

Council of the Town of La Plata  
Town Hall, La Plata, Maryland  
Work Session  
February 1, 2005, 4:00 PM

Present: Mayor William F. Eckman, Councilman Wayne Winkler, Councilman C. Keith Back, Councilman Gene Ambrogio, Councilman Roy G. Hale; Douglas R. Miller, Town Manager; Judith T. Frazier, Town Clerk

Town Staff: Patricia L. Bembe, Assistant Town Manager; Joseph W. Norris, Town Treasurer

Minutes:

Mayor Eckman called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

### Matters of Council Discussion

#### Presentation of the Audit

*Description: The FY 05 Audit will be presented by the auditors.*

Rodney Saunders, McGladrey & Pullen, LLP, provided an overview of the FY 05 audit report and auditors' notes, and answered questions posed by the Council.

#### FY 06 Budget Requests and Expectations of Service

*Description: The annual budget is far more than a financial document. It is also a priority setting document that outlines the expectations of service for the next twelve to eighteen months as well as describes what capital projects are going to be undertaken in that time frame. The elected body will need to articulate what their expectations are for services provided by the Town and what level of service is to be provided. Also, all desired capital projects should be discussed as well.*

Mr. Miller provided copies of "FY 06 Budget Schedule" and "FY 06 Capital Budget Needs and Requests (DRAFT/Incomplete)". Mr. Norris provided copies of "Fund Balances Based from Audited Financial Statements, June 30, 2004, Adjusted January 20, 2005" and "Budget Amendments and Transfers, General Fund", gave an overview of the documents, and advised he would bring the General Fund budget amendments and transfers for action at the next regular meeting of the Town Council.

Council Consensus: Council budget requests include:

1. Street sweeper; explore lease option.
2. Washington Avenue sidewalk: The Council agreed property owners should be contacted to determine objections prior to spending any money, and agreed that they should explore the feasibility of sidewalk on the east side of Washington Avenue to (a) existing sidewalk at Willowgate; (b) Cecil Street; and (c) include Hawthorne Drive from Washington Avenue to Crain Highway.
3. Wills Park community building improvements; explore possibility of converting it to a youth center due to availability of the community center in the police station.
4. Railroad crossing improvements: CSX advises no improvements until 2006. Mayor Eckman advised that CSX set the priority for when they would make the improvements and advised he would try to contact someone with CSX to authorize the State to make the improvements sooner than 2006.

5. Hire a youth director as a part-time summer job for youth programs at Wills Park and the new park in Phoenix Run.
6. Storm water management areas maintenance.
7. Continue to budget for implementation of the Vision Plan.

#### Civista Sign Exemptions

*Description: Civista wants signage at the new hospital that is far in excess of what the Town allows. Exceptions can be granted by the elected body for special circumstances that are in the public interest.*

Ms. Bembe explained that Civista is asking for exceptions from the Council to (1) allow a 14' high sign (12' from crown of road is the maximum allowed) at Charles Street; and (2) allow a 207 sq. ft. building identification sign (75 sq. ft. is the maximum allowed).

Council Consensus: The Town Council agreed to grant an exception to allow the 14' high sign, but did not support allowing an exception for the 207 sq. ft. building identification sign.

#### Comcast Cable Franchise

*Description: The current Franchise Agreement with Comcast has expired. Even though the provisions of the expired agreement stay in effect until a new agreement is signed, it is in the best interest of both parties to update the agreement. The Assistant Town Manager has reviewed the current and proposed agreement as well as has compared our agreement with Indian Head's and the County's. We will need the Council's direction before we meet with the Town Attorney on Thursday.*

Ms. Bembe provided copies of "Town of La Plata Cable Franchise Agreement Comparison Chart, February 1, 2005" which compares La Plata's agreement to those of the Town of Indian Head and Charles County. Ms. Bembe noted that Charles County's definition of "gross revenues" includes more than La Plata's does and recommended we do the same as the County. It was further noted that Comcast wants to exclude free cable service for the private schools in the Town and wants to reduce the service to the Town Hall to only basic service.

Council Consensus: The Town Council agreed that the franchise agreement should be negotiated so it is as advantageous as possible for the Town.

#### American Legion annexation

Councilman Hale advised that Gene Davies, a member of the American Legion, spoke to him regarding his concern about the annexation, and advised that they would like to meet with the Town Council to discuss their options. Councilman Winkler and Councilman Ambrogio advised that members of the American Legion have indicated they are looking forward to the expiration of their contract to sell. Councilman Winkler advised he would be attending the next membership meeting of the American Legion, of which he is a member, and would try to determine what the membership wishes to do.

Conduct of the Council (may be closed)

*Description: Several of the members have asked to have an internal discussion on what Council meeting items to discuss and how to discuss them.*

Councilman Back made a motion to conduct a closed session pursuant to *Annotated Code of Maryland* Section 10-508(a)(2), Protect the privacy or reputation of individuals with respect to a matter that is not related to public business. Councilman Hale seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Councilmen Winkler, Back, Ambrogio and Hale and Mayor Eckman voted aye. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

There being no other work session items to discuss, the Town Council meeting went into closed session, which concluded at 6:20 PM.

Submitted by:

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Judith T. Frazier  
Town Clerk