

Mayor and Council Meeting  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
March 12, 2002, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, 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)

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

*A closed session of the Mayor and Council was held on February 26, 2002, in the Town Hall Conference Room.*

*Present: Mayor Eckman, Councilmen Winkler, Fritz, Ambrogio and Hale; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier*

*On a motion made by Councilman Fritz, seconded by Councilman Ambrogio, and by unanimous consent of the members present, the session was closed. The authority under which the session was closed was Maryland Annotated Code, State Government Article, Section 10-508(a)(1)(i): the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; and Section 10-508(a)(3): the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto. The purpose of the meeting was to (1) discuss compensation issues with regard to the position of Treasurer; and (2) discuss Talbot Street.*

*Regarding the compensation issues with regard to the position of Treasurer, the Mayor and Council agreed that (1) the name of the position is "Treasurer"; (2) the salary range will be \$50,000 to \$60,000; and (3) the Council will meet with the candidate before the candidate is hired.*

*Regarding Talbot Street, the Mayor and Council agreed to advise the County of the alignment of Talbot Street through the Hoffman, Kendig, and Rogers (next to La Plata Mill) properties to Kent Avenue. The Mayor and Council also agreed that Mayor Eckman will speak with Jim Hoffman regarding the alignment.*

*The closed session adjourned at 8:20 PM, and the regular meeting of the Mayor and Council was reconvened.*

Minutes:

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

Approval of February minutes

Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 12 meeting. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it carried.

Councilman Hale made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 26 meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Captain Marc A. Siedband, USN, Commander, Indian Head Division Naval Surface Warfare Center, presented to the Mayor and Council a picture of the caboose, taken at the White Plains siding on the day it was turned over to the Town, a NAVSEA logo to use as a model for painting their logo in a prominent location on the caboose, and a plaque commemorating the donation of the caboose to the Town, to be placed inside the caboose. Mayor Eckman thanked Captain Siedband and advised that the Town plans to renovate the caboose and have it ready for dedication at our July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. Mayor Eckman invited Captain Siedband to attend the dedication.

Public Hearing: Proposed Comprehensive Plan 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 Plan for the Town of La Plata. Mr. Miller noted for the record that the hearing had been properly advertised in the Maryland Independent (2/20/02 and 3/6/02).

Mayor Eckman read into the record the memorandum from the Planning Commission, dated March 6, 2002, advising that a motion was passed at their March 5, 2002 meeting to adopt the Proposed Comprehensive Plan (February, 2002).

Mayor Eckman asked that speakers sit at the front and give their name and address for the record.

Richard C. Baldus, 217 Washington Ave., spoke in favor of the proposed rezoning on four properties: A & B Realty on Charles St., Stagecoach Crossing, Southtowne Center, and the Turner parcel on Rt. 301 near E. Hawthorne Dr. Mr. Baldus noted that all four proposed rezonings are supported by the Vision Implementation Team and the Planning Commission. Mr. Baldus provided hand-outs containing information on the four properties.

Thomas C. Hayden, Jr., P.O. Box 1119, La Plata, was present as a representative of RDR, LLC (Agricopia) and of La Plata Self Storage, and provided written statements regarding each.

In regards to Agricopia, Mr. Hayden stated that the Comprehensive Plan provides for MUD with residential uses only, and explained that RDR is asking that some neighborhood-type commercial uses be allowed in Agricopia. They asked that the Mayor and Council revise the provision in the Comprehensive Plan for Agricopia's MUD zoning, and allow commercial uses.

In regards to La Plata Self Storage, Mr. Hayden advised that they wish to expand the storage facility onto the 2+ acre parcel currently zoned Commercial Highway (CH), which category does not allow that use, and have asked for the parcel to be rezoned to Light Industrial or that CH be amended to allow for the expansion of the self storage facility. Mr. Hayden noted that the draft Comprehensive Plan does not show the requested zoning change.

Stuart Geisbert, owner of the property at La Plata Farm Supply on Simms Ave., spoke in opposition to the proposed rezoning from LI to CB. Mr. Geisbert noted the importance of outside storage for seasonal items and asked that the property remain zoned LI.

Carl Ramey, owner of the La Plata Farm Supply business, spoke in opposition to the proposed rezoning from LI to CB. In response to a question from Councilman Hale, Mr. Ramey advised that the trailers on the property were very critical to his operation as storage facilities for products such as fertilizers, chemicals and straw/hay which must be kept separate.

There being no other speakers, Mayor Eckman closed the public hearing at 7:30 PM.

Mayor Eckman advised that the Town Council would take the testimony into consideration, and that the Comprehensive Plan ordinance will be introduced in two weeks and would be acted on at the first meeting in April. The Mayor and Council agreed to discuss the Plan at the next work session.

Legislation (none)

Unfinished Business (none)

New Business

Mayor Eckman advised that the Vision Implementation Team met this morning and discussed St. Mary's Avenue. Mayor Eckman asked the Town Council to authorize the Town Manager to hire an engineering firm to do the preliminary engineering on the St. Mary's Avenue upgrade project. He recommended Ben Dyer Associates as they are doing work in that area. After a brief discussion, the Mayor and Council agreed that Mr. Miller should obtain cost estimates for discussion at the next work session.

Public Forum

James Hoffman, 206 Washington Ave., asked Mayor Eckman for an update on the Mayor and Council's exploration of other alternatives to building the proposed new Talbot Street through his property. Mayor Eckman explained that the Town met with Ben Dyer Associates, Ron Litten, and Mike Mudd of Charles County government. He advised that all of the alternatives were looked at but that none of the others would work. He noted that the Corps of Engineers has determined the location of the County's portion of the new street due to a gully and the steep grade by the Gyorda property. He also noted that the Courthouse building project will require parking spaces be provided, and that relocating the street would result in a loss of 48 spaces, which could not be provided elsewhere.

Mayor Eckman told Mr. Hoffman that making the decision to bring Talbot Street through his property was "probably the most difficult thing" he's done, and that the Town could see no other way to place the street. Councilman Hale told Mr. Hoffman that, as a group, this was one of the most difficult decisions they've ever made.

Mr. Hoffman remarked that due to his experience in the construction field he knew that even if the street could be built around his house, the dust and dirt created by the construction would be unhealthy for his wife, who has asthma and emphysema. In response to Mr. Hoffman's request, the Mayor and Town Manager agreed to meet with him and his wife to explain all of this to her.

Mayor Eckman acknowledged the presence of members of Boy Scout Troop 1321, who were working on a local government merit badge. Councilman Fritz complimented them on the good clearing job they'd done at Tilghman Lake.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 7:42 PM. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier