

TOWN NOTES

News from La Plata Town Hall



MAYOR'S CORNER

In the spirit of warmer days, spring-cleaning, and outdoor activities, one cannot help but enjoy the rejuvenation of everything that surrounds us.

The spirit that seems to wane in the winter comes alive in the spring and our community once again brims with enthusiasm, renewed energy, and a high expectations. It is our job at Town Hall too not only be a part of this spirit but to be a major engine that drives this rebirth.

And we are off to a fast start. Our Special Events Coordinator, Marcia Keeth, has put together an outstanding schedule of events for 2011; you may pick up a copy of this schedule at Town Hall or see a listing of events on our web site. If you have not had the opportunity to attend a Town event, check out the photos, slideshows, and videos of our 2010 events also available on our web site. Go to www.TownofLaPlata.org and click on "Events."

We all should strive to be good neighbors and it is not surprising when we discover how many of our citizens accomplish this goal. Our neighborhood is not restricted to the area surrounding our individual residence but also our entire community. Our local businesses also encompass our neighborhood and we should be their major supporters. I am certain that most of you do already, but make it a habit to drop in and let them know how much you appreciate that they are part of our community.

This spirit also applies to the many

Continued on page 3

Special Events



Sundaes with the Easter Bunny

You'd think that after hiding all those eggs and treats in all those yards around town, the Easter Bunny would be ready for a break. But that wild hare will be at La Plata Town Hall the very next day – Monday after Easter, April 25th – for some fun with the little ones. Bring the kids for make-your-own sundaes, crafts, and a visit with the Bunny from 11AM to 1PM.

2011 Special Events Calendar

The Town of La Plata 2011 Special Events brochure is now available. We've included a listing of all our events for the year in this issue of Town Notes. You can also pick up copies of the new **Special Events brochure** at Town Hall or from merchants around town. A pdf version is available for downloading from our website. Go to www.TownofLaPlata.org and click on Events.

While you're there, be sure to check out the schedule for the Town of La Plata **Summer Concert Series**. You'll find a complete run down of bands scheduled to perform, every Friday night starting the last Friday in May and continuing through the last Friday in September. Click on any band name to get a video preview of the group.



Community Yard Sale

The first of 3 **Community Yard Sales** scheduled for this year will take place on Saturday May 7th from 8AM to 12 Noon on the grounds of Town Hall. To reserve your table to be a vendor, download the registration form at our website. Go to www.TownofLaPlata.org, click on **Events**, then click on **Community Yard Sales**. You can also pick up a form at La Plata Town Hall, or contact Marcia Keeth at 301-934-8421 x 142 or MKeeth@TownofLaPlata.org.



Joey Garner of the Town's Public Works Department gets nutrition tips from Civista Health dietician Ann LeBarron.

Employee Health Day

Good health was on the menu at the first Town of La Plata **Employee Health Day Lunch and Learn**, a new program for Town staff. On a Friday in February, Town Hall was closed for an hour at lunchtime so that all the staff could attend this informative event.

All employees were encouraged to visit four interactive information stations set up in the Town Hall atrium where they could learn more about health issues from experts. Civista Health personnel covered two of those stations – one on nutrition and another on blood pressure and stroke information. La Plata's Longevity Studios provided information on fitness and exercise, and the Health Department addressed smoking cessation programs and second hand smoke.

During lunch, the entire crew gathered in the Council chamber for something to eat and food for thought. While staff enjoyed a healthy meal from Apple Spice Junction – turkey wraps, salad, and fruit – Ann LeBarron, registered dietician for Civista, gave a fun and interactive presentation called "Fast and Fantastic Lunches For All" with tips on packing healthy lunches every day.

Our thanks to the organizations that helped make this event as fun as it was informative, including Civista Health, Longevity Studios, the Charles County Health Department, and Apple Spice Junction. Based on the response from the Town of La Plata employees, there will be more Employee Health Day Lunch and Learns served up in the future.

COUNCIL COLUMN

Councilwoman Paddy Mudd, Ward 3

I have received so many questions from you since the resubmission of the annexation proposal to build a Super Walmart. The La Plata Town Council would not be involved in this matter except that to build the Super Walmart on this site requires the annexation of 10 acres into the Town. MSI now occupies this property. At the time of the recent Rosewick annexation the MSI owners did not want to be included. Please understand that the Town can only ANNEX and ZONE property. We have no say as to whether more pharmacies, mattress or grocery stores can be built on properly zoned land. That said, we can express our desires as to what we would like in our Town. Walmart could choose to build on another site already in the Town limits with no restrictions from us except the usual zoning and design review requirements. Also they could build in the county by meeting the county's requirements. This corner location is very desirable because it will be a traffic hub when the new neighborhoods are built along St Charles parkway up to the Town limits.

The original proposal for this annexation was rejected by the Council in November by a 3-2 vote. The present store is approximately 140,000 sq ft and was opened in 2000 with the assurance that it was large enough to serve our future population growth to 25,000. Our present population is just under 9,000. The proposed new store would anchor the LaPlata Crossing center which would occupy the 10 acres in the current annexation proposal as well as 18 acres annexed in the previous Rosewick annexation. The main entrance would be on Rosewick Road at the light and opposite Rosewick Crossing.

Much of the opposition during the first

hearings last fall cited concerns about leaving the current Walmart location vacant. Also of much concern was the impact on the present small locally owned businesses in that shopping center. Opposition also raised the point that Rosewick Crossing has not become the upscale shopping center promised by the developers, Faison-Rosewick, LLC. What about the impact of the Super Walmart on that center?

Faison and Walmart have returned to the Town with a letter of interest from Kohl's to occupy 55,000 sq ft (equivalent to one floor of the Waldorf store) of the present building. This proposed Kohl's would occupy only the south end or garden center area of the current Walmart location. They propose that Kohl's would attract other desirable tenants. Other than this letter of interest no modifications have been made to the previous proposal to the Town. The Council asked them to come back by the time of the public hearings with firm commitments for at least 50% of the empty space.

I would like to hear from all of you as to whether this new proposal would be acceptable.

The Planning Commission will schedule a public hearing regarding a zoning recommendation and the Town Council will schedule a public hearing on the whole annexation proposal. You do not have to be a Town resident to speak at these hearings. There is a 3 minute time limit. Please contact me at pmudd@townofaplata.org or (301) 934-4804.

Councilman Joe Norris, Ward 4

Spring is here and that is a happy thought. It is always so uplifting to see the buds on the trees and the flowers starting to peep out. All in all our winter was not too bad com-

pared to last winter. I am grateful to know that the warmer weather is here to stay.

As usual this time of year the Council is busy with the budget. This will continue until late May. I am happy to say that we are probably in better shape than most jurisdictions for this year but we plan to be very cautious as we proceed. We continue to struggle with our long term road maintenance because of the lack of shared funds that we have always received from the gasoline tax and vehicle registrations. As I am sure you have read the state authorities have taken 95 % of this revenue from us and indeed from all municipalities and counties, in order to balance the state budget. We continue to lobby for this revenue but as I write this we don't have much hope of this changing. As usual there are many things we would like to accomplish but must be careful in our planning. This is the year for reassessments in the La Plata area and with falling property values it will have a negative impact on our revenue next year so we need to be careful with new initiatives. Remember as we go through this process we always welcome your input. We do try and let our citizen surveys guide in our decisions.

Just a reminder that yard waste pickup days are Mondays and Fridays, as we begin our yard work. Please put your grass clippings in the biodegradable bags. Plastic bags are not accepted at the Charles County Landfill.

For more information about any of the town meetings or activities go to our website (www.townofaplata.org). Our new events calendar for 2011 is posted on the website now.

As always if you have any questions, comments or issues, I may be reached by phone at 301 934-9230 or by email at jnorris@townofaplata.org. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

MEET THE TOWN STAFF



Theresa Dent

The Town is pleased to announce the hiring of Theresa Dent as a Senior Planner. Theresa began her career in planning in 2000 with the Department of Land Use and Growth Management in St. Mary's County. Theresa left St. Mary's County to work in the private sector providing land planning, market analysis, due diligence, demographics, feasibility and natural resources inventory reports for large commercial development companies in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Most recently Theresa served as Senior Planner for Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission until taking the position with the Town. Theresa attended University of Maryland studying real estate law and has completed advanced environmental courses in wetland delineation, forest stand delineation, natural resources and storm water management. Theresa grew up on the water just north of Annapolis and moved to the Southern Maryland area in 1997 where she raised two children, a son who now serves in the Coast Guard and a daughter who is attending Towson University. Theresa is an award winning photographer and in her spare time serves on two committees at her church and enjoys spending time with family.

LONG TERM CARE



Standing Left to Right: Marty Smith, Chris Persak, Glenn Frank, III, Bill Frazer, Robert Burke and Chris King

On January 20, 2011 Chris King, Bill Frazer, Glenn Frank, III, Robert Burke, Marty Smith, and Chris Persak provided valuable information regarding Long-Term Care and 401(K) Hot Topics & Trends to a group at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center.

Bill Frazer detailed the reasons long-term care insurance can be effective and the benefits for employers and employees. An estimated 70 percent of people who reach the age of 65 will need some form of long-term care. Long-term care takes many forms and can take place at home, in an assisted living facility, retirement communities, senior centers or nursing homes. According to Bill Frazer, "Surveys have shown offering long-term care insurance is good for increasing employee retention,

improving recruitment and attitude, and lowering absenteeism."

Glenn Frank, III, CPA identified the tax implications for long-term care insurance premiums and the potential tax benefits for employers and employees. The IRS Code sections dealing with long-term care insurance premiums generally permit employees to exclude the benefit from gross income and employers to deduct the premiums that it pays. Long-term care also generally falls into two categories, which greatly impact the next step, financing the long-term care. Those two categories are "medically necessary" care and "custodial" care. Medically necessary care is covered by Medicare, but custodial care is not. "The only sound general rule about tax answers is it depends", said Glenn. "The actual tax treatment of a specific transaction or groups of transactions is based solely on their exacting facts and circumstances."

Robert Burke, PA identified ways people fund long-term care and provided legal advice. "Ultimately, the choices may be limited by how much money there is to finance the long-term care. People are often shocked at the expense of long-term care, so make sure you plan well in advance", said Mr. Burke. "Specific provisions should be examined, since the possible conditions can be complex. Policies are appropriate for those with substantial income and assets to protect and who wish to buy this form of protection against the

potential costs of long-term care."

Chris Persak and Marty Smith closed the discussion identifying key advantages for 401(k) plans. A 401(k) plan may be the most important part of your retirement investment plan. Chris outlined how 401(k) plans are designed to help employees prepare for retirement and an employers' commitment to a comprehensive employee benefit program helps employees stay healthy, feel secure and maintain a work/life balance. "Long-term care insurance will help protect employees' assets and their retirement plan", stated Marty. "It's part of a complete financial strategy."

"As we grow another year older we're looking for the best ways to keep and grow our wealth", said Chris King, Financial Advisor at Raley, Watts & O'Neill. "We need to stay on the cutting edge of these important employee benefits."

MAYOR'S CORNER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

volunteer and non-profit organizations that are located in La Plata. They usually operate in the background but they are an important part of the overall fabric of our Town. These organizations provide the means and the bond to many of our neighbors that gives true meaning to the words life and the pursuit of happiness. Support them when you can or better yet become a volunteer.

Everyone takes a certain pride in living and working in a clean environment. We take a special pride in keeping La Plata clean and appealing. A helping hand from local residents is always appreciated by ensuring that trash ends up in the appropriate receptacle and does not litter our streets or neighborhoods. Yes, it does take the help of the entire village to make this work.

I realize that most of you do not have the time to attend a Town Council work session or regular meeting. I also realize that this does not mean that you are not interested in what is happening in your Town. I have attempted to use this column to keep you informed of issues pertinent to the Town and other information that I felt was relevant. This will remain my goal during my tenure as mayor; you the reader will have to determine the degree of my success.

As your Mayor, I will always welcome your comments, be they positive or critical. You can reach me at Town Hall (301) 934-8421 or at home (301) 934-4850.

Town Hall Closed

The Town Hall will be closed on the following days:

Good Friday

Friday, April 22, 2011

Memorial Day

Monday, May 30, 2011

If you have a **water or sewer emergency** after hours, call (301) 934-8421 and follow the instructions given to report your emergency. The automated response system will alert the appropriate department to respond to you.

TOWN OF LA PLATA OFFICIALS

Mayor: Roy G. Hale

Council:

Wayne Winkler Ward 1

C. Keith Back Ward 2

Paddy Mudd Ward 3

Joseph W. Norris Ward 4

Town Manager:

Daniel J. Mears

Treasurer: Robert W. Oliphant

Assistant Town Manager:

Michelle D. Miner

Town Clerk: Danielle Mandley

Project Manager: Steven F. Schroeder

Police Chief: Cassin B. Gittings

Director of Planning and Community

Development: David M. Jenkins

Director of Operations: Robert F. Stahl, Jr.

Director of Public Works:

Jeffrey S. Garner

Senior Planner: Theresa Dent

305 Queen Anne Street,

La Plata, Maryland 20646

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Telephone: 301-934-8421 / 301-870-3377

La Plata Police Department: 301-934-1500

Email: mminer@townoflaplata.org

Website: www.townoflaplata.org

LA PLATA TOWN SERVICES

Special Trash Pickup

Bulk items are picked up the first Monday of each month, or the following Monday if the first one is a holiday. Large amounts of loose material (such as brush) should be bundled or bagged in such a manner that the weight is less than 50 lbs. The Town reserves the right not to pick up items too heavy to safely handle. General construction cleanup and hazardous materials are not eligible. Items must be at curbside by 7:30 a.m. on pickup day. Call Town Hall before pickup day to be placed on the list. Billing for special trash pickup is included on your quarterly utility bill.

Yard Waste Pick Up

Residential yard waste pickups will only take place on Monday and Fridays. Containers of yard waste ONLY – leaves, grass and shrub clippings, brush or branches may be put out on Mondays and Fridays. The containers must be marked “Yard Waste”. Brush or branches must be bundled, weigh no more than 50lbs. per bundle, and the branches may not be larger than 4 feet long. *Plastic bags are not allowed – if you bag yard waste you must use paper bags.*

Household Hazardous Waste Collection



The Charles County Commissioners announce that household hazardous waste collection days for 2011 will resume on the first Saturday in April and continue on the first Saturday of

each month through December from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the parking lot of the Department of Public Works building, located at 10430 Audie Lane, off of Radio Station Road in La Plata this site relocated from the recycling center at the landfill on Billingsley Road. Household

hazardous waste collection is a contracted service and items cannot be accepted when the contractor is not on site.

Items accepted free of charge include pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, paint, cleaning supplies, pool chemicals, batteries, expired prescription drugs, and other poisons that are around your house. Please keep the materials in their original containers whenever possible, and bring them to the collection site in cardboard boxes to ease unloading.

For more information, call the Charles County Department of Public Facilities, Environmental Resources Division at (301) 932-3599.

Trash Collection Schedule Adjustment

If your regular trash collection day is:

Friday, April 22, 2011
Monday, May 30, 2011

Trash will be picked up on:

Thursday, April 21, 2011
Tuesday, May 31, 2011

BEAUTIFICATION GRANT



Do you have an idea to make La Plata a better place for you and the community? If so, apply for one of the Beautification Grants sponsored by the Town's Beautification Commission. The Town has a new grant round that will award **grants of up to \$500** each for projects that positively benefit La Plata.

The Beautification Commission started the Beautification Grant program in an effort to improve the community for our residents, visitors, and businesses. What will you do to benefit the community?

This is a great outlet for Home Owner Associations, school projects, scout groups, civic organizations, individuals, businesses,

and other community members to do something that benefits you, the Town, and all who visit La Plata. Applications for the first round will be due by May 2, 2011.

Grant applications will be available for download from the Town's website, or you may get them directly from Danielle Mandley at (301) 934 – 8421 or dmandley@townofaplata.org. Grant applications will be reviewed by La Plata's Beautification Commission and successful projects will receive up to \$500 to help bring the idea to life. Thank you for your interest in helping our community by focusing on ways to make La Plata a better place.

NOW OPEN IN LA PLATA AND COMING SOON TO LA PLATA

Commercial Building Permits Issued
(1/1/11-2/28/11)

Valvoline
6660 Crain Highway

Commercial Use & Occupancy Permits
Issued (1/1/11-2/28/11)

Office Building
204 Washington Avenue

Law Office
204 Washington Avenue

Dr. Herrings Office
201 Centennial Street C-1

Hue Hair Color Studio
103B St. Mary's Avenue

APRIL 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
					Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Yard Waste Pick-Up Special Pick-Up, call by 4/1/11 to be put on list	Planning Commission meeting; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Design Review Board meeting; 9:00 am Crime Watch Council Meeting; 7:30 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Yard Waste Pick-Up	Town Council work session; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting; 5:00 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	Yard Waste Pick-Up	Town Council work session; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Design Review Board Meeting; 9:00 am		No Yard Waste Pick-Up Town Hall Closed Trash Pick up will be 4/21/11	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	Yard Waste Pick-Up Beautification Commission Meeting; 4 pm Ice Cream Sundaes with the Easter Bunny	Town Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm Celebrate La Plata; noon to 4:00 pm

MAY 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Yard Waste Pick-Up Special Pick-Up (call Town Hall by 4/29/11 to be put on list)	Planning Commission meeting; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Design Review Board meeting; 9:00 am Crime Watch Council Meeting; 7:30 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Early Warning Device Testing; 10:00 am Community Yard Sale; 8:00 am to noon Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	Yard Waste Pick-Up	Town Council work session; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting; 5:00 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Yard Waste Pick-Up	Town Council work session; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Design Review Board Meeting; 9:00 am		Yard Waste Pick-Up	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	Yard Waste Pick-Up	Town Council Regular Meeting; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 6:00 pm		Yard Waste Pick-Up Summer Concert; 7:00 pm	Farmers Market; 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
29	30	31				
	Memorial Day Town Hall closed No Track Pick Up No Yard Waste Pick-Up Memorial Day ceremony; 11:00 am	5/30 trash pick up				

TOWN OF LA PLATA SPECIAL EVENTS 2011

Celebrate La Plata

Saturday April 30, 2011
12 noon to 4PM

Community Yard Sale

Saturday May 7, 2011 8AM to 12 noon

Summer Concert

Friday May 27, 2011 7PM to 9PM
25th Hour Band

Memorial Day Ceremony

Monday May 30, 2011 11AM

Summer Concert

Friday June 3, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Four of a Kind Band

Summer Concert

Friday June 10, 2011 7PM to 9PM
US Navy Band The Commodores

Summer Concert

Friday June 17, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Port Tobacco Pickers

Summer Concert

Friday June 24, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Nuttin' Fancy

Summer Concert

Friday July 1, 2011 7PM to 9PM
The Wise Guys

4th of July Watermelon Bash

Monday July 4, 2011
11AM to 2PM

Summer Concert

Friday July 8, 2011 7PM to 9PM
US Naval Academy Electric Brigade

Summer Concert

Friday July 15, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Roadhouse

Community Yard Sale

Saturday July 16, 2011 8AM to 12 noon

Summer Concert

Friday July 22, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Eastern Tradition

Summer Concert

Friday July 29, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Appaloosa

Summer Concert

Friday August 5, 2011 7PM to 9PM
The Blarney Stones

Summer Concert

Friday August 12, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Sons of Pirates

Summer Concert

Friday August 19, 2011 7PM to 9PM
US Navy Band Country Current

Summer Concert

Friday August 26, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Southern Maryland Concert Band

Summer Concert

Friday September 2, 2011
7PM to 9PM

Cover Story

Summer Concert

Friday September 9, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Eric Scott Band

Chili Cook Off

Saturday September 10, 2011
12 noon to 3PM

Summer Concert

Friday September 16, 2011 7PM to 9PM
US Navy Band Cruisers

Summer Concert

Friday September 23, 2011 7PM to 9PM
Lionel Ward and the New World Band

Summer Concert

Friday September 30, 2011 7PM to 9PM
25th Hour Band

Community Yard Sale & Costume Swap

Saturday October 8, 2011 8AM to 12 noon

La Plata Fall Festival

Sunday October 23, 2011
12 noon to 4PM

Salute to Veterans Parade & Ceremony

Sunday November 6, 2011 1PM

Old Tyme Holiday Gathering

Sunday December 4, 2011
3PM to 6PM

- All Town of La Plata events are FREE and open to the general public.
- All events take place on the grounds of La Plata Town Hall, 305 Queen Anne Street.



- Concerts goers are encouraged to bring blankets or lawn chairs for sitting. Coolers are allowed, but no alcohol, please.
- Food is available for sale at all events.
- The Kids' Zone play area is set up during concerts so that parents can enjoy the music while keeping an eye on children nearby.
- Restrooms are available inside Town Hall and are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Ample parking around Town Hall; please do not park in residential lots or lots of businesses that are open during events.



WEBSITE POLL

Visit the Town of La Plata's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org> to participate in an online poll. Click on the 'Snap Poll' link on the left side of the web page to go to the poll and see the results to date. The current question is:

What type of device do you primarily use for mobile computing?

Laptop PC	Laptop Mac
Netbook	Android Phone
iPhone	iPad
iPod/iPod Touch	Blackberry
Other Devices	Don't do mobile computing

February Website Poll Results

Below are the website 'Snap Poll' results from the last issue. The question and results are:

If the Town offered the ability to pay utility bills online, I would utilize the service.

- Strongly Agree – 81%
- Somewhat Agree – 8%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree – 2%
- Somewhat Disagree – 0%
- Strongly Disagree – 6%
- Don't Know – 3%

The ability to pay utility bills online is the most requested service of the Town. The Town is now developing the capability to provide this service, and will be announcing its availability in the coming months. As one of the top Service Priorities of the Town Council, the staff has been working to upgrade the Town's accounting and finance systems to be able to handle online payments. Over the past several months, Town Treasurer, Robert Oliphant and the Finance Department have been working to enhance the finance functions of payroll, budgeting, accounts payable, and accounts receivable. The system was upgraded so that bills could

be entered with a bar-code scanner, enhancing accuracy of bill processing.

The Town is now finalizing and testing the software in preparation of being able to receive credit cards, online payments, bank transfers, and automatic payments. The Town Council has reviewed the proposal to recover a 2.5% fee on transactions that are charged a fee from credit card companies.

Please look for the announcement of when online payments will be available in the coming months. The feature will be added to the Town's website, and other notification will follow soon. The Town looks forward to being able to deliver this new service.



WiFi



In the Fall of 2009 the Town conducted a Snap Poll to help gauge interest in the Town Council's Service Priority of developing a WiFi system in La Plata's downtown. The survey showed 73% of respondents supported the idea. Today, a partnership between the Town of La Plata and the Charles County Public Library has resulted in a free public WiFi system that covers much of our downtown.

Technology is quickly changing what people can do, and ultimately where they are able to do it. The trend toward mobile computing and wireless devices is increasing. Stores, hotels, restaurants, and other places see a benefit to providing wireless internet connectivity, as it provides a service and serves to attract and retain customers. A community's downtown is a place for people to congregate, shop, dine, and participate in community functions. The ability for public spaces to be more dynamic and meet the modern needs of the population encourages people to use those spaces.

Last September the Town and Library began testing a system with four WiFi nodes located on the Library, Civista, and the Facchina building on Centennial Street. With a successful test, the fall of 2010 was spent scouting, making contact, and confirming locations for next phase of deployment. The goal was to provide continuous coverage across downtown, and connect to Town Hall. In mid February the four nodes had been expanded to thirteen, providing access that ranges from Centennial Street at 301 in the west to the Library in the east. It ranges from Town Hall in the south to the Farmer's Market in the north. Depending on the device you use, coverage is generally available within that area. It is not designed for access to be inside buildings, however there is ample opportunity for outdoor coverage.

To use the network, simply select the network named 'Town of La Plata' on your wireless device. You are required to click through a splash page. You are then able to use the internet just as you would at a terminal available in your local library. In the testing phase just over 200 individuals found and used the network between September and the beginning of February. From mid February to early March, use has

expanded to over 600 unique users. If you have not found it yet, bring your wireless device to downtown and give the network a try. You can look up a movie time while dining with friends. You can research flight times for your upcoming vacation while waiting for your vehicle to be serviced. You can check your email while at the Farmer's Market. How can you use this network to improve your lifestyle?

Information services are part of our Library's mission, and the Town is thankful for their support in bringing this service to our community. Many local businesses have helped by providing a location for the WiFi nodes. Please be certain to thank the WiFi nodes. Please be certain to thank the Port Tobacco Theater, Civista, South Centennial Office Condominium Association, Ed and Candice Kelly, PNC Bank, Facchina, and the Charles County Public Library for all providing space on their buildings.

In the coming weeks, the Town will be putting out this logo to help identify where WiFi is available in Town. The range of the service is mostly limited to the power of the antenna in your device. The best way to find the WiFi service, is to try it. Please share your stories on how this service benefits you by emailing them to dmears@townoflaplata.org.

Conservation Corner

Tree Care

Trees are a valuable resource for our community. Trees provide shade which cool our buildings, paved surfaces, lawns, and ourselves.

They provide visual appeal to our neighborhoods, downtown, and help connect us to our natural environment. They can be a source of food for people, as well as wildlife habitat.

They can serve as elements for recreation and as visual barriers to screen unsightly areas. Trees clean the air, provide oxygen, and serve a valuable role in carbon sequestration. We must all take a role in planting and caring for the trees in our community, for the benefit they provide to our town.



Trees are a cost effective, low maintenance, and attractive addition to our landscapes. The biggest key to success is to research the trees on your property and those you are considering to plant. Be sure to choose trees that are native to this area, so they will have the greatest chance of survival and growing well, this will also reduce your long term maintenance needs.

When planting trees:

- Consider the size of the tree and space it a reasonable distance from buildings, utility lines, driveways, sidewalks, roads, and other trees to ensure the branches and roots do not become maintenance problems later.
- Dig a wide hole to plant the tree to loosen soil and give roots room.
- Do not dig the hole deeper than the root ball.

- On root balls always remove cages, twine, and burlap.
- Fertilizer and other additives are not necessary.
- Water absorbing crystals can aid in retaining moisture in the soil during drier periods.

Mulching trees has many benefits beyond the aesthetic appeal.

- Inhibits growth of weeds.
- Provides a barrier to reduce damage from lawnmowers and other equipment.
- Conserves moisture in the soil.
- Removes competition for rain by turf or other plants, allowing more moisture to get to the roots.
- It helps maintain the soil temperature.
- Mulch up to four inches deep.
- Do not place mulch against the bark. A mulch volcano is incorrect and can lead to tree health problems. Pull mulch away from the trunk.

Pruning trees may be done when needed for safety of people or property, to remove disease or insect infestation, to stimulate fruit production, or for aesthetic appeal.

- Do not top trees or over prune. This causes significant stress to the tree.
- Do not prune in the summer. Tree branches and leaves protect the tree, conserve its moisture, and the tree shades itself.
- Only prune select branches.
- Do not prune branches near utility lines, instead contact the utility.
- Prune safely or contact a professional service.

For more tips visit www.arborday.org. Consider adding a fruit tree to your property to not only add value to your property, but food for your family and neighbors. Properly caring for trees will improve our environment and our community. Thank you for your concern for trees and their positive impact on our community.

MAKING LA PLATA MORE EFFICIENT

With resources strained by challenges in the economy, it is vital that the Town explore ways to make its operations more efficient to save money, time, and add value to the services provided. Town staff is charged with finding new ways to improve services, and the Town regularly invests in technology or implements process changes to drive efficiencies.

Wireless Communication

Across downtown residents and visitors are able to utilize a public WiFi system that gives access to the internet and information services from the Library and Town of La Plata. The benefits to lifestyle and appeal of coming to downtown are apparent and easily utilized. The system also provides a base to explore new options for service delivery and efficiency in government operations as well.

Most of the Town's employees work out in the streets, neighborhoods, parks, and business centers of the Town on a daily basis. This mobile workforce has jobs to do that require labor, but in every instance there are information needs as well. The Town

uses mobile phones, radios, computers, and a host of monitoring devices to receive and convey information. Often we are limited to the speed and capacity of a cellular network for transmitting information.

The Town is exploring ways in which it can use the WiFi backbone to introduce efficiency, reduce cost, add redundancy, and improve service. While each of these ideas are currently in development, future Efficiency Corner articles may highlight the implementation of these new uses. The Town collects data from its well pumps, water towers, and sewage pumping stations to monitor its water systems. Currently those systems use either cellular or dedicated phone line service to transmit the data.

The cost of those systems could be reduced with a conversion to communicating over the WiFi mesh network. Water meters are currently read by a remote read system, collected by an employee driving every road in La Plata. WiFi could be utilized to allow the read of meters instantly from the utility office, aiding in the efficiency of starting and ending service as new residents come into

Town, and responding to billing inquiries.

The Waste Water Treatment Plant is about to receive a \$10 million upgrade to include full Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition, WiFi could be utilized to transmit data and video to allow Public Works to monitor and control the plant from anywhere they have an internet connection. The Police Department could use the system to obtain video from parks security cameras. Officers, Inspectors, and Public Works staff could use the high bandwidth of the network to download large maps, building plans, GIS data or other information while in the field, reducing the need to return to the office for information needs.

Options abound for improvements to operational efficiency. La Plata took a significant step forward in providing opportunity for new efficiency. If you have ideas on how the Town can utilize this new technology or other efficiency ideas, please share them with the Town Council or a member of staff.

TESTING OF EARLY WARNING DEVICES/SIRENS

The Town of La Plata will be testing our early warning devices/sirens on **Saturday, May 7 at approximately 10:00 a.m.** Testing is done twice per year in early May and early December. The testing lasts about a half hour. The tests consist of both siren alerts and audible notifications. The tests are conducted in conjunction with the Charles County 911 Communications Center, which controls and operates the system for the Town.

The devices are installed at the following locations:

- On Charles Street in front of the Charles County Courthouse
- On Curley Hall Road at the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant (near Quailwood Subdivision)
- In Clarks Run Subdivision
- In King's Grant Subdivision
- On Shining Willow Way next to the La Plata Volunteer Fire Department

Emergency Management Officials remind you that in the event of a real emergency to stay tuned to local radio stations for more information, to have emergency supplies on hand - including a radio which can be operated during a power outage, and to know where the safe haven is in your home. It is everyone's responsibility to plan for an emergency.

PARKS PLAN

The Town Council adopted the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (CPRMP) on February 22, 2011. The Master Plan provides policy guidance as the Town considers future parks and recreation facilities as part of an integrated, fully-developed parks system.

The CPRMP implements a key objective Town's October 2009 Comprehensive Plan, specifically, "Adopt and

implement a Parks Capital Expansion Plan after a thorough inventory and assessment of existing facilities is complete."

In addition to an inventory and mapping of existing parks/recreation facilities, the Master Plan recommends future parks and recreation areas, an associated operating plan and capital improvement plan linked to implementation benchmarks, based on the Town's

projected population growth over the next twenty years.

The plan is available for review on the Town's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org>, just follow the link on the left to Comp Plan. For additional information contact David M. Jenkins, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development at (301) 934-8421, Ext 117 or djenkins@townoflaplata.org.

5th Annual Potomac Wildlife Art & Decoy Show

5th Annual Potomac Wildlife Art & Decoy Show to take place on Friday, May 13, 6:30 - 9 p.m. and Saturday, May 14, 10 - 5 p.m. at CSM in La Plata. Join acclaimed oil and watercolor painters, decoy and wild fowl carvers, photographers, jewelers, and more at our annual Wildlife Life Art and Decoy Show. The Show opens Friday with *Cattails and Cocktails Reception*, tickets are \$50 per person. It will be a night of Outback Steakhouse, the Archie Edwards Blue Heritage Foundation, wildlife art, decoys, free decoy appraisals, and more. Saturday, as a new addition to this year's show visitors are invited to a *Breakfast with the Carvers*. If you are interested in decoys, both old and new, you will hear from three of today's most acclaimed carvers—Ray Whetzel, Bruce Eppard, and Bill Bruce—to discuss how the tools and traditions of Chesapeake Bay decoy carvers of the past 100 years find their way into their modern creations. The session will be moderated by Chad Tragakis, a regular contributor to Decoy Magazine and president of the Potomac Decoy Collector's Association. Tickets to both the Friday night reception and the Saturday morning breakfast must be purchased in advance and available online. Call (240) 216-8452 or www.somdgiving.org.



Friendly Reminder:

Please be a good neighbor and...

...remember to clean up after your pets, both when you're out walking with your pets and in your own yard. It's the neighborly thing to do, plus there are provisions in the Town Code of Ordinances that require you (1) to have a container (such as a plastic bag) with you to clean up after your pet when you are walking the pet and to remove your pet's waste from any public property or any private property not owned by you; and (2) to keep your own property clean and free from any accumulation of matter that creates offensive smells or odors. For more information on these provisions in the Town Code, please visit the Town's website at <http://www.townoflaplata.org> and click on the 'Town Code' link on the left side of the web page to go to the online version of the Code. The information is contained in Chapter 67 Animals, Section 67-5.1, and in Chapter 117 Health and Sanitation, Section 117-2 Keeping premises clean, and Section 117-3 Nuisances.

...prevent your recyclables from being blown out of your recycling container. To keep the lighter weight plastic items from being scattered, you could place your bundled newspapers or glass on top. Your neighbors will appreciate your efforts to not let your recyclables be scattered throughout the neighborhood!

TOWN OF LA PLATA

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Celebrate LA PLATA!

Saturday, April 30th
12 Noon to 4PM
on the grounds of
La Plata Town Hall



**FUN • GAMES •
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www.TownofLaPlata.org

For more information, contact Marcia Keeth at 301-934-8421 ext 142 or MKeeth@TownofLaPlata.org