

Council of the Town of La Plata
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland
Regular Meeting
March 9, 2004, 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, Councilman Wayne Winkler, Councilman Thomas W. Fritz, Councilman Gene Ambrogio, Councilman Roy G. Hale; Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk

Town staff: Chief Cassin B. Gittings, La Plata Police Department

Guests: (see roster)

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 stated he believed that the minutes of the February 17 meeting needed to be amended on page 4, first paragraph, to indicate the Council agreed to move the gazebo to Redwood Lake. Councilman Fritz made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2004 regular meeting, February 10, 2004 closed meeting, February 13, 2004 closed meeting, February 17, 2004 Manager-Council meeting (as amended), and February 24, 2004 Manager-Council meeting. Councilman Winkler seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Petitions, Communications and Appearances

Proclamation of March as American Red Cross Month

Mayor Eckman read the proclamation and presented it to Mike Zabko, American Red Cross Southern Maryland Chapter.

Public hearing

Ordinance 03-20 Central Business Transition District and correction of omission of R-8 zoning district in list of districts and in buffer yard regulations and table – For the purpose of creating Central Business Transition District (CBT), specifying criteria and regulations for CBT, and all matters generally relating thereto; and correcting the omission of R-8 zoning district in the list of districts and in the buffer yard regulations and table.

Mayor Eckman opened the hearing. Ms. Bembe entered into the record the Certificate of Publication that the hearing had been advertised in the February 20, 2004 edition of the Maryland Independent, and gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 03-20.

After determining that no one signed the speakers list, Mayor Eckman asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak regarding Ordinance 03-20.

John Pugh, 107 S. Maple Avenue, spoke in favor of Ordinance 03-20.

Councilman Hale advised that the Planning Commission was in favor of Ordinance 03-20. The Clerk read into the record the Planning Commission's motion adopted at their March 2, 2004 meeting, to recommend that the Town Council adopt Ordinance 03-20, with consideration given to the parking, use, density and R-8 issues discussed by the Planning Commission. A brief discussion ensued regarding the issues the Planning Commission asked be considered.

There being no other speakers and no further discussion by the Council, Mayor Eckman closed the hearing.

Legislation

Ordinance 04-2 Design Review Board Alternate Member (For Introduction) – For the purpose of including an Alternate Member on the Design Review Board; specifying the term of office of the Alternate Member; and all matters generally relating thereto.

Ms. Bembe advised that Ordinance 04-2 is being introduced at the request of the Design Review Board to provide for an Alternate Member on the Board in the same manner as provided for the Planning Commission, for the occasions when a member of the Board must recuse himself due to conflict of interest.

Unfinished Business

Council reports

Councilman Hale reported on the March 2 Planning Commission meeting and on Celebrate La Plata Days event which will be held April 30 through May 2 to celebrate all of the good things that have occurred in La Plata since the 2002 tornado.

Councilman Fritz advised that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be meeting on March 10, and that one of the items to be discussed included the brick pavers for the Train Station. Councilman Fritz also reported that the Town has received a notice from the state that there had been a 75% reduction in Program Open Space Funds. He also advised that the 34-acre American Legion Field has been put on the market for \$1.2 million, and that Parks and Recreation has been offered 6 acres at \$35,000 per acre, if the Town wishes to provide for a park in that area of the town.

Councilman Ambrogio reported on topics discussed at the Kent Avenue Revitalization Committee meeting held last week: grant money has been obtained to provide mulch and flowers for the residents as part of the second annual neighborhood clean-up day planned for March 27; they will have an Easter egg hunt the week after Easter; and Parks and Recreation will be discussing getting equipment for Caroline Drive park.

Councilman Winkler reported that the Historic District Commission will meet next week to speak with Jack Warren about completing repairs to his house on Oak Avenue. He noted that the owners of 105 Oak Avenue are working on completing their repairs but are in litigation with the contractor. Councilman Winkler reported that members of the La Plata Business Association, Mayor Eckman, Paula Winkler and he met with Governor Ehrlich last Monday evening to present the La Plata marketing brochure. Councilman Winkler also reported that the sign brochure has been mailed to all of the businesses in Town and praised Ms. Bembe and her staff for the many hours they worked on preparing the brochure.

Mayor Eckman reported that the Town Hall property has been sold to Civista and we must move by May 1, 2005. He noted that Facchina Construction Company hopes to have us in the new Town Hall by Christmas of this year and that the building committee has been meeting weekly with the architect. Mayor Eckman also reported that the Town has worked through all of the right-of-way issues in the streetscape project and signed documents today provided by Marty Cohn and Sue Bauer. He noted that there would be much work being conducted this summer on La Grange Avenue, with work probably beginning in June or July. Mayor Eckman also reported that the state will soon be starting work on the intersection of Routes 6 and 301.

New Business

Award bid to move police station building to Dorchester Street

In response to Mayor Eckman's request, Ms. Bembe advised that American Dreams, Inc. submitted a proposal of \$36,648.00 to move the police station building to Dorchester Street, and that this is a sole source bid.

Mayor Eckman asked for a motion to waive the bidding requirements and award to a sole source. Councilman Winkler made the motion and Councilman Fritz seconded. In discussion prior to the vote, Councilman Ambrogio pointed out that what seems to be a large amount of money will actually provide for temporary housing for the police department until they move into their building on La Grange Avenue, and then will house the Public Works Department offices while the Town renovates the current Public Works Building. Vote on the motion: unanimous.

Councilman Fritz made a motion to award the bid to American Dreams, Inc. in the amount of \$36,648.00, to be taken out of current fund balance. Councilman Hale seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Appoint Vision team

Mayor Eckman announced that the Town planned to reactivate the Vision team. Ms. Bembe advised that their first meeting would be held on the second Tuesday in April.

Councilman Winkler brought up for discussion the immediate need to hire a Code Enforcement Officer at least on a part-time basis due to growth, the amount of Town staff hours being spent on this kind of work, and that this would help improve the looks of the Town. He

reminded the Council that this had been discussed at the January work session. He also advised that he researched similar size towns in the MML Directory and found that Code Enforcement Officer were employed by North Beach, Berlin, Berwyn Heights and Snow Hill, and that he and Cheryl McGuire met with Mayor Ed Rice of Indian Head, who also has a Code Enforcement Officer.

Councilman Winkler made a motion that the Town Council direct the Town Manager to hire a Code Enforcement Officer on a part-time basis, with hours of work to be determined after consultation with Town staff. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the motion.

In discussion before the vote, Councilman Hale advised he agreed a Code Enforcement Officer needed to be hired but pointed out he believed we should wait until after the Director of Development is hired and has an opportunity to participate in the hiring of a person who may be reporting to the Director of Development. Councilman Winkler suggested that the Code Enforcement Officer could temporarily report to the Assistant Town Manager until a determination is made regarding into which department the position would be placed. He also pointed out that this person could relieve the Assistant Town Manager and staff of a great deal of work they are currently handling. Councilman Fritz remarked that when he was County Administrator, the County had two Code Enforcement Officers and needed more, and noted that he believes the Town needs a part-time Code Enforcement Officer. Councilman Ambrogio advised he would like the work hours to be flexible, to include evenings and weekends if needed.

Mayor Eckman reminded the Council that they have given the Town Manager eleven items the Council wants done right now, and that the Town Manager is working on those items. The Town Manager has to hire a Director of Development and Director of Inspections. If the Council directs the Town Manager to also hire a Code Enforcement Officer, Mayor Eckman asked that this extra work be considered when they review progress of work done on the Critical Eleven items. Councilman Fritz agreed with Mayor Eckman and remarked that Mr. Miller is checking with Middle Department Inspection Agency to see if they provide this service. Councilman Winkler pointed out that the advertising process could be done by the Assistant Town Manager. Councilman Ambrogio asked that the process be started as it may be June before anyone is hired. Councilman Winkler agreed and noted that a time limit needed to be placed on this, that an advertisement be placed by July 1 at the latest, and then advised he wished to amend his original motion to include that the advertisement be placed by June 1.

Councilman Winkler amended his original motion to state that the Town Council direct the Town Manager or Assistant Town Manager to hire a Code Enforcement Officer on a part-time basis, with hours of work to be determined after consultation with Town staff, and that the advertisement be published no later than June 1. Councilman Ambrogio seconded the amended motion and it passed by unanimous vote.

Public Forum

Councilman Winkler remarked that he had been advised that a neighboring property owner had not been aware that the new Town Hall was being built on property near her and suggested that the Town should notify all of the residents of that immediate area to advise them

of the new Town Hall development project. Mayor Eckman advised he had spoken to Mrs. Mudd, Mrs. Raymond, Mike Raymond and Gary Echols. Councilman Ambrogio agreed with Councilman Winkler and volunteered to work with staff to draft a letter to send to residents in the block around the new Town Hall property.

On behalf of the Design Review Board, Cheryl McGuire thanked the Council for agreeing to hire a Code Enforcement Officer.

Paula Winkler thanked Mike Plumer and his staff for their assistance in the completion of the Oak Avenue tree planting project.

In response to Councilman Winkler's questions, Ms. Bembe explained that the Town Council may adopt Ordinance 04-2 in two weeks, after which an Alternate Member may be appointed.

There being no further business, Councilman Winkler made a motion to adjourn at 8:17 PM. Councilman Fritz seconded the motion and it carried.

Submitted by:

Judith T. Frazier
Town Clerk