

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
July 22, 2003, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, 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 Maryland Annotated Code 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 7:00 AM, Tuesday, July 15, 2003, in the Town Hall Conference Room.

Present: Mayor Eckman, Councilmen 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 Maryland Annotated Code 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 Tilghman Heirs property on Kent Avenue for new Town Hall. No action was taken. The Town Council is waiting for additional information. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 AM.

Minutes:

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

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Sandy Washington - Kent Avenue Corridor Survey Results

Sandy Washington, Executive Director of LifeStyles, Inc., presented data from the Community Assessment of the Kent Avenue corridor communities, which Ms. Washington advised contained 345 households averaging 4 persons per household. Ms. Washington provided a copy of the *Charles County Public Safety Partnership Draft Community Assessment*, dated March 2003, and advised that a final copy of this document would be presented at a community meeting to be held at the Department of Social Services building on Kent Avenue, on July 31, at 7:00 PM.

Legislation

Ordinance 03-7 Historic District Landmark Designation (For Adoption) – For the purpose of designating a certain property known as 105 La Grange Avenue as an historic District landmark in the Town of La Plata; and all matters generally relating to said historic District designation.

Mr. Miller noted that the Planning Commission held a hearing on this ordinance on July 1, 2003, and recommended that the Town Council adopt Ordinance 03-7.

Councilman Hale made a motion to adopt Ordinance 03-7. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Ordinance 03-9 Major Facilities Fees (For Introduction) – 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 explanation of Ordinance 03-9.

Resolution 03-8 Support of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Neighborhood Business Development Program Financing to Financial Independence, LLC (For Adoption) – For the purpose of expressing support of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Neighborhood Business Development Program financing to Financial Independence, LLC; and all matters relating to said support.

Mr. Miller provided a brief explanation of Resolution 03-8. Councilman Fritz made a motion to adopt Resolution 03-8. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Ordinance 03-10 Moratorium – Sign Permits (For Introduction) – 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.

Mayor Eckman briefly explained that the Vision Implementation Team has been discussing amendments to the Town’s sign regulations and asked that a moratorium be placed on accepting and processing sign permits to allow time to amend the Town’s sign regulations. Ordinance 03-10 establishes a moratorium until November 15, 2003, or an earlier termination

date if the sign regulations ordinance is enacted prior to that date. The Council agreed to discuss this at the next work session.

Treasurer's Report

Mayor Eckman acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report dated June 30, 2003.

Unfinished Business

Council reports

Councilman Hale reported that there had been an excellent turnout for the July 4 celebration at the Train Station.

Councilman Fritz reported that a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission had resigned, and invited applications from Town residents interested in serving on this commission.

Councilman Ambrogio thanked Ms. Washington for doing an excellent job on the survey of the residents in the Kent Avenue Corridor communities. Councilman Ambrogio also reported that the Beautification Commission met on July 21. He read the Code section which details the purpose and duties of the Beautification Commission, particularly that they are to survey public and private properties in the Town to ascertain they are kept free from trash and refuse, and to provide active leadership for cleanup drives in the Town. Councilman Ambrogio noted that the Beautification Commission should start focusing on these areas. He asked Joe Harrison to report on other Beautification Commission topics. Mr. Harrison reported that they are waiting for additional information from Melwood for the beautification projects at Wills Park and the two Town signs on Crain Highway. Mr. Harrison reported that they have received a proposal of \$31,882 for fabricating and installing an 8' aluminum star, neon lighting on both sides, on an 8" x 90' aluminum pole, to be installed behind the historic firehouse, adjacent to the memorial garden. Mayor Eckman and Councilman Fritz remarked that the Town will need to identify where the money will come from to pay for this project, and that the Town will need to put out an RFP and go to bid due to the cost of the project.

Mayor Eckman reported on several topics: (1) He met with the State Highway Administration (SHA) District Engineer, who advised that the bid on the project to improve the intersection of Routes 6 and 301 and to install crosswalks had come in \$250,000 over SHA's estimate, and that the money would have to come out of the funding for the streetscape project. Mayor Eckman also reported that SHA would be reconstructing the railroad crossing on Charles Street. (2) He attended a hearing held today by the County Commissioners regarding a bill to provide tax credits for rehabilitated properties. He noted that the bill would require municipalities to also give the tax credit in order for properties in municipalities to be eligible for the County's tax credit. (3) He spoke with Charles County Commissioners President Murray Levy regarding the County's law controlling massage parlors, which had moved from other counties with regulations to Charles County, who then had no regulations. Mayor Eckman remarked that the Town may need to enact an ordinance to regulate massage parlors, or to authorize the County to enforce County law in the Town. (4) Mayor Eckman noted that at least

eight half-day meetings have been held to date regarding amending the Town's sign regulations. He further noted that hearings will be required before the Planning Commission and Town Council prior to enactment of those amendments.

New Business (none)

Public Forum

Bob Jacobs asked why the Town is involved in the issue of the \$250,000 higher bid than estimated for the Crain Highway improvements project since SHA owns the road. Mayor Eckman explained that the projects were for La Plata improvements, and that those improvements projects could either be scaled down or ways could be found to reduce the costs. Also in response to a question from Mr. Jacobs, Mayor Eckman confirmed that Murray Levy advised that the County's St. Charles Parkway project is still on schedule.

Chief Gittings, La Plata Police Department, announced that communities in La Plata were participating in National Night Out events scheduled for August 5, 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

Art Audley, resident of Phoenix Run, voiced appreciation for all the effort put forth to improve the Phoenix Run neighborhood. In response to the litter issue pointed out by the Community Assessment report presented by Ms. Washington, Mr. Audley announced a special neighborhood litter pickup event for Saturday morning. Mr. Audley also asked that certain drainage ditches in the community and the drainage pipes under Caroline Drive be cleaned out. Mayor Eckman pointed out that Mr. Audley had been involved in attempts to upgrade this neighborhood many years before any organized help was given, and thanked him for his efforts. Councilman Ambrogio remarked that all of the stormwater management ponds need to be cleaned out.

There being no further business, Councilman Hale made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 PM. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk