

Council of the Town of La Plata  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
Work Session  
February 13, 2007, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Gene Ambrogio, Councilman R. Wayne Winkler, Councilman C. Keith Back, Councilwoman Paretta D. Mudd, Councilman Vic E. Newman; Joseph W. Norris, Acting Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk; Officer Jason Posey, La Plata Police Department

Minutes:

Mayor Ambrogio called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

#### Matters of Council Discussion

##### Thomas F. Mudd – Grasso Annexation (“Ellenwood”)

*Description: Mr. Mudd wants to know if the annexation will still be in good standing if the manor house gets completed. Mr. Norris has advised him it must be completed before the Town will give consideration to or act on the proposed 20-lot subdivision. [See attached copy of letter dated October 19, 2006, from Frederick C. Sussman to Louis D. Grasso.]*

Thomas F. Mudd, attorney representing the interests of the Grasso Family Trust, advised the Council of a possible solution to completion of the restoration project on the manor house. He advised that Bryans Road Corporation has offered to purchase the 16 acres to be developed, which would provide the funds to satisfy the Summers claim pending in court and to complete the restoration project. Mr. Mudd further noted that Bryans Road Corporation would need to subdivide the 31 acres into two lots, one lot consisting of 15 acres and the manor lot and one lot consisting of the 16-acre residue, and would not ask the Town for any action on the 16 acres until the manor house restoration is completed.

Mr. Mudd noted he had spoken to the Town’s attorney, Mr. Sussman, regarding an amendment to the annexation agreement, which requires a public hearing, or a modification to the agreement by some other means. Mr. Mudd noted that Bryans Road Corporation has set March 15 as a deadline for the transaction, and that this deadline could not be met if a public hearing must be held.

During discussion, the Council expressed their concerns with this request and agreed they wished to discuss this with the Town Attorney at a work session, and further noted that the Town taxpayers should not have to pay for his time for this discussion. Mr. Mudd advised that Bryans Road Corporation would be willing to pay.

Council consensus: The Council agreed they wished to discuss this at a work session, at which Mr. Sussman will be present, and further agreed that a public hearing should be held on any amendment to this annexation agreement.

Banner signs

*Description: Discussion will include possibly removing the application fee and instituting a penalty.*

Mayor Ambrogio and Councilman Winkler explained they attended a meeting of the board of directors of the La Plata Business Association at which banner signs were discussed, and that the LPBA again asked the Town to change the process to be more business friendly. They are asking that there be a penalty for leaving the banner up longer than permitted rather than a permit fee.

During discussion, it was noted that the permit has been put on the Town's web page, which allows business owners to download the form and mail it in with their payment rather than having to come into Town Hall, and that this addresses one of their initial concerns of having to leave their business to obtain the permit. The Council also discussed the possibility of allowing one permit/one fee for a banner to be displayed for multiple specified time periods, with the applicant mailing in the completed application form and the appropriate fee.

Council consensus: The Council agreed that Councilman Winkler will discuss the one permit/one fee/multiple time periods concept first with Town staff and then with the LPBA.

Draft legislation regarding increasing amount of expenditure exempt from bidding and advertising requirements.

*Description: The Council will discuss a draft ordinance and a draft resolution dealing with amending the Code and Charter to increase the amount of expenditure exempt from certain competitive bidding and advertising requirements. If the Council agrees, these two documents will be prepared for introduction at the February 27, 2007 regular meeting.*

Council consensus: The Council agreed to introduce the ordinance and resolution at the February 27, 2007 meeting.

Draft legislation regarding separation of the job title "Clerk-Treasurer" to "Town Clerk" and "Town Treasurer".

*Description: The Council will discuss a draft ordinance and a draft resolution dealing with amending the Code and Charter to reflect the division of the job of Clerk-Treasurer into two separate and distinct functions. If the Council agrees, these two documents will be prepared for introduction at the February 27, 2007 regular meeting.*

During discussion, Mayor Ambrogio questioned the outdated language in Section 13-2 (Special meetings), regarding method of notifying and delivery of a written summons or notice. Mr. Norris noted that Ms. Bembe is working on the Personnel Policies and has advised him that the Town Code needs a thorough review/update, which Mr. Norris noted could include amendment to Section 13-2.

Council consensus: The Council agreed to introduce the ordinance and resolution at the February 27, 2007 meeting.

Draft legislation regarding Board of Appeals notice of hearings and time limitations placed on special exceptions and variances.

*Description: The Council will discuss a draft ordinance dealing with amending §191-53.D. Notice of hearings and §191-53.I. Time limitations, to alter the filing procedures and time required to set a hearing date for matters to come before the Town Board of Appeals, and altering the length of time when certain decisions of the Board of Appeals shall lapse. If the Council agrees, this document will be prepared for introduction at the February 27, 2007 regular meeting.*

Council consensus: The Council agreed to introduce the ordinance at the February 27, 2007 meeting.

Taste of La Plata

*Description: Mr. Norris would like to discuss rescheduling this event to October, to allow more time to prepare for it and to make for a better event.*

Council consensus: The Council agreed to reschedule the Taste of La Plata event to be held in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce's Festival of Scarecrows event in October.

Beautification budget changes and tree expenditures

*Description: **(1) Budget changes:** Seasonal decorations are currently budgeted for \$6,600: Town Hall/\$1,000, Streetscape/\$5,000, and replacement bulbs/\$600. Mr. Norris will be asking the Town Council to approve the Beautification Commission's request to spend part of that \$6,600 as follows: 14' artificial Christmas tree for the circle in front of Town Hall/\$3,000; 4 illuminated large wreaths to be placed on the front of Town Hall/\$1,600; 3 interior wreaths at Town Hall/\$100. **(2) Tree expenditures:** Town Council approval is requested for the budgeted expenditure for replacement of 14 trees on Heritage Green Parkway. Town Council approval is also requested for the expenditure of \$4,500 to remove 11 dead or dying London Plane trees on La Grange Avenue and to plant 21 other trees, the money for this expenditure to come from the National Garden Club grant (\$15,500+) that the Town already has.*

Council consensus: Following discussion, the Council agreed to the budget changes and agreed to approve the tree expenditures. Mr. Norris will include the tree expenditures approval on the February 27 agenda.

Matters of Information

•Sewer update, including results of Request for Qualification for planning of Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade to ENR. Target meeting date: February 27, 2007: The Council agreed this will be included on the February 27 agenda, and that a representative of the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee be asked to attend.

•Gayle Curry to handle Celebrate La Plata Day: Mr. Norris advised that, due to the additional responsibilities placed on Michelle Miner, Ms. Curry will be handling the Celebrate La Plata Day event, with some guidance/assistance as needed by Ms. Miner.

•Town Staff use of computer in the Council office: Mr. Norris advised that there is a need for a dedicated computer to store the results of the flow meter testing and asked the Council to allow use of the Town Council office computer for this purpose. The Town Council agreed to this request.

Future Work Session Topics

•February 20, 2007, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.: Budget priority setting - facilitated session  
(Wastewater/Water/Town Manager-Council Relations)

In response to Councilwoman Mudd, Mr. Norris explained that Dennison is working on trying to make the repairs at the bioretention pond at Town Hall and that grass will be planted in March.

The Council discussed having a maintenance agreement for Town landscaping and agreed to include this item in their budget discussions.

Councilwoman Mudd requested that future work session topics include (1) the relocation of the Town Public Works Department; and (2) relocation of the Coke Plant and possible Town purchase of the Coke Plant property. Mr. Norris advised that he is working on determining how much land Public Works will need and has looked at a possible site which has a contract on it. Mr. Norris further advised that if the contract does not go through, he plans to bring this to the Town Council for consideration. He also noted that Aberdeen recently built a new Public Works building and suggested that members of the Town's Public Works Department visit Aberdeen to see it.

James Goldsmith suggested that another future work session topic be the proposed bypass issue, which he noted he believes the Town Council should have a position on, and that the Town Council should object to it coming out at Turkey Hill and dumping the traffic onto Rt. 301 and into La Plata.

Following discussion, the Town Council agreed to write a letter to the State and to the County advising them that the Town objects to the bypass and that the Town wishes to be involved in the planning of the bypass.

There being no other business, Mayor Ambrogio moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

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Judith T. Frazier  
Town Clerk