

Mayor and Council Meeting  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
May 14, 2002, 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

Guests: (See attached roster)

Minutes:

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

Noting he was speaking on behalf of everyone in La Plata, Mayor Eckman thanked all of the Town's employees and the volunteers for their long hours of work in the recovery process from the damage caused by the April 28<sup>th</sup> tornado. Mayor Eckman gave special recognition and thanks to Doug Miller, Town Manager, who coordinated all of the agencies who came to help La Plata; to Michelle Miner, who arranged for lodging for the many volunteers who came from other municipalities and counties in Maryland; to the La Plata Police Department and other police agencies; and he especially thanked the people of La Plata.

Approval of April minutes (tabled until the May 28 meeting)

#### Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Mayor Eckman introduced the district winner of MML's "If I Were Mayor" essay contest, Benjamin Norton, who read his essay to the Council members and audience. Following a round of applause, Mayor Eckman presented Benjamin with a key to the city and a La Plata lapel pin.

Chad Goings, La Plata WalMart manager, presented two checks to the Town of La Plata to help with the tornado recovery costs. One check, in the amount of \$10,000 was from the WalMart Foundation. The other check, in the amount of \$8,000, was from customers in a store collection. Mayor Eckman thanked Mr. Goings and WalMart for being good corporate citizens.

Public Hearing: Proposed Comprehensive Rezoning Map for the Town of La Plata  
(THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC HEARING PROCEEDINGS. AN AUDIOTAPE OF THE COMPLETE HEARING IS ON FILE AT TOWN HALL.)

Mayor Eckman opened the public hearing concerning the Proposed Comprehensive Rezoning Map for the Town of La Plata. Mr. Miller noted for the record that the hearing had been properly advertised in the Maryland Independent (4/24/02 and 5/1/02).

Mr. Miller advised there were two corrections to the map on display: the Navy Housing property should be marked as R-10 rather than P-L and the Arehart-Echols Funeral Home should be marked as C-B. He advised that there was no formal motion from the Planning Commission due

to the cancellation of the May meeting, but that they held a public hearing in April and conducted a work session. He further advised that the Planning Commission will make a motion at their next meeting scheduled for June 4 to recommend approval with amendments: several properties on the west side of St. Mary's Avenue be rezoned from residential to C-B. Mr. Miller provided highlights of the proposed rezoning and district categories proposed on the zoning map.

Mayor Eckman opened the floor to speakers and noted only one had signed the speakers list.

Richard C. Baldus, 217 Washington Ave., spoke in favor of the proposed rezoning on four properties: A & B Realty on Charles St., Southtowne Center, Stagecoach Crossing, and the Turner parcel on Rt. 301 near E. Hawthorne Dr. Mr. Baldus presented a letter to the Mayor and Council, dated May 14, 2002, listing the properties and the proposed rezoning.

There being no other speakers, Mayor Eckman closed the public hearing.

### Legislation

Ord. 02-12 2002 Comprehensive Plan (For adoption) - For the purpose of adopting a new comprehensive plan for the Town of La Plata; and all matters relating to said plan.

Mayor Eckman acknowledged the documents (dated May 14, 2002) regarding amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and to Ordinance 02-12, noting the amendments deal with adding a new section to the Plan, "Future Action," which recommends that sections of the Plan which impact areas affected by the tornado be revisited at a later date, and rezoning of certain properties on St. Mary's Avenue.

Mayor Eckman asked for a motion on these amendments. Councilman Hale offered a motion to adopt the amendments. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried by unanimous vote.

Mayor Eckman asked for a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-12 as amended. Councilman Ambrogio offered a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-12 as amended. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried by unanimous vote.

Ord. 02-13 Design Review Board (For adoption) - For the purpose of adding a new Chapter 16, consisting of Sections 16-1 through 16-9, inclusive, to the Code of the Town of La Plata (1998 Edition and Supplements); to establish a Design Review Board for the Town of La Plata; to specify the composition and terms of the office of members of the Board; to specify the powers and duties of the Board; and all matters generally related to the establishment and operation of a Design Review Board for the Town of La Plata.

Mr. Miller briefly explained the ordinance and noted work had begun on it before the tornado. Mayor Eckman described the categories of the five-member board.

Mayor Eckman asked for a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-13. Councilman Hale offered a motion to adopt Ordinance 02-13. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote. Councilman Hale and Mayor Eckman remarked that the Design Review Board would be separate from but work closely with the Planning Commission, who felt this needed to be a separate body.

Ord. 02-14 2002 Comprehensive Rezoning Map (For introduction) - For the purpose of adopting a new comprehensive rezoning map for the Town of La Plata; and all matters relating to said map.

Ord. 02-15 FY03 Budget (For introduction) - For the purpose of adopting the Town of La Plata Financial Plan/2002-2003 Budget; repealing and reenacting Chapter 101, dealing with all fees set by the Town of La Plata Code of Ordinances (1998 Edition and Supplements); and setting the Town tax rate.

Mr. Miller briefly explained that the budget reflects the same tax rate and reflects a 3% increase to water and sewer rates. The public hearing is scheduled for the May 28 meeting.

### Unfinished Business

#### Council Reports

Councilman Winkler reported he has been working with the Economic Development Commission to develop a database of La Plata businesses. He hopes to get the La Plata Business Association reactivated and promote La Plata businesses. He also reported that he is waiting to hear from the company from which he ordered paint for the caboose. He noted that work is on hold until the roof and windows at the train station are repaired.

Councilman Ambrogio reported on Beautification Commission projects, noting that the State of Maryland is to look at a streetscape plan for Charles Street.

Councilman Fritz reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission hopes to have a report on the new park in a month. He also encouraged all to attend the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Town Hall on Monday, May 27, at 11:00 a.m., and remarked that they were planning special events for July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Hale expressed his appreciation to all who have been working to help in the process of recovery from the effects of the tornado. He also reported that the Planning Commission intends to formally approve the Comprehensive Plan.

Mayor Eckman thanked the State agencies who have been helping La Plata and remarked that John Porcari, Secretary of Transportation, was present nearly every day. Mayor Eckman further remarked that the State Highway Administration has committed 25% of their entire resources to the

recovery process, and that Governor Glendening set up a special task force to help La Plata, including help with our architectural standards. Mayor Eckman acknowledged the presence of Marsha Kaiser, Director of the Office of Planning and Capital Programming/MDOT. Ms. Kaiser spoke briefly about the Neighborhood Conservation Program for La Plata, which they will expand beyond the State's boundaries, and remarked they will move as quickly as possible to get streetscapes for La Plata.

### New Business

#### Appointment of Design Review Board

Mayor Eckman asked the Council to approve appointments to the Design Review Board: Cheryl McGuire (citizen/Quailwood), Ron Litten (architect/Port Tobacco Road), Rick Baldus (businessman/Washington Avenue), Dave Jenkins (planner-citizen/Clarks Run), and Charles McPherson (businessman/Quailwood). Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the appointments. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

### Public Forum

Joe Harrison reported that the Farmers Market opened on Saturday, May 11. He remarked that people at the market praised the efforts of local residents helping La Plata, noting that he was "proud to be a Town resident."

Cheryl McGuire acknowledged and thanked WalMart for providing office supplies to the recovery center operation in the Town Hall.

Jake Mitchell, owner of buildings on Charles Street and the Dick Wildes Printing building, thanked SMECO and SHA for the great service they provided to La Plata, noting that without their efforts he would still have debris at his properties.

Mayor Eckman also thanked SMECO for restoring power as quickly as they did, noting that the loss of the water tower lowered water pressure in Town, but having electric power restored in such a short time to the wells on Kent Avenue and Radio Station Road provided for a quicker recovery to normal pressure. Mayor Eckman also praised the efforts of Don McGuire, Director of Charles County Emergency Management.

Mary Beth Chandler expressed concern that residents need special attention now and suggested the Town Council have weekly meetings to talk to Town residents. Mayor Eckman remarked that he has spoken to many residents and has heard major complaints about their insurance companies. He noted that the Town Council is making efforts to visit the neighborhoods and encouraged Ms. Chandler to give him her thoughts and ideas on what else the Town could be doing to help the residents.

Paula Winkler noted she had been working in the Town Hall and received calls from Town residents who praised the efforts of the Town's trash collection crew for continuing to do their work. Mayor Eckman agreed they deserved the praise.

An audience member asked if the Town would be able to help residents remove trees and stumps not covered by their insurance companies, which is a huge financial burden on residents. Mr. Miller indicated the Town is trying to coordinate help for residents. Mayor Eckman remarked that SHA has agreed to help for the next few weeks, if residents bring their woody waste to the edge of the road.

Councilman Hale noted that Safeway has announced they will reopen at 9:00 AM, on Wednesday, May 22.

Councilman Winkler remarked that Ms. Bembe is keeping the Town's web page updated regarding Town businesses relocating and rebuilding. He noted that the Town is doing the best it can and encouraged people to come to the Town and advise them of their needs.

Mr. Miller praised the Town Council's efforts on behalf of citizens of La Plata, remarking they have "done an outstanding job."

Councilman Winkler praised the efforts of all of the volunteers who have worked on behalf of the Town's residents and business owners. Mayor Eckman noted that the Town was planning to have a big party, probably at the end of July, to thank everyone who has been involved in the recovery effort.

There being no further business, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier