Night Out. (2) He and Councilman Winkler attended the La Plata Volunteer Fire Department's Installation Banquet. Councilman Ambrogio passed along the plaques presented by the fire department to the Town Council and La Plata Police Department. (3) The Kent Avenue Corridor community meeting was delayed and will be held August 13, at 7:00 PM.

Councilman Winkler reported on several topics: (1) The Historic District Commission will be meeting on an as needed basis. They will meet at least twice this coming winter to discuss tax credits in the Historic District. (2) The La Plata Business Association will be meeting August 14. They had a board meeting last week. Chris Jakubiak led a discussion regarding marketing. The Association hopes to have at least 25 to 30 members. (3) There is some money left in the Charles County Disaster Relief Fund, and Charles County's finance director is working on a formula to give a certain percentage to the applicants whose expenses were greater than the \$1000 maximum grant. (4) There is approximately \$38,000 in the La Plata Disaster Relief Fund. Councilman Winkler recommended purchasing warning sirens with the money, and advised he wants to discuss this at the next work session.

Councilman Fritz remarked that a current issue of Popular Science magazine has an article regarding new technology to detect tornados. A picture of the La Plata tornado is in that article.

Mayor Eckman reported that he attended and enjoyed seven community National Night Out events in La Plata. Mayor Eckman also reported on the meeting he attended last week with State Highway Administration officials regarding the streetscape project and the upgrade project for the intersection of Routes 6 and 301. He advised that they are short by about \$300,000 to do all of the work, and negotiations are underway to find enough money to complete all of the work.

New Business (none)

Public Forum

Jim Hoffman asked the Town Council for an answer regarding whether they still plan to purchase his property. Mayor Eckman responded that there is uncertainty about the construction of Talbot Street and that the Town Council is not in a position to make a decision about buying his property. After a brief discussion, Mayor Eckman advised that the Town Council will make an effort to give Mr. Hoffman an answer in two weeks.

In response to Councilman Winkler's question, Jim Goldsmith advised that a 12' stockade fence has been constructed between the Safeway property and the residential properties behind Safeway. He noted that most of the residents are satisfied with the fence.

On behalf of the Town Council, Councilman Fritz offered happy birthday wishes to Paula Winkler and Judy Frazier.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 7:48 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk