

Mayor and Council Meeting
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
October 8, 2002, 7:00 PM

Present: 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, Town Clerk

Guests: (See attached roster)

Minutes:

In the absence of Mayor Eckman, Councilman Hale officiated and called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM, then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of September minutes

Councilman Ambrogio made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 10 meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Councilman Winkler made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 24 meeting. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances (none)

Public Hearing

Ordinance 02-17 Historic District - For the purpose of requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic District Commission before any permit shall be issued in any designated Town of La Plata historic area; providing that decisions of the Historic District Commission may be appealed to the Board of Appeals; creating a new Article VII setting forth the authority, purpose, designation procedure, guidelines, application and review procedure, appeal process and enforcement provisions granted to the Historic District Commission; and matters generally relating to the Historic District Commission.

Councilman Hale opened the hearing. Mr. Miller entered into the record the certification of publication verifying that the hearing was advertised in the September 18, 2002, edition of the Maryland Independent. Mr. Miller gave a brief explanation of the purpose of this ordinance.

Councilman Hale asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak for or against this ordinance. No one wished to speak. No names were recorded on the speakers list. The Town Council had no questions or comments. Mr. Miller advised that the Planning Commission held a hearing on this ordinance at their October 1 meeting, and plan to hold a special meeting to discuss the ordinance and make a recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

There being no speakers and no further discussion by the Town Council, Councilman Hale closed the hearing.

Unfinished Business

Council Reports

Councilman Fritz reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be meeting on Wednesday, October 9, at 4:00 p.m., and that the reforestation committee would be meeting on October 16, at 4:00 p.m.

Councilman Winkler reported several issues: (1) The Charles County Disaster Relief Fund balance is winding down. He noted that the last Town Notes newsletter contained information about applying to the Fund. (2) After the Charles County Disaster Relief Fund has been completely disbursed, there will be a committee established to disburse the La Plata Disaster Relief Fund. (3) The Vision Implementation Team met this morning and received updates from various groups and agencies, including an update on building permits given by Mr. Miller. (4) There will be a public open-house style streetscape workshop at the Town Hall on Thursday, October 10, from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Councilman Ambrogio advised he had no report as the Beautification Commission has not yet met. Joe Harrison, chairman of the Beautification Commission, remarked that he has received comments from people who miss seeing the star, and noted it needs to be put back up to show that La Plata is rebuilding. Mr. Harrison made suggestions regarding raising the new star: (1) on a tall pole where the water tower was; (2) on one of the towers that Don McGuire advised that the County may have. Mr. Miller remarked that Bobbie Baldus was talking to Paul Facchina about temporarily placing the star on his building, and noted that Commissioner Mayer suggested the possibility of hanging the star in the front vestibule of the courthouse.

Councilman Hale reported on topics discussed at the October 1 Planning Commission meeting. He also reported that the Great Pumpkin Jubilee, which was scheduled for October 6, had been cancelled due to insufficient vendor participation. An advertisement of the cancellation was in the newspaper. Councilman Hale apologized to those who were unaware of the cancellation and came to the N. Maple Avenue/Baltimore Street site that day. He advised that the Town will try again next year. Mr. Miller remarked that the Town is now focusing our efforts on the Veterans Parade and Ceremony, which is scheduled for November 10, at 1:00 p.m. Mr. Miller noted this is the only Veterans Parade in Charles County.

Councilman Ambrogio asked Mr. Miller for the status of items from Ward III: (1) A new trash can was placed at the Patuxent Court pumping station site. Mr. Miller advised he must confer with Maryland Environmental Service regarding installing a fence. (2) Mr. Miller advised he will be working with SMECO regarding the street lights in The Meadows and Kent Square, and noted this is on the agenda for the next work session.

New Business

Proclamation - Trick or Treat Evening and Great Pumpkin Halloween Party

Because of the sniper shootings, there was concern for the safety of children being outdoors. Councilman Fritz made a motion that this item be tabled and be discussed at the next work session. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion. In discussion before the vote, Councilman Ambrogio pointed out that the proclamation contained two events, Trick or Treat evening and the Great Pumpkin Halloween Party. Councilman Hale explained that they both fell into the same category of events where children would be outdoors. The motion passed.

Application for Grant - Kent Square Homeowners Association

Mr. Miller advised that Kent Square Homeowners Association had applied for a grant for fencing. He noted that it has not yet been confirmed if this would be on private or public property and that he needs to research this and meet with Mike Murphy, president of the Kent Square Homeowners Association. Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Town Council to table this item until the next work session.

Letter from residents on Forest Lane

Councilman Ambrogio led a brief discussion regarding a letter from Forest Lane residents who are concerned about the people who use their street to walk through paths leading to the railroad tracks and the townhouses on Patuxent Court. They are concerned about possible criminal activity by these people and are asking that a fence be installed to prevent them from cutting through there.

Councilman Ambrogio advised that the letter says that Steve Schroeder was contacted and inspected the site. Councilman Ambrogio noted that Mr. Schroeder said the Town could install a 4' fence; however, Councilman Ambrogio believes 4' is not high enough. He asked that the Town Council look at the area and noted that a fence like the 6' or 8' fence at the Prince Georges Street area would be better. Mr. Miller advised that this item is on the agenda for the next work session.

Public Forum

Mark Browning, of Boy Scout Troop 1709, suggested the Town install the star in the middle of the town. He also volunteered his Boy Scout Troop to help clean up the site of the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant which was heavily damaged by the tornado. Scott Browning, Mark's father, indicated there may be liability issues involved in such a project. In response to Councilman Hale, Mr. Miller remarked that the Town has not heard anything recently from Kentucky Fried Chicken recently, but the Town has heard that they may be searching for another site.

George Miller, who lives at 457 Patuxent Court, thanked the Town for responding to his plea for help with the situation at the pumping station, noting that the site is cleaner and the gatherings of juveniles and the noise problems have stopped. He asked the Town to hold off on installing a fence, noting that a 6' chain link fence would be unattractive. The Town Manager asked Mr. Miller

to advise the Town if the problems resume, but noted that while it would be easier for employees to access and work on the pump station without the fence, the Town must also be concerned about protecting \$80,000 worth of pump station equipment.

Paula Winkler asked the Town Council to include another upcoming outdoor event, Veterans Parade and Ceremony, when they discuss the Trick or Treat and Halloween Party proclamation at their next work session. Councilman Hale agreed that the Town has no choice but to consider all outdoor events.

Councilman Ambrogio asked Mr. Miller to have the police department patrol the Forest Lane and Patuxent Court areas, noting that the problem area is the corner playground on Patuxent Court.

Councilman Winkler noted that George Miller had thanked the Town for doing its job, and that two representatives from Quailwood were present and have been working with the Town Manager. Councilman Winkler noted his hope that other neighborhood representatives would let the Town know of problems before they worsen.

Mike Hanks, President of the Quailwood Homeowners Association, asked for the status of the buffer of trees between the Town's new wastewater treatment plant and homes in Quailwood. Mr. Miller advised there is a planting allowance in the new wastewater treatment plant project and the Town will look at what should be planted. Paula Winkler advised she is part of the reforestation group and that the 3,000 trees being temporarily housed behind the La Plata Police Department are slated for November planting in the areas around Archbishop Neal School and the wastewater treatment plant.

There being no further business, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 7:50 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk