

Council of the Town of La Plata  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
October 14, 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)

*Pursuant to the requirement of Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-509(c)(2), this statement is included in these minutes:*

*A closed session of the Council of the Town of La Plata was held at 7:01 AM, Tuesday, September 16, 2003, in the Town Hall Main Meeting Room.*

*Present: Mayor Eckman, Councilmen Winkler, Fritz, Ambrogio and Hale; and Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager*

*On a motion made by Councilman Fritz, seconded by Councilman Hale, and by unanimous consent of the members present, the session was closed. The authority under which the session was closed was Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-508(a)(3): Consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss acquisition of property for new Town Hall. No action was taken. The Town Council is waiting for additional information. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 AM.*

*Pursuant to the requirement of Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-509(c)(2), this statement is included in these minutes:*

*A closed session of the Council of the Town of La Plata was held at 7:05 AM, Tuesday, September 30, 2003, in the Town Hall Main Meeting Room.*

*Present: Mayor Eckman, Councilmen Winkler, Fritz, Ambrogio and Hale; and Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager*

*On a motion made by Councilman Winkler, seconded by Councilman Hale, and by unanimous consent of the members present, the session was closed. The authority under which the session was closed was Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-508(a)(3): Consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss acquisition of property for new Town Hall. Action taken: Motion made by Councilman Hale to purchase the Mudd property for \$600,000, using money from fund balance, seconded by Councilman Ambrogio and passed by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 AM.*

*Pursuant to the requirement of Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-509(c)(2), this statement is included in these minutes:*

*A closed session of the Council of the Town of La Plata was held at 7:16 AM, Tuesday, October 7, 2003, in the Town Hall Main Meeting Room.*

*Present: Mayor Eckman, Councilmen Winkler, Fritz, Ambrogio and Hale; and Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager*

*On a motion made by Councilman Winkler, seconded by Councilman Fritz, and by unanimous consent of the members present, the session was closed. The authority under which the session was closed was Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article Section 10-508(a)(3): Consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; and (14): Before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, discuss a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss acquisition of property for new Town Hall and sale of Town Hall. Action taken: The Council agreed to proceed with the contract to sell the Town Hall, with amendments. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 AM.*

#### Minutes:

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

#### Approval of September minutes

Councilman Winkler made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 9 regular meeting, September 16 special meeting, September 16 closed meeting, and September 30 special meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote. The Council agreed to defer action on the minutes of the September 30 closed meeting.

#### Treasurer's Report

Mayor Eckman acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report dated August 31, 2003.

#### Petitions, Communications and Appearances

##### Bobbie Baldus – Christmas star and pole

Mrs. Baldus asked the Town Council to approve proceeding with obtaining a 100' pole and 10' star, which would be installed at approximately the same site as the old star on the water tower destroyed by the tornado. She noted that SMECO and the Rotary will be asked for

installation and monetary help, and that a company in Northern Virginia will fabricate the star for approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000.

After a brief discussion, the Town Council asked Mrs. Baldus to return in two weeks with more details regarding the strength of the pole and method of installation.

Peggy Schaumburg – Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage on May 1, 2004

Peggy Schaumburg and Diane Kramer presented information regarding the Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage-Charles County Tour scheduled for May 1, 2004, and asked for the Town Council's support (flags on Charles Street, police support when they set up signs the day before and on tour day for pedestrians and parking locations, shuttle bus) and suggestions (parking and traffic issues resolution, exhibits at Train Station.) They explained that part of the focus of the tour will be reconstruction of La Plata after the tornado and noted that proceeds of the event will go to Christ Church for improvements to their walkway and exterior. The Council suggested they meet with Mr. Miller, Ms. Bembe, Michelle Miner, Chief Gittings, and Sgt. Wathen to coordinate how the Town can help them with this event.

Public Hearing

Ordinance 03-13 Sign Regulations – For the purpose of repealing the existing sign regulations applicable in the Town of La Plata and adopting new sign regulations; defining certain terms; specifying a date for conformance with such regulations; requiring a master sign plan under certain conditions; specifying fees for such sign permits; specifying penalties for violations; providing that the provisions of this Ordinance are severable; providing that the provisions of this Ordinance apply to all pending as well as new sign permit applications and all matters generally related thereto.

Mayor Eckman opened the hearing. Mr. Miller advised for the record that the hearing had been properly advertised in the September 26, 2003 edition of the Maryland Independent. [The Certificate of Publication is on file in the Town Hall.]

Mayor Eckman asked if anyone wished to speak regarding Ordinance 03-13.

Jim DiMisa, who advised he is a resident of La Plata and was representing the La Plata Business Association and the Bank of Southern Maryland, asked the Town Council to consider modifying the existing ordinance rather than adopting Ordinance 03-13 and to strike the 5-year sunset provision on grandfathering existing signs.

Larry Edwards, who advised he is a resident of Welcome and owner of Colonial Liquors, asked the Town Council to reconsider the ordinance and to grandfather all signs.

Darlene Fairfax, who advised she is a resident of Marbury and Vice President of the La Plata Business Association, suggested grandfathering all signs and putting no term limit on it.

Cecil A. Hunt, Jr., who gave his address as La Plata, read a prepared statement explaining his opposition to the ordinance, a copy of which was provided for the record.

Rick Hunt read a prepared statement explaining his opposition to the ordinance, a copy of which was provided for the record.

Jon Johnson spoke in opposition to the ordinance and suggested that the Council adopt an ordinance that is more pro-business and remove the 5-year grandfather provision.

Sharon Richards, representing Best Western, spoke in opposition to the ordinance and noted it would be a financial burden to many businesses.

Calvin Bowling spoke in opposition to the ordinance and noted it would put an undue burden on businesses.

Tom Higdon, Jr. spoke in opposition to the ordinance.

Chris Lind, who advised he is a resident of White Plains and a member of the La Plata Business Association, spoke in opposition to the ordinance.

Debbie Almassy, owner of Bernie's Frame Shop, spoke in opposition to the grandfather provision which requires removal of signs.

Linda Lopez, owner of Cozy Creations, spoke in opposition to the ordinance, and noted her business needs signage on Route 301.

B. R. Winkler, Jr., who advised he is a resident of La Plata and is president of La Plata Mill and Supply Co., spoke in opposition to the ordinance, especially the grandfather provision.

There being no other speakers, Mayor Eckman closed the hearing. Mayor Eckman advised that the Town Council and the Planning Commission planned to hold a joint work session on Ordinance 03-13.

#### Legislation (none)

#### Unfinished Business

##### Council reports

Councilman Hale reported on the topics discussed at the October 7 Planning Commission meeting and announced that the Town would hold the annual Salute to Veterans Parade and Ceremony on Sunday, November 9.

Councilman Fritz noted he would be presenting an item under New Business, regarding awarding a bid for erecting the pavilion at Tilghman Lake Park.

Councilman Ambrogio reported that the Kent Avenue Revitalization Committee met last week, and noted that the Beautification Commission's September meeting had been cancelled.

Councilman Winkler reported that the Historic District Commission is meeting on an as needed basis and has not needed to meet recently. He also remarked that he represents the Town on the La Plata Business Association and encouraged all La Plata business people to join.

#### DNR Grant – Paula Winkler and Mark Rose

Paula Winkler, Mark Rose, and Horace Henry (urban forester, DNR Forestry Division) were present to provide information regarding the \$40,000 matching grant from DNR. Mr. Rose provided copies of the Grant Scope of Work and Proposed Timeline-La Plata Urban and Community Forestry Grant, and advised they needed the Town Council's acceptance of the grant.

Following a brief discussion, Councilman Hale made a motion to accept the DNR grant. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

#### New Police Station

Chief Gittings provided a brief update on information requested by the Council concerning the FEMA \$564,000 grant for the new police station. He advised that the grant requires a 25% match from the Town of approximately \$112,000, and noted that Ken Golden, a grant coordinator, advised him that the Town's purchase of the building will satisfy the match requirement. FEMA's grant will provide for "hardening" of the building to make it a shelter capable of withstanding high winds up to 150 miles per hour and projectiles caused by high winds. Chief Gittings also noted that a FEMA representative would meet with the Town Council if they wish. The Council agreed to discuss this at their next work session.

#### New Business

##### Proclamation – Trick or Treat Evening

Mayor Eckman read a Proclamation declaring October 31, 2003 as Trick or Treat Evening in the Town of La Plata.

##### Bid for Tilghman Lake Park Pavilion

Councilman Fritz explained the \$56,175 bid from Wood Construction Company, Waldorf, is to install the pavilion and equipment which are on-site at Tilghman Lake Park. He advised that the money is available in the Parks and Recreation fund and asked the Town Council to approve the bid so installation can begin.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to award the bid to Wood Construction Company, in the amount of \$56,175. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Miller advised the Council that he sent them an e-mail regarding two January dates (January 24 and 31) for conducting a post-tornado retreat.

Mayor Eckman reported that the Southern Maryland Municipal Association would be meeting in North Beach on October 15. Mayor Eckman also reported that the Senate Finance Committee members would be touring the tornado reconstruction area on October 22.

Public Forum

Paula Winkler asked that consideration be given to including prohibiting walking along Washington Avenue in next year's Proclamation regarding Trick or Treat Evening, due to the amount of traffic and lack of sidewalk on that street.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

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Judith T. Frazier  
Town Clerk